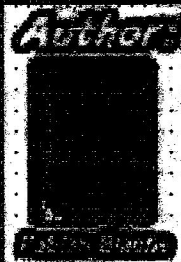


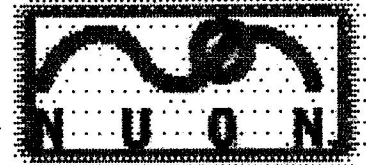
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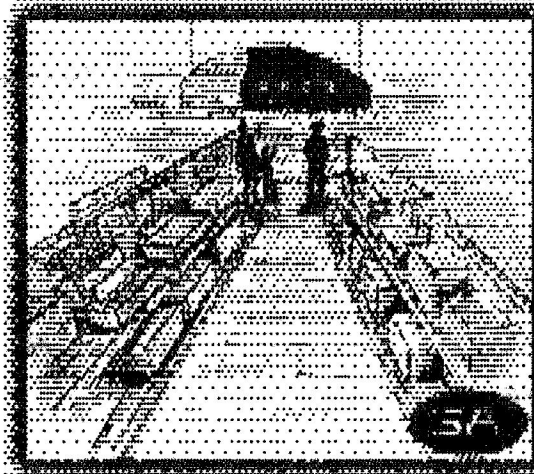
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VM LABS: Now Inching Closer To Reality

Today, October 27, 1998, the Project X technology developed by VM Labs, and being brought to market with the help of Motorola, has been officially given its new and final name. The name that this burgeoning technology will be known by is **NUON™**.



The NUON technology, formerly known as Project X, is a highly parallel and scaleable architecture that will afford a heretofore unseen level of programmable processing power. This power will enhance digital consumer electronics devices. The aim is to create a highly advanced interactive software platform. This is VM Labs' realization of the "Set Top Box" for our living rooms. The power of the technology will "provide the raw horsepower to decode digital video and audio, while delivering advanced trick modes and an enhanced user interface. This highly parallel and scaleable processor is capable of executing in excess of 1.5 billion instructions per second." The technology is slated



for inclusion in DVD players, and other digital video media devices. The first products are expected to be available sometime in 1999.

The essence of this name NUON, which VM Labs took great care and time in developing is "brilliant graphics and accessible space-age technology." The

name NUON, according to VM Labs, bears a marked resemblance to the word "muon" which is an elementary scientific particle. This lends itself to the concept of highly advanced micro-electronics. Then there is

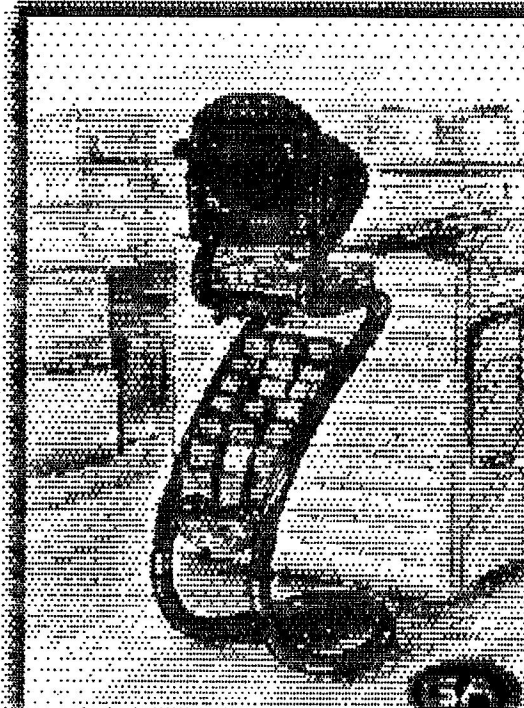
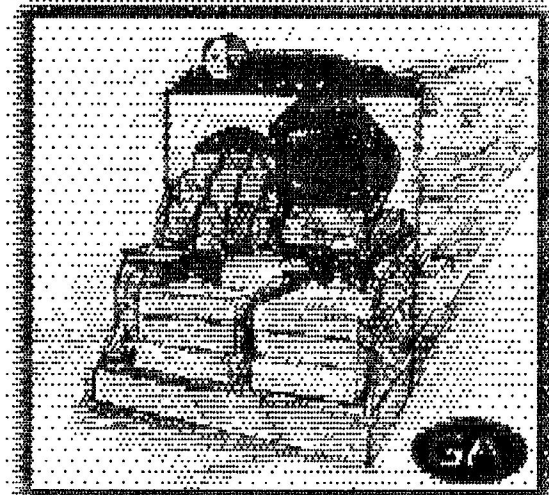
associate with brilliant visuals. Hence you have 'micro-electronics that generate brilliant visuals.' Going one step further, the ending "-on", as VM Labs puts it, places this new name in the class with base matter components such as "proton" and "neuron." Then there is the obvious relation of "NU" to "new" and "ON" to "on"; which they indicate is in contrast to the word "off" They enlisted the help of the national branding firm LEXICON, creators of the names as Pentium®, PowerBook® and Deskjet® to bring this new word to realization.

