

Panel Discussion

Recall the Past to Understand the Future: Home Video Game Consoles as Origins of Platform Business

Moderator: Akinori NAKAMURA

(Vice Director, Ritsumeikan Center for Game Studies; Professor, College of Image Arts and Sciences, Ritsumeikan University)

Panelists: Masayuki UEMURA

(Director, Ritsumeikan Center for Game Studies; Professor, Kinugasa Research Organization, Ritsumeikan University)

Ken KUTARAGI

(CEO, Cyber AI Entertainment, Inc.; Visiting Professor, Graduate School of Management, Ritsumeikan University)

Hirokazu HAMAMURA

(CEO, Gzbrain Inc.; Visiting Professor, College of Image Arts and Sciences, Ritsumeikan University)

(MC) I'd like to start the panel discussion now. CEO of Gzbrain, Mr. Hamamura, and Professor Nakamura of Ritsumeikan's College of Image Arts and Sciences will be taking over from here, with Professor Nakamura acting as moderator.

(Nakamura) Allowing me to take the baton from here, I would like to begin this panel discussion by reaffirming that video game consoles are in fact platforms.

Today's panel discussion will be conducted similarly to a comparative case study. The aim of this session is to have two developers who exhibited leadership in video game console platforms during both the 16-bit and the 32-bit eras, as well as Mr. Hamamura, who was on the scene witnessing those times, discuss how the different platforms were developed while reflecting on those times from the perspective of those directly involved and from the perspective of the media.

The first question is about the reaction when the release of the video game console was announced. We will start with Super Famicom. Gzbrain has provided us with an article published at that time in *Famicom Tsushin*. Please refer to the material dated September 1, 1989. What was surprising was that the release of Super Famicom ended up being an announcement that it wouldn't be sold for another year. Mr. Hamamura, please tell us more about the situation at that time.

(Hamamura) When Famicom came out, there was uncertainty at first as to whether it would merely be a toy or if it would become an industry in and of itself. But as many third-party developers started to emerge, it became a big business, and

the fact that Super Famicom was being released made it clear this was going to become an industry that would continue into the future. Owing to that, expectations for Super Famicom were extremely high. I too attended the press conference for Super Famicom, and I will never forget it. I never imagined unexpectedly announcing a postponement (of the release date), so I was disappointed and severely shocked.

(Nakamura) It is quite rare to hear of a release that disappoints the media.

(Hamamura) Aside from this one occasion, I have never heard of any kind of postponement being announced.

(Nakamura) Professor Uemura, please explain the context behind why the yearlong postponement was announced.

(Uemura) I believe everyone generally understand why we decided to sell the Super Famicom from the previous presentation. We were trying many new things with the Super Famicom. For instance, at that time, sound had a surprisingly peripheral status in the video game world, and was given the cold shoulder up until then, in that only a small amount of data were allotted to sound. The first time PCM sound sources were used was in the Super Famicom.

The reason for the postponement was simply that we couldn't acquire the SRAM, so we couldn't acquire the necessary parts, yet. And the reason for that was that word processors were selling at a rapid rate at that time, and parts manufacturers were in a situation in which they had to place priority on supplying the parts for their own products first. I

asked Mr. Kutaragi if there was anything they could do to help us, but of course, he responded that they couldn't help either.

As such, we hadn't stirred up expectations as part of some sales strategy; rather it was an unavoidable situation in the greater balance of the industry at the time. Yet, as a result, we were able to get rid of bugs in the hardware and attain a year for polishing the software. So, in a way, the delay was useful in that it created circumstances we could be grateful for.

(Kutaragi) I was in the same exact position at that time, but the difference was that Sony was, in fact, making parts, including SRAMs. However, Famicom sales were too high, and I thought that we probably couldn't make the needed amount. Another thing was that PlayStation likewise required a lot of memory when we first released it. However, the culture at that time was that if there were excess parts, you would go ahead and share them. But we hit a dead end with all the Japanese manufacturers; no matter who we asked, they weren't even in a position to negotiate.

(Nakamura) I see. So a priority was being placed on computers.

