

NintendoWorldReport

POWERED 

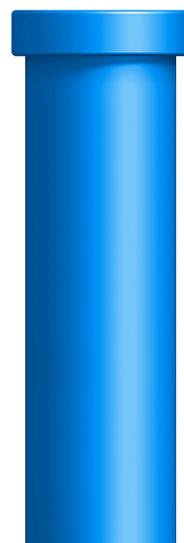
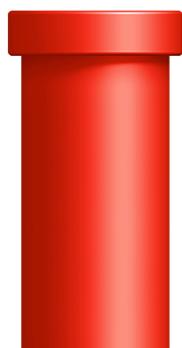
Christmas
Special!



Blogs and
Features!



Five great
games
reviewed!



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Letter From the Director

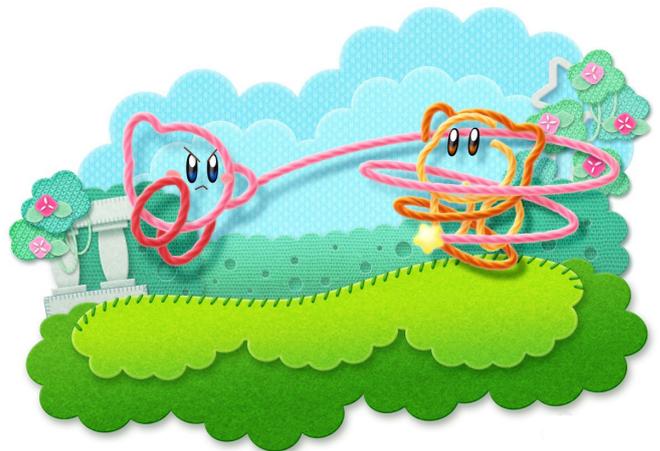
By Neal Ronaghan

Welcome to the next ambitious thing coming out Nintendo World Report - Nintendo World Report: Powered Off. It's a PDF magazine that features a variety of content from the NWR vaults, presented in a magazine-like format that is perfect for tablets (or printing out and stapling together to make your own magazine).

Our first issue is sort of a "Best of 2012," only featuring articles from the past year. Enjoy a variety of musings and content, ranging from why I love Super Mario RPG to how Zach Miller deals with his post-brain abscess gaming.

In the future, we'll dive back even further into the close to 14 years of NWR (and Planet GameCube) history, presenting all sorts of interesting content in new ways. You'll also be able to feed the mailbag at poweredoff@nintendoworldreport.com, as we will be answering letters in next month's issue. Also, get ready to send in your fan art.

Thank you very much for checking out the first issue, and have a great holiday season.



How Super Mario RPG Made Me the Gamer I Am Today



By Neal Ronaghan

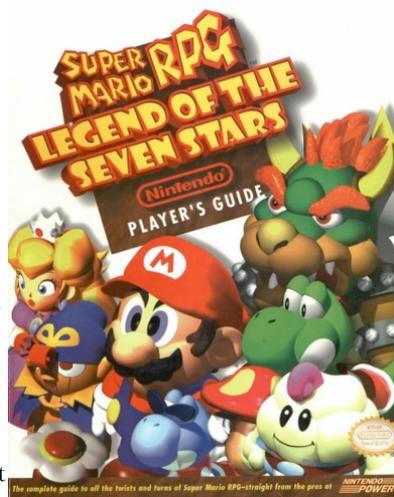
Nintendo and Square's late SNES RPG was the linchpin in Neal's gaming fascination.

I can think of some landmark gaming moments when I grew up in the '90s relating to video games. In the beginning of the decade, I spent a lot of time playing NES with my cousin. I played the hell out of Super Mario Land 2 and DK '94 on the Game Boy, the first system that was wholly mine. I played a lot of my brother's Genesis and sharpened my teeth on Sonic the Hedgehog, Dynamite Headdy, X-Men, Aladdin, and more. My cousin gave my brother and I his NES in the middle of the decade, which led to several years of FuncoLand-fueled chaos and a collection that now is knocking on the door of 200 games.

The one singular game that put me on the path to being so crazy about video games that I dedicate so much of my time to Nintendo World Report is Super Mario RPG, though, by a large margin. My history with the game dates back to around 1997, when I was 9 years old and spending time with my friend Joe. Joe's family had a shore house (that was recently hit by Sandy, sadly, but managed to avoid destruction) and his Super Nintendo resided there. He owned Super Mario RPG, as well as a strategy guide for the game. The few times I stayed down there mostly consisted of two nerdy, glasses-wearing elementary schoolers playing through Super Mario RPG constantly.

When we'd go back home, we'd pore over the strategy guide, looking forward to the next time we could play. I can't really remember how many times we played the game.

Honestly, it probably wasn't as often as I remember; I may just think I played the game more than I did because of how vivid my memories of the strategy guide are.



Thinking back, I don't remember much about 1997 otherwise. I mean, it was a pretty fantastic year. The Packers did win the Super Bowl, after all. I do



remember so much about Super Mario RPG. Oddly, my memories of it pale in comparison to how vividly Joe remembers it. We talked about it recently, and he's at a point where playing the game isn't that rewarding. He can basically replay it in his head. We got to the point in the game where we would do low-level runs. I've never done that with another RPG.

That insanity and zeitgeist led me to getting obsessive over Mario Kart 64, GoldenEye, and Ocarina of Time. That Mario RPG-fueled passion got me mega-hyped for Paper Mario, Metroid Prime, and much more. If it weren't for that complete craziness over the beloved 1996 Super Nintendo game, I might not have stumbled upon Planet GameCube a few months before the GameCube came out. Maybe I don't keep the site as a permanent bookmark for seven years before I apply to a job for the hell of it. Maybe I don't apply that Mario RPG-esque craziness to writing and editing for Nintendo World Report.



I guess what I'm saying is, if you want to see a really weird butterfly effect, go back in time and make sure I don't play Super Mario RPG. I think this site and my life would be really different.

Putting Some Paper in Smash Bros. 4

By James Jones

This time it will take a real man to give real gamers what they want.

Despite it not being out yet—Nintendo has, in fact, said little about it—it does seem fair to start online message board rants about the next Super Smash Bros game. Self-proclaimed "competitive gamers" have already started doing so, lamenting that it will most likely be exceedingly casual, based entirely on the loss of the ability to move about like Peter Pan using fairy dust in the transition from Melee to Brawl.

With that in mind, I have a plan to save the franchise, and in fact Nintendo itself. Nintendo has neglected adding characters from Mario's "Paper" adventures, and the one they add should be a villain. No, not Bleck. Smash Bros needs an enemy at a different level, a character that best identifies with those who love the series as it should be.

Super Smash Bros. needs Francis.



Challenger Approaching!

Francis is a man... well, chameleon, they can identify with. I assume he only owns one shirt — a collectible he got with Club Nintendo points. He wears thick

glasses. He tends to hide when a hot babe shows up in his room. He understands the hi-technical nature of not just making a game, but of the combat system these fans demand be added to this fighting experience.

Francis would not stand for the removal of wavedashing, or L-canceling, and assuredly would not stand for the removal of reverse flip-stumping. He, like those who would identify with him, would instead modify the game code, much as was done by some for Brawl. At the very least he would ban the use of items, although he may save them for his collection. And lest you doubt his talents, remember he created the always-titillating MeowMaid, combining the two best assets of a woman: feline features and domestic servant attire.

