

NintendoWorldReport

ISSUE 11

POWERED  OFF

POKÉMON X & Y

Read our review inside!

I CHOOSE YOU!

The top five Pokémon games!

RETRO REVIEW

Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire

EXCLUSIVE EDITORIAL

Longing for the Darkness



POKÉMON CELEBRATION ISSUE

IN THE DARK

By Nicholas Bray

*Hello darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains.*

This month, James Jones delves into the darkness, longing for the days in which Nintendo's download press releases were filled with possibly unintentional hilarity.

Aside from that, we have some articles on Pokémon, including an interview with Game Freak, New York Comic Con, and an article about two Kickstarter campaigns with two very different outcomes.

Review wise, there is a nice spread with titles including Sonic, Pokémon and even a hidden GameCube gem.

All that and more, please enjoy.

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Longing for the Darkness

By James Jones

There was a dark era, before the dawn of the eShop, where Nintendo sold their digital products in a shadowy marketplace, lit only by the lanterns of their own murky words. We called this bazaar of the undesirable the Nintendo DSiWare Shop. The comparably reputable face of Nintendo's digital enterprise was the labyrinthine Wii Shop Channel. A market stocked with products you might actually desire, though they were often buried beneath wares no rational consumer would ever procure.

While the eShop is the light – a transparent marketplace that allows for nominally easier purchases and meaningful marketing efforts – the Wii Shop Channel and Nintendo DSiWare Shop had one thing that the eShop never had: Nintendo Downloads press releases.

Nothing, literally nothing, could ever top the unintentional comedy that Nintendo regularly delivered to the email inboxes of every member of the gaming press.

I once noted that if I could interview anyone at Nintendo it would be the literary wizard who concocted these weekly reflections on the newest content. His task, a mix of Sisyphus and Prometheus, seemed eternally impossible. When upcoming winners like *Enjoy Your Massage* would leak, the anticipation was palpable. We were always rewarded:

Enjoy Your Massage

Publisher: Microforum

Players: 1

ESRB Rating: E10+ (Everyone 10 and Older) - Mild

Suggestive Themes

Price: 500 Wii Points

Description: Congratulations! You have just been hired as an apprentice masseur at Giselle's beauty farm, one of the most famous in the city. Learn new relaxing massage combinations and use them on your stressed customers. As an apprentice, you'll have to do your best. If your client gets angry, no one will save you from losing your job, but if you prove capable, you might even become the director of the whole beauty farm. So, what are you waiting for? Six clients are waiting for your help!

These are the ramblings of a madman.

At some point it became en vogue for a certain population of the NWR staff to stake out the Nintendo Download press release in order to openly mock it in the associated news article. The situation escalated quickly, resulting in Neal's apocalyptic edict that "being funny" is forbidden, and thus NWR returned to the nuclear winter of writing about digital notebooks seriously.

Special credit belongs to Australian publisher Nnooo for the myNotebook series. I thought I knew real comedy. I thought I understood what makes me laugh. I did not.

Nnooo managed to release three "myNotebook" DSiWare applications, with color as the primary difference. Without further comment, the press release for myNotebook Carbon:

myNotebook: Carbon

Publisher: Nnooo

Players: 1

ESRB Rating: Not Rated

Price: 500 Nintendo DSiWare Points

Description: Make notes, lists, and doodles. Or even play your favorite pen and paper games (games not included). myNotebook allows you to take notes wherever you are. Just pop open your Nintendo DSi system and jot down your thoughts! Make a list and cross it off, or even play your favorite pen and paper games (games not included). You can even personalize your notebook by drawing on the cover and changing the paper type with 24 different unlockable squared and lined paper styles. Use the pen or pencil to make your notes or doodles and then erase the bits you don't like. With five ink colors, you'll always be able to make your notes and doodles look stylish. myNotebook also includes 128 pages to write on and the ability to export your pages to your Nintendo DSi Photo Album!