(Kutaragi) There was a blackboard when you went to buy parts, and the price and number of items available were listed. It was like "this is all that is available, you can take it if you want." That is how we were treated because, in the industry, video game consoles were a lower priority than word processors, appliances, and PCs. The tables turned some years later, and it became clear that we were considered a higher priority.

(Nakamura) Now I would like to ask Mr. Hamamura about which Super Famicom features were of particular interest to the media. The fact of the matter was that there was an increase in various display features, such as rotation, the enlargement/reduction feature, and scrolling; but articles at that time were actually introducing the sprite features and the sound, which was just explained.

(Hamamura) We were aware that the sprites and the sound were improved, but the enlargement/reduction feature was the most noticeable improvement. It was used in almost all of the video games.

(Nakamura) That's right. When changing scenes and so forth, the enlargement/reduction feature came into play extensively.

(Hamamura) Everyone was intrigued by and using gameplay in which, for example, you would get on top of an airship, and the ground would grow smaller, and then you would suddenly get off. Since that feature never existed before, it really stood out.

(Nakamura) Professor Uemura, what do you think about this reaction? What feature did you want to push most?

(Uemura) Honestly, I was not actually involved with detailed design at that level. Once we found success, everyone gained confidence and proposals for lots of different specs were coming forth. It would have been great if I could have just said "Make it as you please," but there were also cost restrictions, so it was my job to decide which features to adopt. The enlargement/reduction feature was not so difficult from a technical standpoint, but it had never been used in video game consoles up until that point, and it was noticeable without being costly, so I think that is why it was proposed.

When making Super Famicom, amidst a debate on whether to design it as Super Famicom internally but Famicom externally, we discussed PlayStation's image as a consumer electronics device within the company. There are different kinds of control mechanisms, but the company was equally divided into two schools of thought, one that first and foremost wanted to use disks and reform the disk system, and one that wanted to enhance the conventional Famicom features. As such, we moved forward with designs along both lines.

Famicom's greatest point was the use of ROM cartridges. Conversely, disk systems run using a method in which data, including CD-ROM data, are temporarily transferred to the RAM. The merit of cartridges is that features can be expanded by adding a chip to the software, meaning that hardware design enhancements could be carried out via software. Another merit is that no loading time is required, so the system starts up as soon as you click the cartridge into place. In the end, my own preferences took precedence, and rather than persuading the team to design it as Super Famicom internally but Famicom externally; in other words, design it, so the cartridge clicks into place, I just went ahead and decided that on my own.

(Nakamura) Now I'd like to discuss the launch titles. There were only two games that were sold on the same day as the product launch, and from there, eight games in about one month. That is considerably low. However, some of

the titles that are still considered to be Nintendo classics like F-Zero and Super Mario World were released. The colors in Super Mario World were diverse, and sprites were used to give F-Zero a pseudo-3-D look. The enlargement/reduction feature was also highly utilized in Populous. Mr. Hamamura, of these titles, which software made the biggest impression?

(Hamamura) We knew that Mario was going to be released, and I was even looking forward to it, but it was unexpected that Populous was one of the first titles to come out because Populous had become a kind of “god software” in the world of PC games. Although it was only eight games, they were full of variety, and my impression was that Nintendo adeptly brought together a mix of completely different titles.

(Nakamura) You get the sense that the lineup reveals Nintendo’s ideologies as a platform leader.

(Hamamura) The types of entertainment offered were truly diverse, and I felt they skillfully created a vast assortment with such a limited number of items.

(Nakamura) Now, I would like to draw comparisons by switching the focus to PlayStation. My strongest memory is the dinosaur demo utilizing 3D graphics. Mr. Hamamura, when you saw this demo, what was your impression as a representative of the media?