I assume that says "Oh Francis you're so suave."



So, what would Francis do? Obviously he could turn invisible. His long tongue is a devastating weapon, and certainly he could swallow his enemies, much like Kirby. Perhaps his most powerful attacks will come from his laptop, which he stores in his very stylish fanny pack. His Nerrr2Babe.exe interface will woo any female characters via a very stylish dating sim. Yes, the game will have to pause briefly, but you can't rush romance. If you're a dude, though, you're probably just getting a Meowbomb to the head.

Don't worry about ol' Francis taking a beating, though. I know for a fact he likes it.

What would his stage be? Well, it can't be his room: he enjoys his privacy. The only people allowed in are he and the aforementioned babes. Certainly it is a condition we can all identify with.

Who am I kidding; it's going to be Final Destination.

This is why Nintendo needs to add Francis. He could be a hero to their most hardcore fans.

Author's Note: I was advised during editing that I should conclude with a concrete statement that this is satire, which of course it is.

I reluctantly conceded this point—unless you actually play Smash Bros. with items off. If so, you're totally Francis.

Of Nerds and Men: Gaming in the Rough

By Zachary Miller



Arceus is watching over me.

I don't remember how old I was when I got my first IV. I know I was scared out of my mind, though. I actually hid behind the exam table in the hospital and instructed my mother to tell the doctor I stayed home. Eventually the ruse was discovered, and I was hoisted aloft. I looked to the left as my mom told me about the movie "Arachnophobia" while my doctor inserted a tube in my right arm. This was, as he called it, a "tune-up." These things are occasionally necessary for CF patients like myself, and this would be the first of many. Because it was my first line, and my first time on whatever medication I was getting, I had to stay in the hospital for something like a week. Normally I would have hated every second, but back then they had a room in the pediatrics wing for kids that had toys, magazines (like Highlights and Ranger Rick), and a small TV hooked up to an NES. I played that system every day I was there.

If you're unfamiliar with Cystic Fibrosis (CF), I'm not surprised. It's not one of the "sexy" terminal illnesses like AIDS or cancer or heart disease. It affects a very small portion of the population. If you'd like the whole story, the Wikipedia page is informative. The short version is that it's caused by a genetic flaw that influences the body's ability to regulate mucus. It's thicker in CF patients, which leads to a ton of problems: chronic lung infection, infertility, pancreatic issues, and digestive problems. Because CF is caused by a huge number of CFTR gene mutations, different patients can have different severities of illness. I'm in pretty good shape considering my age and bacterial load, but plenty of CF patients don't survive to adulthood, and most eventually require lung transplants.

Back to that hospital stay, though: there weren't a lot of games to choose from on that NES, but *Milon's Secret Castle* was among them (somewhere, Jonny Metts' ears just perked up). I played the hell out of that game but never beat it—I question whether you actually can beat it!



They also had *Zelda II* and *Castlevania II*, games that are surprisingly similar and, perhaps not surprisingly, regarded poorly. I don't remember if I had my Game Boy during that period. I don't really remember playing it, but I don't remember a lot about my first few IVs. Many years later, during another hospitalization, the pediatrics wing had a mobile TV set hooked up to an SNES, but there were only two games: *Super Mario World* and *Star Fox*. I played both religiously, but *Star Fox* was my jam. I never beat it, but I remember being floored by the graphics and music (I still am).



When and if a CF patient reaches a certain age, the prevalence of *Staphylococcus aureus* in the lungs drops off as a new, more problematic bacteria starts moving in: *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. This is a chronic bug, and once a CF patient acquires *Pseudomonas*, they never get rid of it. I'm on two different antibiotics just to keep it suppressed, but even then it will sometimes flare up, which requires an IV drug to dropkick it back to equilibrium (it happened three times last year). CF patients need lung transplants because the body's immune system is constantly fighting off these bacterial squatters, and their ongoing feud produces scar tissue in the lungs themselves. Alveolar walls become stiff, mucus clogs up airways, and sometimes (like with me), an entire lobe can be taken over by bacterial redcoats.

I spend a lot of time here, at the kitchen table, with my medical compressor, which, this last week, decided it didn't like functioning. This is a problem.

Thankfully, since we know I tolerate the IV drugs extremely well, I'm usually sent home after getting my lines now. I deliver my medication myself—usually just by screwing a bag of meds onto the exposed cap of my line, unclipping a clip, and there you go. And when I'm home, I can play SNES all I want, and my library of games is much better.

My rate of hospitalization has actually decreased through the years, but I still go back all the time for blood work, radiology, sputum cultures, etc. And while I can't drag a TV screen with an SNES along, I do have my handhelds. Recall that I had three separate week-long stints at the hospital last year—once for my first really bad *Pseudomonas* flare-up in eight years, once for that nasty brain abscess, and again for my initial—and now ongoing—brawl with a brand-new bacteria: *Mycobacterium abscessus*. That first hospitalization, which lasted six or seven days, was made a little easier by the launch of the Nintendo 3DS, a system I had no real excitement for. But hey, I was in the hospital (“suffering”) and I guilted my wife into getting one for me. I had a gift card so she only had to pay half the cost. I told her not to get a game, since I was not thrilled with the launch selection. I loved that thing to death. If there were trophies for the AR Games, I would've gotten Platinitums on all of them.



Just a small sampling of all the fun drugs I'm on. The downside? Exactly NONE of them get me high.

Needless to say, the 3DS was there for my subsequent hospital stays. I take it with me whenever I go in to get tests in case there's a wait. I can get a few rooms cleared in VVVVVV, at least. I'm not limited to handhelds at home, although I do have a fondness for them. I spend a good amount of time doing breathing treatments. I have a whole setup at the kitchen table for them, and I entertain myself during this (sometimes 45-minute) routine with a host of devices. In the past, it would've been my GBA or DS, DSi or PSP, and now 3DS or Vita (or iPod Touch). If I'm in the mood for a meatier experience, I just unplug my compressor, drag the whole shebang to the end table next to the couch, and play a console game. That takes a little more effort, though—juggling the nebulizer and a two-handed controller and my tendency to sink into the couch produces some awkward positions. I also tend to breath shallowly while gaming (no idea why), and the whole goal of these treatments is to inhale the aerosolized meds deep into one's lungs.

“Long and deep!” my wife will scold, meaning my breathing.

THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID, AMIRIGHT?

Actually, that's one of things I'm looking forward most to on the Wii U: my wife can do whatever she wants, even watch *The Real Housewives of Who Gives a Shit*, while I do my meds in the kitchen and play a console



game on the GamePad. Well, assuming the range isn't too limited. There's not a wall between the kitchen and the living room, but there's probably 30 feet between myself and the TV, and there's a couch between us. It'd be great if the GamePad still functions at this range with a couch in the way. I'd beat *New Super Mario Bros. U* in no time at all!

This is actually my third PICC combating the *Mycobacteria*. They eventually break or clot, so we have to pull one and put another one right in. And no, it doesn't hurt—but sometimes it itches like the devil.