There are far too many things here to comment on, but the fact that there are a limited number of virtual pages gave members of the Nintendo World Report staff aneurisms. It was never entirely clear to me if the fact the exact same block of text was reused for myNotebook: Pearl makes the work of the Download's author more or less hilarious. Note, even on its second use, the repeated phrase about not included pen and paper games was not corrected.

But, before we conclude this dalliance in the darkness, let us look towards the true light of Nintendo's download space.

Flashlight

Publisher: Kaasa

Players: 1

ESRB Rating: Not Rated

Price: 200 Nintendo DSiWare Points

Description: Flashlight changes the dual screens of your Nintendo DSi system into a flashlight with added features.

When it is dark people need a simple source of light. Flashlight changes the dual screens of your Nintendo DSi system into a flashlight with added features. Change the color and the intensity of the light. Use your Nintendo DSi system to read under a blanket or to get a serious source of light while taking night hikes. Flashlight could also be helpful in other situations, such as using the warning light when your car has broken down.

This was, pardon the pun, the highlight of the DSiWare space. This is a piece of download software that is being marketed as transforming your expensive electronic toy into a reflector triangle. The author of the Download press release actually notes, allegedly without irony, that you can "read under a blanket" or "take night hikes" using your DSi. The DSi XL was not out when this was released, but I'm curious if it had been would they have listed "signal aircraft" or "start campfires" as features.

The above tells us a lot about the author. Clearly, he hates his job. It is impossible that this was written seriously. I defy you to read that description out loud and not laugh when you realize that all they're promising is that your backlight will be bright. The exact same effect could be accomplished by going to the DSi's home screen. This is a person whose sense of humor and intellect is only matched by their resignation.

Of course, with the eShop came our new, much dryer, download press releases. Presumably the person who once wrote about My Farm and My Exotic Farm in successive weeks, changing only the word "chicken" to "parrot," is no longer with us. And for that, I long for the darkness. Oh unnamed downloads author, share with us your musings. While its lack of heat cannot thaw your frozen heart, please tell us why this week's Wii fireplace is the definitive one.

Upcoming Games, Retro Tourneys, Eiji Aonuma Make Nintendo's New York Comic Con Showing Great

By Neal Ronaghan

Original Publication: October 15, 2013

For the second year in a row, Nintendo kills it at New York Comic Con.

Nintendo once again put together a pleasant showing to New York Comic Con, which was made even stronger by the fact that Microsoft and Sony with their fancy new consoles were nowhere to be seen. A month away from the next generation, the Xbox One and PlayStation 4 were absent from the New York Comic Con show floor. Mario, Zelda, Wii U, and 3DS, though, were all over the place.

Aside from the mobbed Pokémon X/Y launch event at Nintendo World Store (so mobbed I walked by, shrugged my shoulders, and then decided to download it on the eShop at midnight), the other marquee event was the Zelda panel featuring Eiji Aonuma, which laid out a whole slew of new Link Between Worlds details. I woefully missed the panel, but on all accounts, it was a highlight for those who went. Panels like these give fans a rare direct interaction with Nintendo's developers, and it's something that can't really do anything but good for them. I mean, if Hideki Kamiya, Twitter aficionado, didn't crack at PAX Prime, I doubt you can worry about something blowing up.

Oddly, Nintendo's main show floor booth was my least favorite part of their show. The content was mostly bolstered by E3 demos of Super Mario 3D World, Wind Waker HD, and Bayonetta 2 that were absolutely mobbed thanks in part to Nintendo's Mario cat ears giveaway. If you played two games, you could get a pair of furry cat ears, which came in Mario, Luigi, Peach, and Toad styles. The booth was arduous to get through, though that's not necessarily something exclusive to Nintendo. The show floor at New York Comic Con was more or less absolute hell when I attended on Friday and Saturday. The 3DS was also represented at the main booth by Mario Party: Island Tour, Skylanders: Swap Force, Batman: Arkham Origins Blackgate, and more.