(Hamamura) In the earlier discussion, Mr. Kutaragi said that he went around to various companies to explain this feature. However, as media reps, we received explanations after developers. Manufacturers who had seen it before me were dying to talk about PlayStation and would ask me “Mr. Hamamura, did you see the dinos?” and say to me “It’s incredible, isn’t it? They move off the screen!” Therefore, the talk about dinosaurs moving in 3D was going around town like an urban legend. Amidst wondering what all the talk was about, Mr. Kutaragi came to show me. I was truly shocked and astonished that this feature could be achieved with a video game console. Yet, at the time Nintendo was really dominant, so the revelation I had that “The console itself is no longer enough, strong software is now also a must,” was probably written all over my face. Mr. Kutaragi told me confidently “We are going to become number one in the world, without a doubt.” After that, they really did become the global leader, so that was very cool.

(Kutaragi) I don’t remember saying something so bold... However, technically speaking the dinosaurs have a textured pattern layered on their surface. Arcade and computer games at that time did not utilize layering, rather gradation was achieved with origami-like triangles, and polygon-based graphics were a selling point. But the movie, Jurassic Park, had come out, so we decided to try dinosaurs.

The first time we unveiled the dinosaurs, about 100 people who were all from the video game industry were there, except no one from the media was present. People in the industry usually respond enthusiastically, so I was expecting them to ooh and aah, but they were all completely silent with stone-like expressions on their faces. It wasn’t a hit at all. Without uttering a word, everyone left. Every single one of us was thoroughly disappointed. Afterward, we learned that apparently, they were so shocked they didn’t know how to react.

(Nakamura) Were you able to convey your vision that video games would be one step ahead in computer entertainment development?

(Kutaragi) Probably not yet at that point. Because everyone actually looked mad. We received some responses on the following day, so it was as if they needed some time to process it.

But the most significant response was in arcade game shows that actually came after that, when Virtua Fighter suddenly appeared. What was striking about this was that space was incorporated as a game element. It was encompassing. Moreover, the characters’ expressions changed fluidly in real time, right? It was probably upon seeing this that creators realized it was possible to make such amazing games. After that, inquiries started suddenly increasing, with people saying, “I heard in the past that you could do 3D, is that right?”

(Nakamura) As a result, it was released to the press that over 100 companies expressed interest in collaborating and specific games were even presented in the magazine *Famicom Tsushin*. Mr. Kutaragi, can you tell us more about why so many companies came together for a platform from a manufacturer who had never before produced video game consoles or computer entertainment devices?

(Kutaragi) Since there were a lot of creators who wanted to take part, we decided to create a video game development environment and tools that would make it easy for them to do so. In other words, we wanted to lower the threshold.

People involved with making games for existing video game consoles, couldn't make games for us without approval from upper management. On the other hand, some people who had absolutely no prior involvement in making video games started emerging saying they wanted to make new types of games. For example, Parappa the Rapper was based on an idea from the music artist Masaya Matsuura from the band Psy-S, and it's a video game where players compete by rapping. It was super exciting and having more and more new games like that come out was really fun.

(Nakamura) According to the Media Art Database, after PlayStation came out, 19 games were released in one month. There was a 3D train simulation by Artdink, and Tama by Time Warner which was a puzzle game that utilized 3D balls. At this stage, titles started coming out that were like fan discs for already released games, such as Ridge Racer by Namco, which I think was the most popular at that time, a 3D side-scrolling game by the game studio Technosoft which was producing PC games, Battle Arena Toshinden by Takara, and Jewel BEM Hunter Line by Asmik. So, titles were already coming out that were different from existing games.

(Hamamura) There were a considerable number of indie-type companies. It was as if all the people who had previously thought that entering the home video game market was challenging, suddenly had a chance to join the video game industry. For example, FromSoftware is now a globally-renowned company, but they had been a PC system company before developing their first game for PlayStation, the game King's Field.

(Nakamura) That game somewhat resembles the ambiance of Demon's Souls.

(Hamamura) It's a game that is entirely impossible to clear. Those guys were making impossibly hard games right from the get-go.

(Kutaragi) When we started PlayStation, the company we partnered with was Japan's Sony Music Entertainment, in other words, a music company. To them, artists were the most important thing. They loved indie musicians, and they worked to increase the motivation of and facilitate the success of people who were likely to become popular and people whose talents could be developed. The culture there was to wholeheartedly cheer anyone who was up and coming in the world. I think that worked out perfectly somehow

because more and more extremely talented people started coming in.