This is the main reason I haven't replayed my Wii games since my launch Wii was repaired: I just don't have a lot of time to dedicate to sitting in front of the TV. I got *Uncharted* 3 months ago but I've barely touched it. I still haven't moved past the first dungeon in *Skyward Sword*—and I got that game for Christmas last year! However, I have beaten all my 3DS and Vita games (except *Kid Icarus: Uprising*) and most of my eShop and Virtual Console games (except the ones that suck). Due to my situation, handheld gaming has become my preferred method. My wife laments that I could probably publish that book I keep threatening to write and illustrate if I spent even half as much time writing/drawing as playing games while I'm doing meds. She's not wrong, but playing games makes the routine go by quicker and I feel like I've actually accomplished something.*





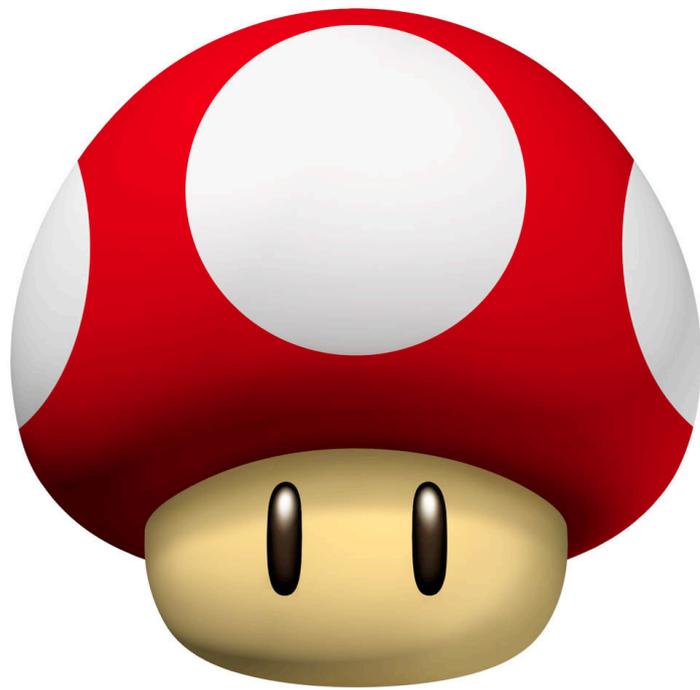
I never showed this picture last year, did I? That's me in the ICU when I got the brain abscess. That tube in my skull is sucking out my (infected) spinal fluid while a PICC line pumps my bloodstream full of Penicillin. If "brain abscess" was a game, it would get a pretty bad review.

Right now, I'm on more medications than I've ever been on in my life. I'm still fighting that *M. abscessus* infection with a PICCline IV and there's no sign of it clearing up any time soon. I'm still on my *Pseudomonas*-suppressing meds, and then there's all my "usual" meds. I go into the hospital every week to get my line's dressing changed and I'm usually getting some blood work or a sputum culture. Bottom line? I'm playing a lot of games. Through thick and thin, Nintendo has been there to keep me from going insane. I can't be the only CF patient—or terminal patient in general—to turn to gaming in times of health crises, so I'm sure I speak for all of us when I say thanks, Nintendo, for everything you've done to keep me entertained and motivated through my own personal "bad times."

*You could convincingly argue that getting a Heart Piece or completing a quest or beating a game doesn't actually accomplish anything, and I would agree without hesitation. We convince ourselves that these virtual endeavors have meaning.



Get Super



**Buy
Shrooms!**



A Boy and His Hugs

By Nate Andrews



I think there's something in my eye...

The connection's there in the wording: *A Boy and His Blob*. Not some blob, or a passing blob, or that blob from down the street. His blob.

Even if the title of David Crane's imaginative 1989 NES game is more a clever turn of phrase than a direct description of friendship between a small, backpack-wearing child and a little white something from outer space, the tone of WayForward's 2009 version perfectly encapsulates the latter. While the original game portrayed the blob as an odd, shapeshifting tool, the Wii version goes out of its way to create just what the title suggests: a tender relationship between a young, adventurous child and an innocent, squeezable alien.

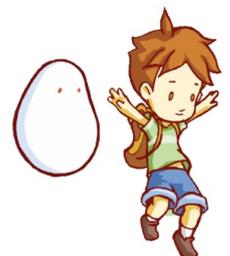
"Then there's the hug—the heart-melting and composure-breaking capstone of the relationship."

Much of this concept comes through in the game's visual representation of the two characters. In the soft, hand-drawn aesthetic of the game, the boy is visibly young—dressed in a t-shirt, shorts, and a backpack, he's clearly old enough to have the urge to explore on his own, but inexperienced enough to be helpless. When he finds the blob, though—a soft, ghost-like globule of a thing—he is

the one to coax it over after they frighten each other away, a moment that establishes the blob as sort of an amorphous, age-equal version of the human character. In some ways, the creature is a similarly helpless, codependent partner to the boy—who is really just a boy.

From there onward, it's evident the blob is a companion in travel, not just a functional piece of luggage. The boy trots along, arms swinging with the anticipation of adventure and discovery, while the blob loyally bounces along close behind. Bound by a wordless connection, both are content and immediately fulfilled by the company of the other. The boy's vocal tone when addressing the blob—another humanizing act—is the kind of soft, faux-authoritative command a child might shout to a friend when he wants to share or be joined in something exciting. *Hey, come look at this—me and you. Ready? This way!*

Then there's the hug—the heart-melting and composure-breaking capstone of the relationship. There are tiers of hugs, and it's easy to discern those performed out of formality from the genuine article. In *A Boy and His Blob*, we're treated to the latter. When prompted, the boy bends down, and the blob stretches up. They meet and embrace in a multi-stage squeeze, the kind where, even after establishing contact, you keep going in deeper, wrapping yourself around the other person (or blob) to punctuate the emotion. The mid-nuzzle sound the boy makes is similar to the muffled murmur of a child burying his face in a favorite stuffed animal. Or a really good friend.



Grasshopper Manufacture's Heroine Addiction

By Tyler Ohlew

A look at how Liberation Maiden's Shoko Ozora compares to Grasshopper's previous female heroes.

It is poor form to take a female protagonist for granted, but they are often neglected in favour of the proverbial bald space marine. Most commonly, a lack of male interest in such a character leads to this dearth.

So it makes great sense that a developer with a self-proclaimed punk attitude would challenge that notion. Grasshopper Manufacture has never shied away from heroines, and Liberation Maiden's Shoko Ozora is their latest.



As the daughter of Japan's serving Prime Minister, Shoko's duty is to protect her country's energy sources after her father's assassination. Within her Liberator, a mech suit by the name of Kamui, Shoko fights an invading foreign hoard in this wacky, anime-fused eShop shooter.

But where does Shoko fall in Grasshopper's line of heroines?

The following contains story spoilers for Killer7 and No More Heroes 1 and 2

KAEDE Smith - Killer7 (2005)



KAEDE is a hired gun. As an assassin, her morals do not stand in the way of profit. She's bold, and her

speech is best described as blue. In life, she was excellent at her job, but she ended her career with an act of cowardice. However, as a persona of Garcian Smith, she fought off hordes of Heaven Smile differently from her male counterparts. Always the aggressors, the male members of the Killer7 rush in, guns blazing. KAEDE shot from afar, slow, but always accurate in her attacks. It isn't fair to classify this as a "woman's touch," but it certainly displays a great amount of skill and intelligence.