The highlight for me was the tournament room, which was a nice respite nestled in the bowels of the Javitz Center (where they hold all the panels). While I only watched portions of a rousing Balloon Fight and Mario Bros. tournament, I wish I had the chance to participate or watch more intently. I love tournaments, and these ones, focusing on classic games and hosting kick-ass prizes, were some of the best I've witnessed at fan-focused events such as Comic Con and PAX. I sincerely hope Nintendo brings the retro tournaments to PAX East 2014. Additionally, this room was a haven for eShop games, with Shantae and the Pirate's Curse, Retro City Rampage, Shovel Knight, and Q.U.B.E.

If you came to New York Comic Con wishing for Nintendo loving, you likely got it. If you wanted to play upcoming games, compete in some old ones, and see the modern day Zelda mastermind speak about the series, you got it.

If I had one huge complaint, it's that I'm sorely disappointed in the StreetPass scene at New York Comic Con. I didn't finish my puzzle pieces, and I routinely would get less than 10 passes in an hour. Is StreetPass Mania dying down a bit? Well, with the packed Nintendo Community panel on Saturday, maybe it was just a little overwhelmed by comics at a comic convention.

A Tale of Two Kickstarters

By Jonathan Metts

Original Publication: October 6, 2013

Jonny takes a look at why *Shadows of the Eternals* failed (twice), while *Mighty No. 9* jumped right through the boss gate.



We've recently seen a number of famous game creators hit up Kickstarter for support of their next projects, with various results. Many of these proposed games leverage nostalgia built up on Nintendo platforms, and yet that alone is not a recipe for success. Let's compare two disparate campaigns, [Shadow of the Eternals from Precursor Games](#) and [Mighty No. 9 from Comcept USA](#), and consider how they went wrong versus how they went right.

Establish a Spiritual Successor

Both campaigns have been up-front about their major inspirations (*Eternal Darkness* and *Mega Man*, respectively), which is good as a matter of transparency to backers. Both classic properties have adoring fans, unique presentations, and iconic game mechanics. This tells potential backers exactly what they can expect to get when the game is completed... allowing the creators to focus communication on what will be new and different. In other words, the basic pitch is already evident to many gamers, whereas a more experimental game might have difficulty explaining its core concepts.

Fill an Unserved Niche

A large part of both pitches involved making a kind of game that hasn't been seen in recent years. This is probably less the case for *Mighty No. 9* (see similar games like *Mutant Mudds* and *Gunman Clive*), but certainly there are beloved aspects of the *Mega Man* formula that have not been directly copied. Core ideas from *Eternal Darkness* are seen widely across the industry, but usually in games that bear no resemblance to that cult classic.

Attach the Original Creative Minds

This has been a huge success for *Mighty No. 9*, as Keiji Inafune is widely recognized as the primary creator of *Mega Man*, even though his career took on much larger responsibilities at Capcom. He was effectively managing the entire publisher, even as his own signature franchise deteriorated into spin-offs and poor sequels through the

late 90's and 2000s. People don't seem concerned that the fall of *Mega Man* largely occurred under Inafune's watch, nor that his output since leaving Capcom (*Soul Sacrifice*, *Bugs vs. Tanks*) hasn't been popular. There is a sense that his destiny is to resurrect *Mega Man*, and a lot of people want that to happen.

Associating Denis Dyack and his creative team of ex-Silicon Knights people has been far more problematic. Their last two games (*Too Human* and *X-Men Destiny*) are notorious, and Dyack himself has achieved a kind of popular villainy among attentive gamers that probably does more harm than good when directly asking people for money. Whether it was originally his fault or not, Dyack's silence and lack of public redemption over the last several years has left an ugly impression of his personality and skills as a developer. This image has proven to be extremely damaging to his support among the sector of gamers who are most prone to contribute to any Kickstarter. To put it bluntly, someone similarly tainted like John Romero would need to release at least one stellar game to erase the negative connotations of his name, before anyone could seriously consider supporting him through direct funding. Dyack hasn't done that either, and merely clarifying his role as being exclusively creative wasn't nearly sufficient to calm the concerns of prospective supporters. (Note: Denis is a long-time friend of mine, and I've spoken on *Radio Free Nintendo* about how his personality has been misconstrued and exaggerated on the Internet – the above points address a problem of perception more than fact.)