(Nakamura) Mr. Hamamura, what was your take in terms of how interesting the games were?

(Hamamura) Even though I was a media rep for video games, it was as if I became enlightened as to how far-ranging video games could be.

(Nakamura) So you were mainly able to see things from a new perspective. I believe that the video games that are released when a platform is launched reflect the ideologies of the platform company.

Going on to the next question now, I'd like to discuss the classic titles for each platform. After discussing titles with Mr. Hamamura, I ultimately selected these based on my own discretion and inclination. For Super Famicom, Super Mario World, Mario Kart, The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past, Star Fox, and F-Zero, among others, were classic titles developed by first-party developers, but Star Fox, which was released on February 5, 1993, was developed in cooperation with England's Argonaut Software, featured more polygon-like portrayals than Mario Kart, for example. Based on Professor Uemura's earlier explanation, I think this was due to the fact that hardware developers tended not to use 3D representations.

(Uemura) The idea was similar to how we had been trying a lot of different things, like adding sound chips to cartridges, since the Famicom days.

(Hamamura) You are talking about the Super FX chip. Such things existed for PCs, but it came as a surprise once we were able to play with domestic video game consoles in that way.

(Nakamura) You could display the game with polygon-like pseudo-3D graphics by adding that chip.

(Hamamura) That's right. It was really a unique idea. It was sensational to be able to expand features by adding something like that to the ROM, as opposed to the hardware.

(Nakamura) Essentially since that technology was also being used for sound sources, the next step was to add chips that could enhance the graphics display. The fact that features could be expanded in this way explains Professor

Uemura's idea about the importance of using ROMs.

(Uemura) We didn't know when or where new value revolutions would occur, so we had to ensure that we could expand capabilities for that future time. Because disk systems are just memory, we, unfortunately, decided not to adopt disks for that reason.

However, Star Fox received low evaluations internally at Nintendo. People thought the graphics were cool, but they didn't think the game itself was interesting. Yet, games that were generally popular internally tended not to sell well, while games that didn't do well internally sold well on the market. It is also for that reason that I think the most important thing is to create an environment in which the general public can be involved in various ways.

(Nakamura) In terms of games developed by second-party and third-party developers, the classic titles included Street Fighter II, Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride, and Chrono Trigger, among others. However, when Street Fighter II was ported over switching over to Nintendo, what became an object of interest was the controller buttons. The question was whether the overwhelming number of buttons in the arcade game console could be reproduced on a video game console.

(Hamamura) As we were wondering how the game would be played using the Famicom controller, Nintendo added the L/R buttons. I was surprised by that idea. The bike in F-Zero was also moved from left to right using the cross-shaped control pad, while the L/R buttons controlled the angle of the bike. Professor Uemura also mentioned this, but Nintendo carefully decided controller operations by researching gameplay in depth. They modify the controllers after studying tactical games like Street Fighter II and F-Zero. Nintendo will forever continue such efforts, and I sincerely realized that Nintendo is a company that specializes in the art of play.

(Uemura) The idea for the L/R buttons came from the division that is now called Nintendo Entertainment Analysis and Development. At that time, the people producing software were in an extremely powerful position, so when they told me to make something, I was the yes-man. However, this was not limited to Nintendo internally; I also made sure I was the yes-man for people outside the company, too. Because the reality was that the controller had a connector-like mechanism which could also be used to expand capabilities. Video games should not just be a discussion of the images on the screen, but rather should

be a discussion of a unified world-view incorporating the controllers and a discussion of enjoyment. I think this has gone unchanged since the start of Famicom.

(Nakamura) Final Fantasy VI actually contains an airship, but was the earlier discussion about the enlargement/reduction feature, in fact, a reference to this game?

(Hamamura) Exactly, that's the one. You would go extremely high up, and the ground would spin around as you were coming down. The feature appeared so much that you'd almost be saying "oh, here it is again." I guess they were trying to show it off as a selling point.