The differences between Shoko and KAEDE are substantial. As an assassin, KAEDE kills for the good of herself. Shoko's motivations are worlds apart; she puts an entire country ahead of her own wants and needs. In one of her flashbacks, we see KAEDE run and hide from an enemy. She had an opportunity to warn the other members of the Killer7, but placed more importance on her life than those of others. Shoko boards her Liberator immediately to defend the innocents of Japan, a far cry from KAEDE's selfishness.

Shinobu (Scarlet Jacobs) - No More Heroes (2008) No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle (2010)



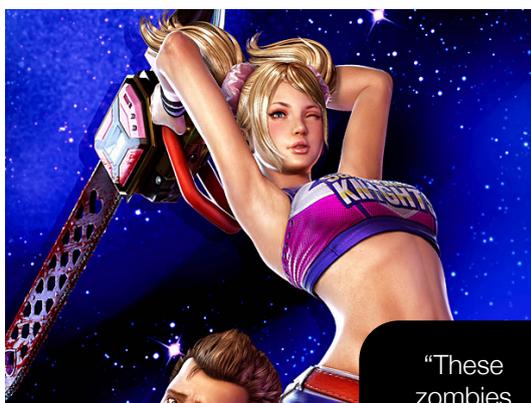
"When the gatekeeper to hell asks who sent you, tell him it was Shinobu Jacobs"

Shoko's attributes as a heroine come closest to Shinobu's. While initially introduced as a brash and quick-tempered teenager in No More heroes, her motives quickly become clear. Much like Shoko, she too lost her father to a bloodthirsty enemy. Both take a call to arms to avenge what they love, and both act on it. Shinobu is honourable, saving Travis Touchdown's life in No More Heroes due to his own act of kindness earlier in the game.

In No More Heroes 2, her skills are placed in the player's hands, and it's here we see just how capable Shinobu is. Her goal is to ensure Travis can avenge the loss of his friend, and she doesn't take it lightly. She puts her life on the line to protect the ones she loves.

As great as it is for Grasshopper Manufacture to embrace female protagonists, they do still fall victim to sexualizing them through clothing. KAEDE's miniskirt stands stark against her cold demeanour (and apparent distaste for men, judging by her quote: "I changed my makeup. Did you notice? Ugh, men. They never notice these kinds of things"), and Shinobu's schoolgirl outfit does little to imply she's more than a pretty face. Shoko's slim-fitting unitard closest resembles Shinobu's attire, in that while they hardly seem an outfit suited for combat, they're not overly revealing. Not ideal, but at least their character speaks far better of them.

Juliet Starling - Lollipop Chainsaw (2012)



"These zombies suck dick at driving"

By far, Juliet Starling is Grasshopper's most outwardly sexual female protagonist. She wears her sexuality on her sleeve (even when she doesn't wear them), and has no problem playing coy if the player attempts to take some pantsu shots. But don't let her bubbly demeanour and flirtatious attitude fool you into thinking she's dumb. While she isn't the

leader of New Japan like Shoko, she can certainly take care of herself. Hailing from a long line of zombie hunters, Juliet knows her way around a chainsaw. Her favourite colour may be pink, but she isn't afraid to bathe in red.

While her adventure may be on a smaller scale, Juliet's reclaiming of San Romero High School is just as dangerous as Shoko's defence of Japan; both require an incredible amount of self-sacrifice.

"By far, Juliet Starling is Grasshopper's most outwardly sexual female protagonist."

Grasshopper Manufacture's array of heroines is well staffed, and Shoko Ozora is another interesting addition. Their personalities are all quite varied, but none of them play the role of the helpless victim. Much like her compatriots, Shoko brings the fight to her enemies. You won't find her in another castle; she'll be far too busy defending it.

Special Thanks to Danny Bivens for impressions of Shoko Ozora's characterization.



Getting to Know Your New Super Mario Bros. 2 Directors

By Neal Ronaghan

Who are these young dudes making our new Mario game?



It's weird to think that when Yusuke Amano, the director of New Super Mario Bros. 2, was 4 years old, Super Mario Bros. came out in Japan. It's also weird to think that less than 10 years ago, he was making the Super Skills movies for Super Mario Advance 4. It's even weirder to think that Shigeru Miyamoto, Nintendo's renowned creator, is almost 30 years older than him.

Amano grew up, like most kids born in the '80s, adoring Nintendo. He loved them so much that he only applied to one company when he graduated college. Fortunately, he landed a job at Nintendo, as part of their debug team. His first project was the aforementioned Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3. He joined late in production, though, and only worked on testing the game.

However, he did get to experience a form of downloadable content, as he worked on developing content for the e-Reader. He worked on Super Skills movies alongside Shigeyuki Asuke, who would later go on to develop New Super Mario Bros. Wii.

Following his Mario debut, Amano was part of the debug team on Brain Age and Animal Crossing: Wild World. He moved into a planning role on Big

Brain Academy, and worked with Asuke again on New Super Mario Bros. Wii, where he was in his lead planning role.

While working on New Super Mario Bros. Wii, Amano joked to Star Fox developer Takaya Imamura about making a new entry in the series. After NSMBW wrapped, Amano was put on Star Fox 64 3D, working as the coordinator between Q-Games and Nintendo.



New Super Mario Bros. 2's Art Director, Masaaki Ishikawa, was spun up around the same time. Ishikawa did design work on Nintendogs, New Super Mario Bros., Mario Kart DS, Wii Sports, and New Super Mario Bros. Wii. Following his work on NSMBW, Ishikawa worked on Mario Kart 7, coordinating character and kart designs. He also worked closely with Retro Studios on the animation of the characters.

Around the end of that project, Ishikawa noted that whoever was going to have follow up to Super Mario 3D Land, which came out weeks before Mario Kart 7, is going to have a hard time. Shortly after development stopped on Mario Kart 7, he was asked to lead the art direction on New Super Mario Bros. 2.





Amano and Ishikawa aren't alone on the project, though. While the team working on New Super Mario Bros. 2 is relatively new to the world of side-scrolling Mario, they all have experience with the 3DS, whether they were at EAD Tokyo working on 3D Land or at EAD working on Mario Kart 7.

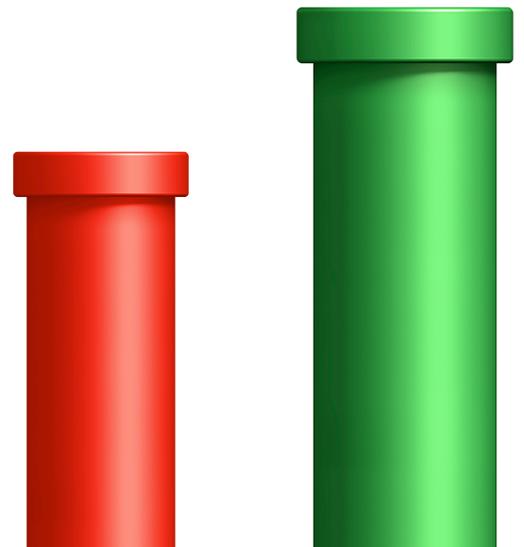
Most of the staff were also products of Takashi Tezuka's Mario Cram School. The idea behind the school was for developers from EAD and Software Planning & Development to learn how to design side-scrolling Mario levels. Tezuka's philosophy, according to Amano, is that course design is the crux of 2D Mario games, so he led these classes to spread that knowledge throughout the company.