Realistic Goals

Time and time again, we've seen that the most successful Kickstarters begin with modest funding goals, reach them within a week or two, and quickly pick up momentum through a series of stretch goals. While both of our specimens could be considered high-profile campaigns with significant pedigree and media coverage, *Mighty No. 9* still set a low bar (and was officially funded within about 24 hours). In stark contrast, *Shadow of the Eternals* set a relatively steep initial goal (at least by Kickstarter standards), then suspended the initial campaign, and eventually returned with a lower number that was still higher than the vast majority of video game proposals on the funding platform.

There is certainly a valid argument for the relative complexity and ambition of these projects – it is entirely plausible that *Shadow of the Eternals* was more honestly budgeted and is a more expensive kind of game to produce. Nevertheless, the end result is that *Mighty No. 9* asked for less and will ultimately be better-funded than *Shadow of the Eternals* ever dreamed of asking.

Collectively, gamers have learned some important lessons about the costs of game development through such examples as the *Skullgirls* DLC experiment. At the same time, Kickstarter is an inherently humble method to drive game development. Famous creators are going to their fans (and detractors) to ask for money. Even the vague smell of “AAA” production can be enough to scare away backers, because we assume that larger products have more potential to spiral out of control. This is already happening with games that were initially conceived as tiny and then over-funded to a point that the entire thing had to be rescaled – see *Double Fine’s Broken Age*. This risk also threatens *Mighty No.9*, and it’s up to smart people like Keiji Inafune to keep things under control. One of the great failings for Precursor Games is that onlookers lacked faith that a new company, formed from the shards of a disastrous company, could exert that sober planning and self-control through the long development process. Coming back for the encore Kickstarter campaign with a lower target –and, importantly, no satisfactory explanation of how it could still work—led gamers to question the studio’s financial acumen, even as the creative scope expanded from a debut episode to a self-contained adventure spanning several hours.

Appealing Community Interaction

Even though submitting ideas to a game studio has long appealed to fans, there are excellent reasons for developers to have ignored these ideas for past decades. Aside from legal implications, which are apparently relieved through the use of Kickstarter, the fact is that most people don’t know what makes a good game, even though we all like to think we do. You’ve heard the phrase: “Ideas are cheap.” It means that anyone can brainstorm and throw random suggestions at a creative team, with grandiose projections of what each one might bring to the final experience. It takes true talent and experience to filter through these ideas, test an array of the best ones, and then months or years to turn those ideas into balanced mechanics or polished creative assets. So then, the corollary to “Ideas are cheap,” could be, “Execution is dear.”

Both of these Kickstarter campaigns brought forth complete concepts from experienced, creative people. These were not half-baked premises asking the community to fill in gaping holes. So the differences in community involvement are primarily a matter of presentation and perception. In

numerous interviews and throughout the campaign websites, *Shadow of the Eternals* was pitched as a community-driven project. Precursor sought to assure everyone that they were seeking much more than just financial contributions – they wanted us to help make this game by adding our own ideas directly to it. Even if this sounds appealing to some gamers (and it doesn’t, to many of us), the whole thing doesn’t seem plausible when developers have already crafted a half-hour demo/trailer, intricate back-story, multiple characters, etc. *Shadow of the Eternals* has already exhibited more original ideas and a rare narrative energy than we typically expect from this industry – why muck it up with community ideas from people who may have no more attachment to the game than pledging five dollars? Those of us who don’t want crowd-sourced creativity, who simply wanted to see a new epic from the guys who already did such fantastic work on *Eternal Darkness*, not only rejected such participation (whether it was ever realistic) but were also less than enthused about other people messing up a good thing with their laser swords and three-breasted goat demons. The whole thing seemed like a massive distraction for the developer who should be focused on putting their own unique ideas into code and simply needed the monetary backing to do so.