Then to compliment this new word/name, VM Labs further enlisted the help of The Beeline Group in Newark, California to create a suitable logo to represent their product.

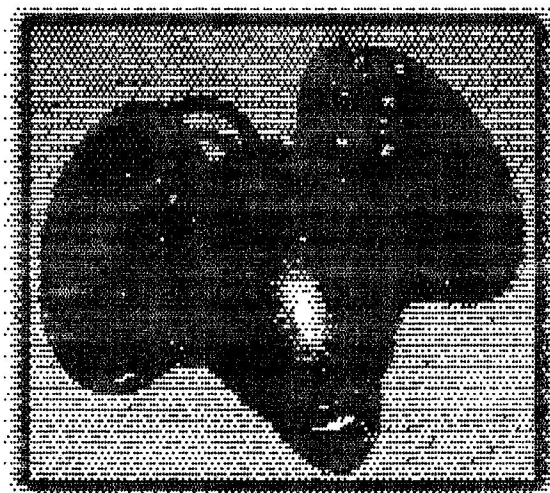
This firm is know for their work with Hewlett® Packard, Nike and top videogame companies. The story goes that the logo germinated out of something observed in an early technology demonstration. It was the depiction of real-time raytracing. The demo showed a wavy body of water that reflected light sources and images from several spheres. Greg LaBrec, VM Labs Vice President of Marketing had this to say:

"Consumers will come to recognize and look for the NUON logo on home electronics hardware and software as an assurance they are getting the advanced level of interactivity and digital video convergence only NUON will provide. The logo will appear as an icon on the front of enhanced hardware, as well as on packaging, software, and traditional advertising media."

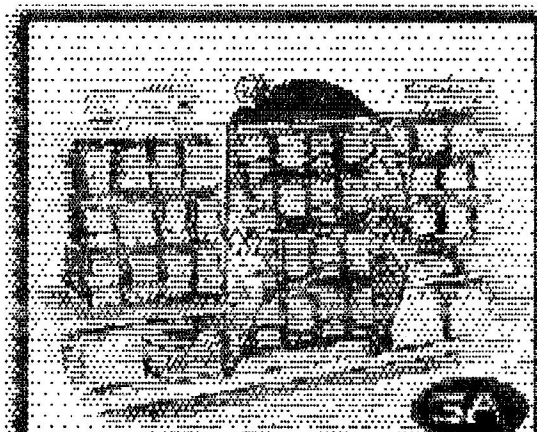
All this word play and their new, and very appealing, logo don't tell us much more than we knew all along. How or whether or not this will impact the Motorola "Blackbird" project, which is basically touted as a VM Labs Media Processor, remains to be seen. An actual launch date has yet to be announced. Images of



the hardware, and the controller configuration have yet to be released, but it is believed that both aspects of this development phase have been completed. A company that manufactures ergonomic products participated in developing the design of the NUON controller. The controller is a winged configuration that clearly shows six tear-drop shaped buttons on its face, in addition to a molded, circular disc digital thumb pad and what appears to be a concave surfaced analog thumb stick as well. Looking at this device, it appears to have been fashioned by Alps Interactive, makers of the Alps Gamepad. I would almost bet the farm on that one. The Alps Gamepad, if you recall, was the very comfortable Sony PlayStation controller that resembled a Bat-A-Rang and had rubber non-slip soles on the underside. It is currently unclear as to whether or not the NUON pad sports any type of shoulder buttons or under-side triggers, but it is likely that it will. Nor is it currently known if the device offers a feedback or vibration function, and if so how that feature is powered. The controller looks very comfortable and has a distinctive look, with well rounded edges and what appears to be a smooth curvy feel.