Amano didn't actually take part in first iteration of Mario Cram School, though, as he was busy working on Star Fox 64 3D at the time. However, because of his work on New Super Mario Bros. Wii as a planner, Tezuka didn't hesitate to reach out to him to direct New Super Mario Bros. 2.

Under the tutelage of Tezuka and legendary Nintendo programmer Toshihiko Nakago, Amano and company began work on New Super Mario Bros. 2, though there was a different approach this time around. The team made the levels first before working in the mechanics. So, all the levels in the game were made, and then the new power-ups and

mechanics were added in, shifting the levels around to make everything copacetic.

The team behind New Super Mario Bros. 2 might not have a lot of 2D Mario experience, since the 2D Mario team was working on New Super Mario Bros. U. Amano and Ishikawa are the elder statesmen on the team, with pasts that barely date back to the Game Boy Advance era. Fortunately, Tezuka and Nakago worked closely with the team to make sure it went smoothly, from its Mario Cram School origins to development.



Staff Profiles



Danny Bivens

Nickname: Formerly Captain eShop

Age: 28

Location: Saitama Prefecture, Japan (originally from Illinois, USA)

Blood Type: O negative

Favorite Nintendo System: GameCube

Favorite Nintendo Song: Kakariko Village (A Link to the Past)

Nintendo ID: the_dan_x

Game of the month

With the Wii U launch in Japan earlier this month, I have been playing a lot of Nintendo's first HD console. The game that has probably grabbed me the most isn't really even a game per se. It's the included free application Wii Karaoke U. I've had a lot of fun competing online for high scores and annoying my neighbors with late night singing sessions. Sure, you have to pay to use the service, but the prices are significantly lower than they are at normal karaoke places.

Best Gaming Christmas Present

Christmas 1998 stands out as one of the best gaming years of my life. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time had just released a month before, and I had been dreaming about playing it since I read about it shortly after Nintendo announced the game. Not only did I get Ocarina of Time that Christmas, I also got Star Wars: Rogue Squadron, WCW/NWO Revenge, and Pokémon Red! With a small pile of great titles to play, it turned out to be one of the best winter vacations I ever had!



Nicholas Bray

Nickname: Nick or Nicky

Age: 25

Location: Newcastle Australia

Blood Type: Type N for Nintendo

Favorite Nintendo System: Nintendo 64

Favorite Nintendo Song: Dragon Roost Island Theme

Nintendo ID: Traveller7

Game of the Month

With the release of the Wii U, this past month has mainly been filled with solo Sonic and

All-Star Racing Transformed and some great fun with Nintendo Land in multiplayer. If I had to pick, I would probably say Nintendo Land edges out Sonic by a tiny bit to become my fave this month.

Best Gaming Christmas Present

My best gaming Christmas present would have to be Zelda: Majora's Mask. I don't have many notable gaming gift stories from around the Christmas season, so this one stands out as being a really good one. Of course, being so hyped for the sequel to one of my favourite games of all time certainly helped.



Daniel Mousseau

Nickname: N/A

Age: 23

Location: Ontario, Canada

Blood Type: Can't remember off the top of my head.

Favourite Nintendo System: SNES

Favourite Nintendo Song: Golden Sun Battle Theme

Nintendo Network ID: UberDwarf

Game of the Month

Even after being out for over a month now, I am still playing ZombiU. The challenge of Survival mode, and the scare factor (Thanks to a little game called Amnesia, I'm scared of everything), I still spend hours scavenging, and looking for supplies to survive the outbreak. For me, this is the best horror survival yet.

Best Gaming Christmas Present

N/A



ZombiU

By Andy Goergen

REVIEW

London Bridge is burning down.

ZombiU is terrifying. Let's get that out of the way early. This is a game that hammers home how fleeting life is, over and over again. It's a game that makes you swear out loud with frustration, and a game that has your heart racing with every hit of a cricket bat to a zombie's rotting skull. It takes you up high, and then throws you off a building. As London burns to the ground around you, you inhabit a series of survivors from the zombie infection. How many survivors you play as all depends on you.

As you take on the role of each survivor, you begin with the cricket bat and a pistol containing six bullets. This is true no matter how far along in the game you are. How well prepared you are to handle this sort of consequence is entirely up to you, as your safehouse holds a storage box in which you can stash weapons and ammo. Every time you die, all the gear you held remains attached to the now-zombified body of your previous character. You have one chance to kill that zombie and reclaim your goods; if you die in that effort, those supplies are forever lost. You can replenish these items, as they regenerate in areas you have previously found over time, but to say that losing supplies is a setback is a major understatement.

Melee combat is slow and difficult, requiring precise timing and spacing. If you miss a shot, you leave yourself vulnerable to attack for several moments, which is all a zombie needs to kill you. Don't fret, though: you will die a lot no matter what you do. This is the nature of the game. As you play longer, however, it's easier to adjust to the challenges of swinging the cricket bat, becoming more proficient at beheading undead foes. Some

zombies take quite a few hits to kill, so if you have to deal with a horde, you are better off advancing and retreating to maximize your chances of success.



The game requires you to use the screen on the GamePad for all non-combat tasks, such as inventory

management or barricading a door. While in many games having to take your eyes off the screen may seem like bad design, in ZombiU, it's effective in adding to the sense of panic and vulnerability. When you need to manage your inventory, you have to do so quickly and without error, or you leave yourself helpless against attacks. The inventory screen is a bit clunky, but perfectly usable without resorting to the stylus. ZombiU also uses the GamePad as a scanner. Scanning requires that you hold the L button on the GamePad, and use either the right stick or the gyro controls to move around and detect items in the distance. Unlike in games like *Metroid Prime*, where the story is largely revealed through scanned items, the scanner in ZombiU is mainly used to find ammo and health items. It can help identify from a distance which zombies are worth looting for supplies, and which are empty-handed. It's occasionally used to progress the story as well, but if you find it slowing the pace too much, you can scan only as often as you feel is necessary most of the time.



The story is a bit uneventful, unfolding the tale of a prophecy that foretold the zombie apocalypse. A faceless NPC called “The Prepper,” whose sole job is preparing survivors to get by in this hellish world, guides you through the game. It’s a bit jarring when he talks to you as if you’re the same character the entire way through when clearly you’re going through multiple characters as you die, and the same goes applies to several other NPCs you meet in the game. The story feels as if it came before idea of multiple player characters was developed, and never tweaked to make the two agree. Regardless, the voice acting is well done, and lends to the realism of the bleak world.

Aside from the cricket bat, your character can use firearms, but they are easy to lose if you die, and ammo is hard to come by. You always start out with a pistol and one clip of bullets, but the pistol doesn’t necessarily seem like a better way to kill zombies once you are proficient with the cricket bat. Luckily, you can upgrade all the weapons, and those enhancements survive even when your player character does not. It’s one of the few things you can bring across from character to character, and it’s very helpful.

The longer you survive and kill zombies as an individual character, the higher the score attached to that character. This ends up being a fun way to have a high score battle with yourself as you play, and alternatively, a fun way to know how well you were doing after you die. Folks from Miiverse show up in the game as zombies as well, carrying whatever loot they had on them when they died, which is another way to compare character scores and get extra supplies. It’s a fun reminder that Nintendo has built a very subtle, but effective, social media platform running underneath the games on Wii U.