With *Mighty No. 9*, Inafune’s Comcept and partners like 8-4 Ltd. and 2P Productions have mostly stuck to promising insight (vs. input) to the game’s development. It’s a one-way mirror, not an open door. Fans will see the uncompromised process of creating a kind of game that many have known for almost 25 years; no surprise that this aspect is alluring, even while many other *Mega Man* fans will likely chip in their money and then look away for 18 months, happy just to know that they have kept a beloved formula from going extinct. The underlying message to Inafune’s team is one of confidence: we know you know how to make this game, and we know that you just need to be enabled. Here’s a \$4+ million genius grant to make it so. There are promises of fan input, but these are primarily accomplished through surveys, polls, and other aggregate methods that involve screening content as provided by the development team.

This lesson of appropriate community interaction must be a bitter pill for Precursor Games, who pushed it as a core principle of their entire company and a revolutionary aspect of this particular game. They flaunted hundreds of creative submissions from their backer forums, showing how much these people wanted to see their drawings, stories, and insanity effects manifest in the game. But of course, the well-meaning and enthusiastic people behind those submissions were already invested in the game. The sheer volume of their responses were, at best, meaningless to uncommitted spectators.

At worst, the undecided masses looked at this mountain of submissions and wondered how Dyack and his small team would ever sort through it all, much less how the rest of us could ever get in a word edgewise when the most rabid community members were already so deeply invested. While the outcome is rather complex and perhaps unintuitive, the short version is that Shadow of the Eternal's vision for community interaction took a positive idea and turned it into a negative for all but a few dedicated fans who never needed to be convinced anyway. It's astonishing how the Kickstarter campaign trailed off any attempts to reach a wider audience in the final weeks, instead focusing exclusively on backer updates (sent to people who had already pledged some money). It appears the thought was to extract deeper commitment from an asymptotic pool of backers, but if so, the strategy proved to be ineffective.

Build to Platforms We Own

The Mighty No. 9 started as PC-only, but with an easily attainable base funding level (relative to the Mega Man legacy – the absolute dollar amount was actually still higher than Precursor's revised minimum). Stretch goals for expanded platforms seemed within grasp from the first few hours, and in the end, every expanded platform was assured (including some next-gen console versions added later). Being a 2D platform-action game, it appears to be a prime candidate for almost any grade of laptop, handheld, legacy console, etc. Anyone interested to play Mighty No. 9 should own hardware capable of running the game. This is not so easy to assess for Shadow of the Eternals. The early demo was shown running in CryEngine 3, which is associated with high-end gaming PCs and doesn't have an established reputation for cross-platform compatibility. Nor was this an engine that Precursor has used in any previous title at Silicon Knights; the ambitious technical aspects of the game were seen as bad omens by gamers who recalled tales of SK's forfeited struggles to build Too Human in Unreal Engine 3, another high-end tool with which they had little experience (with far greater resources) at the time.

Most likely, Precursor expected more of a boost from the Nintendo community by promising a Wii U version. This is a great idea in principle, as it would serve frustrated fans of Eternal Darkness and establish some kind of licensing partnership with Nintendo, which even holds a hint of a dream for the original franchise to be revived. The Wii U version was a dud for numerous reasons, but the biggest one is also the most obvious: very few people, even among dedicated Nintendo fans, owned a Wii U console at the time of this fundraising campaign. People have either moved on to other platforms or are still waiting for the right price and games before picking up Nintendo's newest console. Even fewer gamers (zero) possessed a PlayStation 4 at the time, so

tacking on that promise had even less material impact. The sad truth is that not many people ever played Eternal Darkness, and even those who did and supported this spiritual successor probably didn't own any of the platforms that were announced for Shadow of the Eternals. Pivoting to announce 3DS and Mac support, much less heritage consoles (PS3 and 360), could have made a huge difference. But no one really expected to see that happen, because Precursor had already committed to using CryEngine 3, and those systems don't run it. The mismatch was disastrous.