(Nakamura) Moving now to the classic PlayStation titles, when looking at the titles published by Sony Computer Entertainment, the first impression is that the titles are full of variety. In addition to Parappa the Rapper, which was mentioned earlier, there was also Devil Dice and Doko Demo Issho, among others. While some had 3D as a selling point, there were also other entirely new titles which were not 3D, but the lineup gave the impression that they were all being published under one brand. . The most impressive initiative was Game Yarouze (Let's Make Games). The same goes for the previously discussed Parappa the Rapper, but the really innovative titles essentially originated from here.

(Hamamura) It was astounding. I had heard that the people at Sony Music highly valued indie artists, as Mr. Kutaragi also mentioned, but to try to produce video games together with, not video game makers, but the general public in such an open manner was a revolutionary approach.

(Nakamura) Where did the idea for Game Yarouze come from?

(Kutaragi) Mainly the people at Sony Music just came up with it naturally. It originated with talk of something along the lines of "Music Yarouze." Since it was extremely cheap and easy for us to make developer tools that even the general public could use, we ended up saying "Let's produce video games together!" The idea was to create a mechanism where, if there was a fascinating video game concept, we could introduce it before it was even made. *Famicom Tsushin* reporters took an interest in the initiative and covered it many times. Further, the joy of bringing something that was developed through a grassroots initiative to fruition, and the fact that grand techniques and vast teams of people weren't

necessary, that it could be done with just one or two people, were fun aspects that also excited the creators, and that was, basically, how it came about.

(Hamamura) The promotional content for Everybody's Golf left a lasting impression. Before that, TV commercials for video games tended to follow the pattern of showing the video game screen, and then children playing, but the age demographic for Everybody's Golf was set to middle-aged men from the start. The commercials also started with middle-aged men getting together to go play golf, with hardly any shots of the video game screen. Sometimes a caddie would also appear. I felt you were aiming for a video game for adults that was completely different from anything before.

(Kutaragi) PlayStation advertisements included one which started with kids banging on the shutter of a store screaming "1, 2, 3... 1, 2, 3..." and even after the opening shots, our commercials tended not to show the video game screen or the console. Of course, there was the aspect in which we wanted PlayStation to be for everyone, but it was also because we wanted to convey the PlayStation image more than the actual video game screen. For example, the controller cord was about the same length as Famicom's in the beginning, and that was fine for kids because they generally play video games peeled to the screen. However, adults play video games at somewhat of a distance from the screen. In that case, the cord is too short, isn't it? In addition to reducing the price, we also made the cord longer and showed commercials with women looking stylish and relaxed, and worked to portray that type of image. We were trying to convey a lifestyle by helping people imagine what kind of experience PlayStation offers.

(Nakamura) That concept is present in Everybody's Golf, as well as in other titles. For example, the main character in Doko Demo Issho is a character that players can feel extremely close to. On the other hand, serious racing games such as Gran Turismo were released and games like Gunparade March, which really appeals to anime fans, also came out. It is the classic titles published by Sony Computer Entertainment that give the strong impression of being new, cutting-edge titles, as opposed to ones that take the easy road. However, in terms of third-party developers, domestic companies gave us the Final Fantasy series, the Tekken series, the Metal Gear Solid series, and the Biohazard (Resident Evil) series, and a foreign company (at the time) gave us the Tomb Raider series.

(Hamamura) Before then, serious horror video games were hard to come by. Biohazard plays background music, using sounds from a live orchestra and so forth, but there are also moments in the video game where it becomes completely silent, and I feel like I learned from that game that those are the scariest moments in the world of horror. This also applies to Metal Gear Solid, but the storylines are incredibly profound, for example amid the Cold War being the topic of discussion, the theme is actually antiwar. It seemed like video games which had profound storylines that adults could understand and connect with came into existence in a substantial way after PlayStation came out.

(Nakamura) Yes, games with deep themes. Mr. Kutaragi, what do you think about these titles that came out one after another from third-party developers, the so-called major game manufacturers?