The world of ZombiU looks fantastic, for the most part. Some textures blur when you get too close to a sign or a wall, but many areas have incredible detail and are littered with embellishments that make this post-apocalyptic version of London believable. One scene in particular subjects you to a thunderstorm, and the weather effects add to the game immensely. The lighting tricks the game employs are very successful, and despite my early misgivings about blurry textures, the more I played of the game, the more impressed I was by how it looked. The world of ZombiU falls

apart around you, and the mood is set early and often.

The game contains a few simple local multiplayer modes wherein one player uses the GamePad to deploy zombies, and another player uses the Wii U Pro Controller or Wii Remote and Nunchuk to play as a survivor. One mode has you capturing flags, and another simply asks the survivor to hold out as long as possible in a score attack-like mode that includes leaderboards. Neither mode seemed all that interesting when compared to the single-player campaign, but their inclusion is a nice touch. Another way in which you can compete for high scores is the Survival mode. This mode is identical to the main campaign mode, except once you die, that’s it. There are no continues. You are scored based on how long you last and how many zombies you kill, much in the same way that you are scored in the regular campaign on a per-survivor basis.

ZombiU seeks to scare the hell out of the player by making their very survival doubtful, and wildly succeeds. This game is stressful, terrifying, bleak, and, in all of that, wonderful. It is one of the best launch titles I’ve ever played, and quite simply, a return to form in a genre that has taken a distinct turn toward run-and-gun. These kinds of games are not for everyone, and some people may not like ZombiU due to its high level of difficulty or clunky combat. However, if you appreciate the qualities of the older Resident Evil games, the challenge of a game like Dark Souls, and the exploration of a Metroid-style world, this game is absolutely for you. Enter the survival horror.



Score

9

Pros

- + Fantastically realized world
- + Great voice acting
- + High level of challenge
- + Scary as hell

Cons

- Multiplayer options are limited
- Some blurry textures



Tales of the Abyss

By James Dawson

REVIEW

There's nothing abysmal about this Tale.

Despite the recent influx of great games for the 3DS and the bevy of new titles to come, the handheld is still behind when it comes to its predecessor's greatest genre: RPGs. Coming at such a time, the 3DS port of the popular PlayStation 2 RPG, *Tales of the Abyss*, fills the gap nicely. With an average of over 50 hours per playthrough, excluding the game's numerous extras, *Abyss* should please even the most enthusiastic players.

In *Tales of the Abyss*, you play as Luke fon Fabre, the son Duke Fabre of the Kingdom of Kimlasca-Lanvaldear. Seven years prior to the story, a rival country known as Malkuth supposedly kidnapped Luke, causing him to lose all his childhood memories. In light of this incident, his uncle, the King of Kimlasca, placed him under house arrest in his father's manor.

With the backstory aside, it doesn't take long for *Tales of the Abyss* to open up significantly from the confines of the Duke's manor. Within the first hour, Luke is transported far from the manor to Tataroo Valley, an area within Malkuth territory, after a brief encounter with his master's would-be assassin, Tear Grants, creates a hyperresonance. Challenged with returning to Kimlasca, Luke and Tear set out on a journey that hurls them into a world of political and religious intrigue.

Throughout the journey, they encounter several characters that join them on their quest, including the sadistic Jade Curtiss, a colonel in the Malkuth military,

and Guy Cecil, Luke's gynophobic servant. In fact, while the setting itself is interesting, the characters' relationships and pasts are the true driving forces of the story. This does not end with the allies; even the enemies have interesting pasts that connect them to the events and characters around them. Likewise, most of the story is told in well-written, often humorous fully voiced dialog between the characters. Additionally, 8-4's localization of the game is superb; each character's voice and dialog matches them perfectly.



Tales of the Abyss plays similarly to other JRPGs, with a few standout exceptions. Like most other games in the genre, *Abyss* has a large overworld dotted with several villages, cities, and dungeons. Early on in the game, your only option is to cross the overworld on foot; however, later on a much faster form of travel becomes available. While traveling across the overworld, the frame rate suffers slight drops in forested areas; nevertheless, this is a minor annoyance and does little to distract from the game. The overworld is also home to several enemies; however, unlike many JRPGs, you can actually see them, allowing you the option of avoiding conflict if you please.

Moreover, the villages and cities in Tales of the Abyss, while small compared to some games, are full of people to talk to and item vendors from which to purchase healing items, food, weapons, armor, and more. Talking to people in towns and cities also triggers many of the game's side quests. The other areas dotting the map, dungeons, are filled with item chests, monsters, and more. You usually do not visit these areas until the story prompts you to. Once completed, however, most can be revisited. Some even include extra bosses and items. Of course, each dungeon also holds puzzles that must be completed to progress, none of which are overly complicated but still feel well designed and fun. Each dungeon ends with a unique boss that can be a challenge to defeat, but usually doesn't require grinding.



Speaking of bosses and enemies, perhaps the most distinctive aspect separating the Tales series from other JRPGs is the battle system. Tales of the Abyss uses a variation of the series' real-time battle system, known as the Flex Range Linear Motion Battle System (FR-LMBS). The FR-LMBS allows you to directly control your character in battle along a linear field, as well as move freely with the addition of a free run skill that you get early on in the game. The battles play out similarly to a fighting game or brawler. Each playable character has his or her own unique skills, or artes, that they can use in battle. Characters that focus on physical attacks, such as Luke and Guy, are able to chain combos using their normal attacks and artes, while other characters are better skilled in long-range attacks, such as magic and archery. While you can directly control one character, the other characters can be directed using the menu, or touch screen. This comes in handy when you want Tear to heal a character, or Jade to unleash a massive fonic arte to devastate an enemy. You can also set a strategy for each character instructing their AI to act in a certain manner. This is unbelievably useful, especially when fighting more difficult bosses.



As the game progresses, new features are added to the battle system, the most important of which is the Field of Fonons (FOF). The FOF transforms your artes into more powerful elemental forms. In order to activate the FOF, you must have a character or enemy use an elemental attack of his or her own. This creates a circle that transforms certain artes while standing in it. There are six different elements all together, each of which have the ability to transform artes into more powerful versions. Additionally, each character has special techniques called mystic artes that does massive damage when triggered, as well additional skills that give passive and active bonus to your characters. When used correctly, these additions can make a battle much less difficult, but how you utilize them is up to you.

My only real disappointment with the port is the fact that so little was added from the original PS2 release. Other than the addition of stereoscopic 3D, touch screen artes selection, and shorter loading times, the 3DS port is identical to the original North American release. And while both the touch screen artes selection and the shorter loading times are improvements on the original, the stereoscopic 3D adds nothing to the experience. Often times I even forgot that it was turned on. It's a pity too, as many other games seem to look smoother when the 3D is turned on, but Tales of the Abyss still has the slightly jagged graphics of the original, even with the slider turned all the way up.

Tales of the Abyss holds up surprisingly well on the 3DS, despite being a relatively conservative port of the original. And with the 3DS's small selection of RPGs, it's a must have, and a great entry point in the Tales series.