To Fund, Or Not To Fund

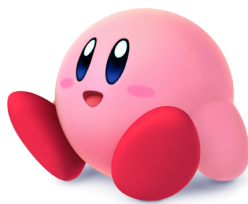
Perhaps my comparison of these game isn't fair. They are, after all, very different styles of game, proposed by teams of disparate pedigrees and cultural origins. Maybe the conclusions were foregone -- it is quite plain that more people care about Mega Man than Eternal Darkness, and we didn't need Kickstarter to reveal that fact. Yet, the respective inspirations for these two campaigns have both seen years of yearning from loyal Nintendo fans, and the larger gaming community. It's easy to be optimistic that either one could find success among a small but starving fan base, if given the appropriate treatment and delivered to the right platforms at the right price. So, in my own editorial defense, I think the comparison is valid to the degree that both concepts are legitimately appealing – and the contrast is valid purely on the basis that one game will be made, while the other is headed back to someone's virtual file cabinet, hopefully to emerge again someday.

Kirby is Coming and You Better Be Ready

By Zack Kaplan

Original Publication: October 12, 2013

Kirby 3DS hype and Wii U dreams collide in one super cute blog.



Nintendo has taken their dear old time bringing Kirby to the 3DS. Seeing as how the little pink fellow had four outings on the DS, it's hard to believe it took so long for Nintendo to bring the franchise onto their current handheld. Well the wait will soon be over, and I'm excited. Before I start making preparations to pitch a tent for the midnight release, I'll give you insight on why this is particularly awesome.

Believe it or not, the new Kirby 3DS game is really something to get excited about. Think about it, after *The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds* what else do we have releasing on the 3DS? More Mario? Considering we have already gotten 14 (by my count) other Mario titles within the past year, I think we can all agree, it's Kirby's time to shine.

While visually it looks a lot like *Return to Dreamland*, the teaser trailer showed off some interesting additions to the series. Similar to *Donkey Kong Country Returns 3D* and *Mutant Mudds*, jumping between layers is a new game mechanic that will hopefully optimize the title's 3D effect. If the two Kirby StreetPass puzzles are any indication, Kirby rendered in stereoscopic 3D will look quite lovely. The trailer also shows off Kirby being squished

against the screen which was both humorous and sad for me to watch.



To be honest, Kirby on the 3DS is only whetting my appetite. The first questions I will ask after getting the new 3DS Kirby game is when does the next one come out, and will it be on the Wii U? While it may seem rather corny to get excited about HD, considering competitors have had it since the last generation of consoles, Kirby's art style looks to lend well to a high-resolution screen. Colors will pop and Kirby will shine. Seeing him rendered in the *Smash Bros.* trailer was riveting, but it can only get better from there.

If a new Kirby title on the Wii U is coming, then I have a couple of predictions:

A Full-Fledged 3D Platformer - Since ye olden days of the N64, I have wondered why Kirby has yet to receive a 3D platformer. At one point *Return to Dreamland* was being made as one, but sadly that didn't happen. No time is better than the present to make a 3D Kirby platformer.



Kirby Air Ride 2 - Plain and simple, a sequel to the GameCube's only Kirby game. Recently Nintendo found much success with a sequel to another GameCube Classic with *Luigi's Mansion 2*, so why stop there? With online multiplayer and HD visuals Nintendo could have a surprise hit with this one.

Crazy Weird Game Utilizing the GamePad, Wii Remotes, and Balance Board - Nintendo is good at doing new things, and they like doing weird things like making you stand up or move, or show any sign of being alive while playing. Maybe we could get that Kirby Disco Skiing game we all want, right?