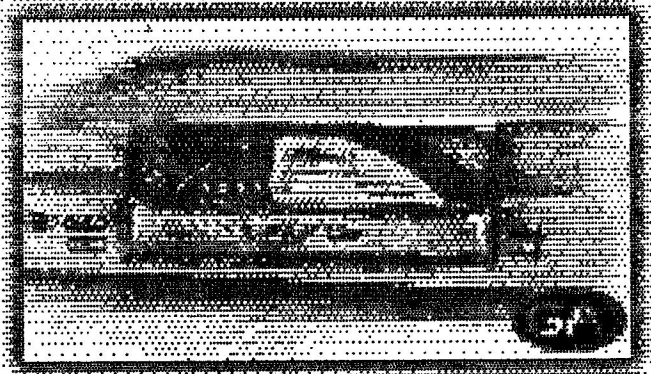
With a recent move into new office digs on Monday, October 26th, it is no wonder that VM Labs has been a bit quiet and chose "now" to announce this phase of their project. What this most likely means is that they have many of the answers to our questions in-hand, and will trickle this information out to the general populous as development reaches specific milestones; that being hardware and software development. So the excitement is sure to begin brewing again, as the advent of Dreamcast gets gamer's technology lusting juices flowing, and VM Labs plugs onward with their brainchild. As previously mentioned, Gaming



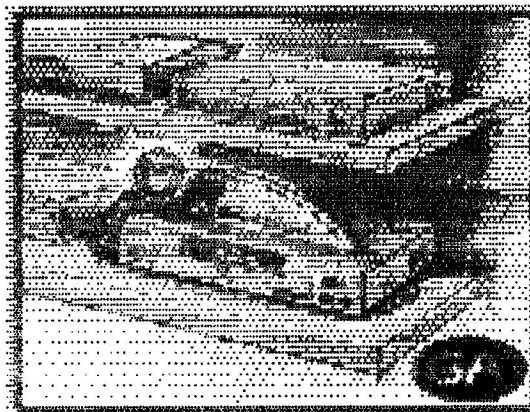
Age has seen the early technology demonstrations, and walked away quite impressed with the results of their efforts. They may be taking this slowly, but the staff surrounding this effort are veterans of the industry and know what they are doing. Former Sony staff members now

include; Producer/Director Joe Sousa who was formerly the head of Sony's infamous Product Evaluation Group, which approved game concepts, Scott Hunter a former Sony Account Executive serving in the same capacity now for VM Labs, Senior Support Engineer Mike Fulton who was Sony's Performance Analyzer, and Pratip Fatehpuria a Sony Senior Support Engineer, now functioning as Senior Software Engineer to VM Labs -- the list goes on and on.

As has been reported, heading up the 3rd Party Development and Licensing as Vice President is Bill Rehbock, formerly Sony's very effective VP of Research and Development. I spoke with Bill the day the NUON press release was issued. After our pleasantries were very genuinely dispensed with, we chatted briefly about the future of NUON, and Bill's obvious excitement surrounding the new information being released to the public. He could not be pinned down on a release date and I had no choice but to admire his repose in skillfully warding off certain questions I posed. It seems VM Labs have more juicy bombshells on the horizon with which to fire salvos, and they don't want premature announcements to sabotage their efforts. My own conjecture leads me to think that we may see this technology come to fruition sometime by the summer of 1999. That would be somewhat in-line with earlier citations of an early 1999 release. If this is the case, then the product would likely beat Dreamcast to the US market, as it is slated for a Fourth Quarter 1999 release.

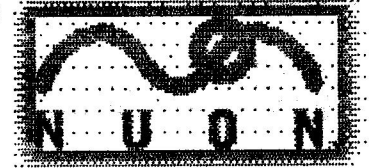


What impact NUON launching around summer of 1999 may have, if it in fact occurs, is a good question. What I was able to learn, was that the top twelve publishers, who account for 90% of the software that is brought to market, will be on-board with NUON. I could not help but



take notice to the shift in terminology to "publishers" from "developers." In the past, the focus was placed on naming VM Labs committed developers. Back in June of this year VM Labs made it abundantly clear that they were actively pursuing other top tier developers and publishers.

hand-in-hand, but many developers do not publish their own titles. If all this is true, then NUON is getting some significant support and it will be interesting to see just whom these publishers are. It goes without saying that currently their list dose not include the likes of Sony, Nintendo or Sega, but with Rehbock at the helm anything is a possibility. When all is said and done, at least in the this phase of the game, VM Lab's NUON is getting close to put-up or shut-up time. Their guns are loading daily and their staff are dedicated infantrymen that yearn for a good clean fight. So we are now past "Edging Closer To Reality" and have moved into "Inching Closer To Reality." Inching seems more appropriate now as the pending release of this technology is, most likely, not too far off. Small steps? Perhaps! But big footprints may be left in the sand nonetheless.



So for now, enjoy the various artwork and the new logo. Gaming Age will bring you more coverage as it develops, and will help you make sense of all this hoopla. Stay tuned...

-- ***Fabian Blache***

NOTE: The images you see here are conceptual artist renditions of the projected Point of Sale merchandising Kiosks and Centers for NUON™ products.

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