Score

9

Pros

- + Captivating story
- + Great battle system
- + Lengthy and epic adventure
- + Memorable characters

Cons

- Little added from the original
- Poorly done stereoscopic 3D
- Slight drop in frame rate in certain areas



The Last Story

By James Dawson

REVIEW

A flawed, but respectable addition to the Wii's library.

Directed by Hironobu Sakaguchi, the father of the Final Fantasy series, and featuring music composed by the equally revered Nobuo Uematsu, it's not surprising that *The Last Story*'s localization garnered so much attention from the gaming media. However, too much attention is never a good thing, especially when a game fails to live it up to its expectations. I don't think *The Last Story* is a bad game, but it suffers from a number of technical flaws that diminish what is otherwise a notable addition to the Wii library.

The Last Story follows Zael and his mercenary companions as they struggle to find work on Lazulis Island. Early on in the game, Zael and fellow mercenary

Syrenne find themselves trapped by a group of seemingly immortal skeletons. As the situation grows hopeless, a mysterious voice grants Zael the Triforce-esque Outsider's power. Initially, Zael's newfound power doesn't receive much attention from the others, but as the game progresses, the ability serves as a catalyst for an interesting story of deceit, political intrigue, and environmental catastrophe. It also helps that the main characters are likeable—each has an interesting past and personality.



Yet, it's not the game's story, characters, or setting I have issues with. Overall, they actually serve as the greatest reason to buy *The Last Story*. The combat, camera, and missed opportunities, on the other hand, provide enough frustration early on that I hated the game by the two-hour mark. My first problem came with the brevity of enemy encounters early on, as most fights ended before I could personally dispatch a single enemy. This later changed as enemies became too strong for my allies to kill within the first minute, but for a game with such an involved real-time combat system, it's a bit counterintuitive to limit its use within the first few hours. Additionally, the game's most unique aspect, the Gears of War-inspired cover mechanic, is criminally underused. Taking cover and sniping an enemy from afar with your crossbow feels great, and the amount of strategy it adds to combat is worthwhile. However, it's mostly a missed opportunity: with the exception of several great sets, many battles devolve into chaotic messes that involve little strategy or stealth—especially with the help of the game's finicky camera

that often gets stuck on obstacles in the environment. It's a pity too, as the battles that rely on stealth and strategy are perhaps the most fun I've had with a JRPG's battle system. Boss battles and online play tend to be much better in this regard, though. In fact, I had a blast playing the game's online versus mode.



That said, the combat system is one of the more distinctive I've encountered in a JRPG, and as I passed the two-hour mark my opinion of the game began to greatly improve. The real-time combat is reminiscent of third-person action games, to the point that I'd be willing to call *The Last Story* an action game with RPG elements, rather than a fully fledged RPG. During battles, you have direct control over Zael, using either the Wii Remote and Nunchuck or the Classic controller. By default, attacks are set to occur automatically, similar to *Xenoblade*, but you do have the option to map them to the A button. Later in the game you also gain the ability to order your allies to use certain powers or spells. And like *Tales of the Abyss*' Field of Fonons system, each spell leaves an elemental circle that provides additional effects to attacks.

With the game's mechanics aside, *The Last Story* does have quite a bit going for it, not the least of which is

its presentation. While the art style and graphics aren't exactly the most outstanding, the attention to detail is impressive. Every weapon you equip looks different, as does your armor. When you upgrade your weapons via *The Last Story*'s Monster Hunter-esque upgrade system, the weapons gain particle effects or auras around them. The town that acts for the game's hub world is richly detailed, and includes plenty of small secrets to find. Likewise, the music is superb and sets the game's tone perfectly. It's exactly what you would expect from Nobuo Uematsu.

While my review may seem overly positive, the game's small number of flaws are incredibly frustrating at times. That said, if you feel you can look past a few missed opportunities and a flawed but fun combat system, I can't see why you wouldn't enjoy *The Last Story*. Just don't expect it to be as genre defining as previous Sakaguchi titles.



Score

8

Pros

- + Careful attention to detail
- + Fun and distinctive battle system
- + Fun online multiplayer
- + Interesting story and characters

Cons

- Combat can become too chaotic
- Often-finicky camera
- Too many missed opportunities



Paper Mario: Sticker Star

By Scott Thompson

REVIEW

This game really [insert sticker pun here]!

Despite Nintendo's unwillingness to deviate from the tried-and-true methods of Mario's traditional 2D adventures, they have had no issue experimenting with and reinventing the plumber's paper persona. After the duo of Paper Mario and PM: The Thousand-Year Door, the Wii's Super Paper Mario attempted to apply the paper motif to Mario's classic 2D roots, forsaking much of the RPG system that had defined those previous games. The result was an enjoyable if somewhat forgettable foray that didn't show much benefit from ditching the RPG tropes. Paper Mario: Sticker Star arrives some five years later, with the series still in flux, with a new spin on the formula that brings it closer to the achievements of the first two games while being completely unlike either. Let me explain.

Turn-based battles return to Paper Mario, but with your participation reimagined. Rather than equipping items and learning new skills along the journey, Mario uses a handy sticker collection to defend himself. Stickers, which you can pluck off scenery, purchase in shops, find in "?" boxes, and earn in battle, provide an attack or ability for Mario in battle, and then disappear after a single use. They also come in different styles, from worn-out to flashy, denoting their rareness and power. A worn-out Jump sticker causes a minute amount of damage, while a flashy sticker, which appears to shine and reflect light, causes large amounts of damage.

This reliance on stickers, themselves a finite resource, creates some interesting strategy for players. While traditional RPGs may support simply spamming the

most powerful attacks to cut through weak foes, Sticker Star encourages careful management of Mario's stickers. While using a shiny POW block to dispatch a group of Goombas in one move may prove tempting, that sticker is often better utilized during an encounter with a more powerful foe. Because of this consideration, it is common to use a stockpile of simple Jump and Hammer stickers, which are plentiful and available from the start of the adventure, to deal with common enemies. So, while rarer stickers may be lifesavers in tougher battles, they are no more important than the most common of stickers.

While turn-based battles return, Mario doesn't level up or gain any experience points as he progresses. In fact, his only improvements come from finding HP-Up Hearts throughout the world, which increase his total health by five points. Unfortunately, while these health boosts are an absolute necessity in order to survive later battles, you can only find them through exploration. Unlike Zelda games, which grant Link more health after defeating bosses as well as through discovering secrets or completing side quests, Mario becomes harder only when he finds these power-ups.



However, finding those power-ups usually isn't a problem, as the game has you scouring each and every level for "things" in order to progress. From the start, Sticker Star gives the impression of a straightforward affair, featuring a world map not unlike Super Mario Bros. 3. However, the game periodically comes to a screeching halt when it requires a specific item to progress further in a level. These "things" are the real-world items

that show up in Sticker Star, like scissors, fans, vacuums, radiators, and more. Lots more, actually. These "things," essential in

solving certain puzzles, aren't usually found in your current level, though, leaving you to search every nook and cranny of each available area until you stumble upon the key item. Or, you know, you could just use a walkthrough.