(Kutaragi) I guess it was that they featured never-before-seen kinds of expression. For example, hiding somewhere in the shadows. Of course, the games were surprising for us too, and we thought they were scary or awesome, but I think they probably really affected Western gamers. We had a lot of somewhat crude video games back in the day, where you would be shooting non-stop in a tunnel, for example, but the expressiveness of these video games was amazing, and the production teams were amazing. Ever since then, the production teams have been held in high regard.

(Nakamura) What was the impact of Final Fantasy VII? Mr. Hamamura, from the media's perspective?

(Hamamura) I first saw it in the production company's viewing room, and I felt it was impossible if I wasn't playing properly on PlayStation. I was playing seriously, but I honestly thought it was impossible if I couldn't focus harder and play more properly. I became keenly aware of the magnitude of video games' potential. There were "Final Fantasy Launching" commercials aired in which polygon-graphic characters simply spun around, and it was just a bunch of fanfare, but I feel Final Fantasy became a game with that much value and one that determined PlayStation's direction.

And that wasn't just in Japan, it (the game's impact) was also overseas. At the last E3 expo, there was talk that Final Fantasy VII was coming back out and that a remake was going to be released, and the crowd went wild and gave a standing ovation. It's actually possible that this video game

changed the world, and I think it's the title that made the biggest impression on everyone.

(Nakamura) When designing the hardware, had you thought in advance that there was a possibility that this type of video game would come out?

(Kutaragi) No, it's not something we considered. What we create is similar to the canvas for a painting, and as Professor Uemura mentioned, you cannot necessarily expand from there. However, the creativity of the video game creators is astonishing. Professor Uemura has also discussed this a lot in the past as well, but if you create a piece of hardware with 100 capabilities, in time people master 50%, then 60%, then 70% of the skills. Then at some point, they exceed 100. Of course, some of those people may expand the hardware, but more often than not, skilled creators surpass anything the hardware production team ever conceived of and start creating something out of this world. There is really no limit.

(Nakamura) I think we have been able to learn here that, for both Super Famicom and PlayStation, features were achieved which exceeded the given specs. In Super Famicom's case, Nintendo themselves invented a chip for expanding features, and in the case of PlayStation, it was beyond the hardware, through new kinds of expression in video games.

Next, we will discuss how so many different creators were managed. This is known as platform management, but simply put; CERO was founded in 2002, and in the United States ESRB was established in 1994, which means that regulations are not something that can easily be achieved naturally. As such, those times were an era when hardware manufacturers were dictating how things must be done in some way. That became systematized with the Mario Club which was formed in the Super Famicom days. Conversely, PlayStation seemed to take a completely different approach, so I would like to ask you both about that.

(Uemura) The Mario Club is now known for quality control, but I'm sure you are all aware that there was a mixed response from the software companies regarding quality control. Earlier I mentioned the discussion about distributors having a discerning eye, but from the manufacturers' standpoint, if we sell our products then our inventory disappears, but if distributors purchase products that don't sell then they are stuck with that inventory. Yet it is challenging for distributors to get information about which software will sell before the products are released for sale. To

address this, we had the idea to hire people from the general public as part-time staff to check the quality of video games, and from around the end of the Famicom era, we started giving those people questionnaires and ranking the video games and giving that information to the distributors. We called that group of people the "Mario Club."

It went well in the beginning. The results were quite on target, and the distributors were also happy. However, we thoroughly realized how difficult it is to rate products, and eventually, the results stopped being on target.

(Nakamura) Did the results differ from general users' opinions?

(Uemura) Yes. The club members started becoming Otaku-or hardcore gamers. In a way, it was unavoidable because we couldn't just fire our part-time employees. Another role that they played was to debug the video games. They even debugged software from our licensees and checked whether or not there were any issues with the hardware. This role became quite valuable, and the mindset even in our internal software development became "If the Mario Club checked it, then it's probably fine." So, we decided that after putting products through that one filter, we just had to try to release them to market. The group has stayed in place with the responsibility of conducting this kind of quality control, including debugging.

(Nakamura) In PlayStation's case, I feel as though not much information on this topic has come out. Since the titles released for PlayStation were full of variety, we have the impression that rather than giving advice to the video game companies, PlayStation is just cheering them on. Yet, can you tell us what was done in terms of matters that had to be regulated to some minimal degree?