Whatever Nintendo decides Kirby will do for his next starring role, if they can offer a chance to use new ideas like they have before, Wii U is the platform to do it on. For now though, Kirby's 3DS escapade is gearing up to be my most anticipated title next year.

Top 5 Pokémon Games: I Choose You!

We roll up our sleeves, throw some Pokéballs and try to order them all.

Figuring out our refined favorite five Pokémon games was no easy task, involving some internet slap fights, a few terse sarcastic remarks, and the occasional Quick Attack. We emerged through that time with a list of five Pokémon games that we feel are the best of them all.

Note that we count a generation as a game, so for example, Gold, Silver, and Crystal are counted as one game. Also, we did include spin-offs, and someone even made a play for including Super Smash Bros. Melee (which actually got more votes than Pokémon Black 2 and White 2).

I can assure you that Melee missed the Top 5 and that all of the following games include the word "Pokémon" in their name. Hope you enjoy our list, and if you think we're right or wrong, let us know in the comments.



#5 and #4

By Alex Culafi, Becky Hollada and Nicholas Bray

Original Publication: October 9, 2013

Golden memories spread rubies around our fifth and fourth entries.

#5 - Pokémon Gold/Silver/Crystal

System: Game Boy Color

Release Date: October 14, 2000 (Gold/Silver), July 29, 2001 (Crystal)

Pokémon Gold and Silver. These games embody hype for me. After having played Red and Blue for years, the lead up to Gold/Silver was exciting. As info started to trickle down to me, I just got more excited about them. Colour graphics, new land, the return of the old land, the cool Poké-Gear allowing you to do things like ring people up. These games were more than I could have hoped for. The intro to the game was also really impressive, and I used to love watching it. Another favourite feature was being able to decorate your room with toys etc, a feature that I missed when it was not included in the remakes on the Nintendo DS. - **Nicholas Bray**



#4 - Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire/Emerald

System: Game Boy Advance

Release Date: March 19, 2003 (Ruby/Sapphire), May 1, 2005 (Emerald)

Ruby/Sapphire/Emerald was one of my favorites because it was the first Pokémon game to bring story into the mix. It felt like a total revamp, for the better, of the classic formula used in the previous generations. It also had colorful, more vibrant art, a lot of bonus material like Pokémon contests and secret bases, and some pretty darn adorable Pokémon designs. - **Becky Hollada**

I love Pokémon Ruby because it's so weird, so different, and so great. The art design, music, and design is extremely different from previous games in the series despite still being very much a Tajiri work. The music has new twists with the new hardware like horn sounds (Maxie's theme is my favorite Pokémon song of the last decade), the art is unusually bright in a way that hasn't been seen in the new games, the world is filled with tons of secrets and things to explore (like discovering Rayquaza and the Regi trio), the story started to become an actual story, and despite controversy, I love the Pokémon designs of that gen. Slaking is probably my favorite Pokémon ever alongside Umbreon. This is also where abilities were introduced and stats started to become as standardized and complicated as we know them now, but I consider that secondary to how good it feels to play this game. - **Alex Culafi**

#3 and #2

By Andrew Brown, Becky Hollada, Josh Max, J.P. Corbran, Kimberly Keller and Zachary Miller

Original Publication: October 10, 2013

Snap a picture of our #3 and #2 Top Pokémon games!