Maybe the excellent pacing of Xenoblade Chronicles, which never left the player confused or wondering where to go next, has spoiled me, but this reliance on "things" is a real pain. I groaned every time I realized I needed a special item to progress, and eventually started resorting to Google. I'm not opposed to puzzle solving, but the fact that these items aren't, at the very least, in the present level is incredibly discouraging. What's worse, the "things" are also necessary to beat bosses. An early boss encounter pits Mario against a giant Pokey (you know, the cactus-looking thing from Super Mario World). The super Pokey has 300 HP and is unstoppable with standard stickers alone. However, if you bring the baseball bat (found two or three levels



before this encounter), you can use it to knock out segments of his body, dropping his HP to under 100.

I'd be fine with this if, like a Mega Man game, the "things" merely gave you an advantage, and you could still defeat bosses

through conventional means, but that just isn't the case. On top of that, Mario's sticker scrap book can only hold so much at once, so you can't even have all of these "things" with you, just in case. So, unless you read a walkthrough ahead of time, the game expects you to start battling a boss, die, and then return with the required "thing." It's mindboggling, really.

It's a shame, too, because playing the game is so much fun. Easily the most thematically dedicated entry in the series, the game constructs its paper worlds and characters with believability, bending and folding them accordingly. Mario's progress also impacts the environments in interesting ways: a forest world is covered in poison, but once Mario beats the boss, he can return to each level in that world to freely explore and collect items, unencumbered by the poisonous goo. Levels are also surprisingly lengthy and feature some unique settings, such as the aforementioned poisoned forest.

I want to love Sticker Star. The game looks great, the localization is top-notch, and, when things are moving along, it all feels so right. The sticker economy is well realized and forces you to manage your sticker collection well. But the game's obsession with "things" brings it to a screeching halt all too often. This hurdle is easily sidestepped by bookmarking your preferred walkthrough, but it's a shame the game couldn't simply be less obtuse in its puzzle structure. So, instead of loving Sticker Star, I'm left to simply like it.



Score

7.5

Pros

- + Cuteness overload
- + Great sticker system
- + Localization is well done and often funny
- + Worlds are unique and impacted by Mario's progress

Cons

- Puzzle solving is obtuse and complicated
- Reliance on "things" stops all momentum



Liberation Maiden

By Tyler Ohlew

REVIEW

The more aggressive side of diplomacy.

During the Dominion's reign over Japan (New Japan's former moniker), a secret policy was put into effect. Without the public's knowledge, Brain-Mail (heretofore known as B-Mail) messages were kept from reaching their destinations, and the senders received AI-composed messages in return. The following is one such Brain-Mail chain, from a Japanese resident named Hideki Inaba. It was written during what became known as Liberation Day.



B-Mail Message: Dominionary 23, 2112 – Another crappy day

I got to admit, I'm not a fan of this calendar system the Dominion has put in place. Ever since they started muscling into our country, they've been making awful changes to the once-beautiful Osaka. A friend of mine in Tokyo has it way worse, though. The Dominion did an environmental study on his property, and found it was right on top of an energy vein. They dozed his entire neighbourhood and built a Conduit Spike right

on top! Now he's homeless like the rest of us, surrounded by tanks and submarines.

The Dominion doesn't give two farts about its own people—why would it start caring about its vassal states?

We had a good thing going for a while with our resistance. But it came to an end today when some jerk assassin killed our new president. The only thing we had any hope in. The resistance is trying to get his daughter in as the new president, but I think our momentum is lost. It's time to give up.

B-Mail Message: Dominionary 24, 2112 – Japan-produced heroine

So... that new president I mentioned, President Shoko? She just shot out of her office in a MECH! She's up in the sky right now, just blowing these damn fools to hell! She's just up there, flying around and taking care of business. Things looked kind of awkward at first. Seems she can switch between free movement and strafing with the touch of a button, but she got used to it pretty quickly. Shoko aims using her right hand on a touch screen, and steers the mech with her left. Not too comfortable if you're a lefty like me, but I could adapt. She doesn't have to worry about controlling her elevation at all—the mech does it for her. Shoko just has to worry about the direction she flies in, allowing her to concentrate on saving us. Word is that this “liberator” of hers is some cutting-edge tech.

From my visits to Tokyo's Video Game museum (I'd suggest checking out the JRPG Revival of 2014 exhibition, it's amazing), I'd compare President Shoko's attacks to what our ancestors saw in a game called *Rez*. She locks onto multiple targets, and then unleashes a wave of missiles all at once. She even had a huge beam she could fire as a constant stream of energy. She has to be careful though; I see her shield deplete with the more enemies she targets. Not that she has much to worry about. Despite the size of the Dominion's forces, not a lot of funding went into their tech; their missiles buzz around her before moving in for the attack. As long as she pays attention, she can avoid damage. President Shoko's airborne advantage is beneficial: since the Dominion focuses on sapping energy from our land, their defense is grounded. Shoko never has to contend with any moving targets, which I imagine bores her a bit. Sure, she's saving her country, but I'm sure she'd like a little more variety in what she destroys.

Best of all is President Shoko's thoroughness! It's not just the mainland she cares about; I've watched her dart off to smaller villages to rid them of the Dominion as well. She's even done some recon missions, flying through an area checking for enemy forces. They're off the beaten path and totally optional, and while I appreciate the effort, they really don't amount to much. I don't know where here sources get their information, but most of those recon missions I mentioned don't even turn anything up. They're just a waste of President Shoko's time, which could be better spent on her main mission.

Here's something a bit crazy, though: as she clears an area of this Dominion scum, they instantly turn fertile again. Entire forests grow back in seconds, right before our eyes. What was once run-down, Dominion-occupied land becomes lush and green again once Shoko is through with it. It's crazy to see how beautiful everything once was, and is again.

B-Mail Message: Dominionary 24, 2112 – We're free again!

Wow, that was fast. President Shoko made quick work of everything the Dominion had to offer. And I don't

just mean here; Tokyo, Kagoshima, and Hokkaido are all Dominion-free! A couple of folks around here were a bit underwhelmed by how long it took President Shoko, noting that it must have been too easy if she could dispatch them so quickly. But those three hours were incredible, if you ask me. It was a fun ride, and yes, while President Shoko spent a lot of her time taking out faceless grunts, I thought the bosses she faced offered plenty of thrills. And that last one she fought—that was something else, wasn't it? I'm sure you saw it on the New Japan News, so I won't bore you with the details.



Is it somewhat sick that I enjoyed the liberation of my country? Nope! I'd even be willing to do what she did, and go for a better score! Of course, I'd only be competing against myself (I can't compare my scores with anyone else it seems), but I'd enjoy watching my skills improve.

Overall, I enjoyed what President Shoko did for this country. While brief, I was able to enjoy my time watching her give the Dominion what for. Her abilities may have been limited, but she certainly did the best with what she had. Thank you, President Shoko. We're in safe hands.

01

Score

8.5

Pros

- + Brief, but encourages high-score runs
- + Colorful visuals
- + Entertaining voice acting
- + Simple controls

Cons

- Enemies aren't very aggressive.
- Good boss fights, but not much enemy variation.



Artwork by Natalia Silva

NEXT ISSUE

Alright, how was that for a first issue? We are just getting warmed up though, so be on the look out for issue #2 in late January.

In the next issue we are going to be adding some exclusive content into the pages of Powered Off. Mailbag, fan art and possibly a mind bending crossword for you puzzle nuts to solve, just to name a few new things we are planning!

Don't forget to send your mailbag questions and fan art to the following address!

Poweredoff@nintendoworldreport.com

Until next time, Happy Holidays.

- Nick