(Kutaragi) First, priority is placed on cheering them on, because they are expected to produce video games unlike anything in the past. However, if there is any difference from Famicom and the other consoles, it is that games are not only for children but something that could also be enjoyed by adults were being developed, and that meant that sometimes the games involved blood splattering, right? That, of course, led to claims to stop producing such video games, so we would make requests to the video game companies. For example, we'd say "Sorry, but could you change the color of the blood from red to green?" In that way, we would try to find a point of compromise. However, in the process of doing

that repeatedly, we started discussing that a rating system was indeed necessary, and we created a system which CERO is also a part of. Since standards such as age ranges were established, the consensus became to develop video games in line with those standards.

In addition to that, our intention from the start was that PlayStation would be in homes across the world, but then there is the issue of differences between countries. There are countries which have strict regulations on violence and kinds of expression that are prohibited due to religion. So, we were also checking those things. But it wasn't always perfect, and when the number of titles rapidly increased, occasionally some titles were overlooked. Then we would receive claims and products would be boycotted, so we had no choice but to respond at those times. We would issue strong requests, including to the software manufacturers. And we would tackle the issue right away while assuring the claimants that we would rewrite the disks immediately and do whatever we could technically to respond.

(Nakamura) I think we can see from these discussions how the companies' attitudes differed.

Time is almost up so the final topic will be recommendations to the video game industry. I'd like to hear comments from each of you regarding how you think future video game industry platforms should be, from Mr. Kutaragi, if possible, I'd like to hear what your message to Sony Interactive Entertainment and the PlayStation group would be, in view of the progression from PlayStation to today's PS4 and PSVR, likewise, from Professor Uemura in view of the progression from Super Famicom to Nintendo Switch, and from Mr. Hamamura, in view of the entire industry.

(Kutaragi) There aren't really any demands I would like to make towards my former team members. But 23 years have passed since the first generation, right? So, I think perhaps they could be making greater waves. I feel like the original first-generation PlayStation was continually making waves.

(Uemura) In the end, I wish that research in Japan would be conducted based on the notion that "simple is best." This is in line with what Mr. Kutaragi said, but put differently. It should be a good thing that there are two different products because it would be totally uninteresting if both companies were doing the same thing. The latest Switch is popularly based on something surprisingly simple, and it's the rich taste which Nintendo has

always possessed. Therefore, I hope that the industry continues to embrace the notion that "simple is best."

(Hamamura) I feel that the video game industry is changing at an incredibly rapid pace. 2016 was considered the year of VR, and a year has already passed since then, but new models are already being announced, and people in distant locations can connect via Facebook and talk in VR. The same is happening in eSports. A culture for watching people play video games was born, and large amounts of prize money are even being awarded. And the same goes for AI. I discussed this a bit with Mr. Kutaragi earlier, but I feel as though the future we had been imagining is becoming a reality extremely quickly. Even though I think the video game industry has always changed rapidly, I feel that the pace of change has been rapidly accelerating these past few years in particular. It is hard to stay up to speed, but it is exciting, and there is a lot to look forward to. I hope that from here it continues to become an even more exciting and even more fun industry.

(Kutaragi) There is just one last thing I feel I have to say. This is a request to everyone in Japan's video game industry. I hope that all of the people making video game software are having fun in the process because there are some genres where this is no longer happening. This involves some complexities in meaning, but I want the industry to return once again to the state in which video games are made by having fun.

(Nakamura) We just received some extremely important recommendations from two people who built the video game industry and constructed two major platforms, and a media representative who closely witnessed those developments. At the same time, although we discussed the concept of platforms while focusing on video games today, this concept can also naturally be applied to other industries. Japan was once the world leader in the video game industry, so I would like to conclude this seminar by expressing the hope that if we reflect on the circumstances of that era with a renewed focus on the platform concept, the time will come again in which we can exert leadership in other services, such as social networks, apps, and possibly even other hardware.

Please give our guests another round of applause. Thank you for your participation.

(End of article)