#3 - Pokémon Snap

System: Nintendo 64, Wii

Virtual Console

Release Date: July 30, 1999

(N64) December 10, 2007 (Wii)

Pokémon Snap is one of the most unique, charming games I've ever played. There's no feeling quite like learning a course inside and out and taking amazing pictures of the Legendary Birds. Then taking you Memory Pak to Blockbuster and printing out stickers of your photos!! It's a shame we'll never see a sequel. - **Zach Miller**

Pokémon Snap was such a simple concept, but put to amazing use. It was fun to just explore and see all your favorite Pokémon running around and interacting, but then slowly discovering new ways to get special poses or get rare Pokémon to appear just took it to the next level. Of course, it was also fun to just annoy the heck out of every Pokémon I drove by. -

Kim Keller

What seemed like a lame concept to begin with ended up being one of my favorite games for the N64. It never gets old trying to either get the best shots possible, or see how far I can get on tormenting Pokémon and terrible photography. Like every other Snap fan, I've always wanted to see a sequel with even more Pokémon and updated graphics. Maybe we'll wear them down someday... - **Becky Hollada**

#2 - Pokémon HeartGold/SoulSilver

System: Nintendo DS

Release Date: March 14, 2010

I sank more time into HG than would be considered healthy. Toward the end, I was three Pokémon away from a living Pokédex. These are superb remakes of my old favorite PKMN

games, and they do not disappoint in any way. - **Zach Miller**

I've enjoyed all the Pokémon games I've played, but I will always hold a nostalgic attachment to the first two generations



of games. Gold and Silver came at the prime of my interest in the series, and HeartGold and SoulSilver take those games and update them to be more in line feature-wise with the newer games in the series. They're the perfect blend of nostalgia and modern quality. - **J.P. Corbran**

G/S/C has been my favorite generation since I was a kid, so the reboot naturally had me beyond excited. HeartGold and SoulSilver treated the original material well and drew in a lot of the features from the newer Pokémon games that I enjoyed. The game became so expansive that I have yet to run out of things to do and I've probably logged half my life on it. And finally getting to battle the legendary Red? Just the cherry on top. - **Becky Hollada**



What can I say that hasn't already been covered? The second generation of Pokémon games was undoubtedly my favorite, and given the significant improvements FireRed and LeafGreen Versions had over their original Game Boy counterparts, it was only natural to assume that HeartGold and SoulSilver would step things up in the same way; the assumptions weren't misplaced. I especially liked traveling with your top Pokémon in tow! - **Andrew Brown**

This is the best game. I don't quite know why it's not number one. HeartGold/SoulSilver is the perfect game for this generation. It has masterfully mixed the right amount of nostalgia with new content. That doesn't apply to just the gameplay, but to the Pokémon and trainers as well. Yes we got Joey and his Ratata, but we also got to face off against Blue with a level 70 Tyranitar. The game was, is and will forever be beautiful. End of story. - **Josh Max**



Sometimes, the original is still the very best.

#1 - Pokémon Red/Blue/Yellow

System: Game Boy

Release Date: September 30, 1998 (Red/Blue), October 19, 1999 (Yellow)



Pokémon Red and Blue were the first instances of real gaming fanaticism that I remember. The Pokémon franchise rolled out and stormed on to my TV, backpack, lunchbox, and, of course, my Game

Boy Pocket. I still break out that old Pocket and play some Pokémon Blue from time to time; sure, it has aged quite a bit, but the cute sprites and catchy music still make for a fun afternoon. - **Justin Baker**

Over the years I have gone back to Red and Blue every so often. Most of the time it was just to play around on my completed save, although, last year I reset the game and played through from the beginning. I still find the game to be fun, and the simple graphic style is charming. Sure, better Pokémon games have been made since these first couple, but, Red and Blue hold a special place for me. Pokémon has continued to add more and more creatures and more and more stuff to think about in regards to training, items etc. The first games are less cluttered with options, which can make it easier to decide how and what to do.



One of the big advantages of having only 151 Pokémon, is that you only need the other version for a dozen or so. Today, we have to trade from many different games from over the past decade to catch them all. Its cumbersome and has been slightly irritating me for some time.

It took me a long time to actually own a copy of Pokémon Blue. Many of my friends had the game well before me, as I had to slowly save up enough money to buy it. I remember looking at the box at the local Toys"R"Us for weeks, earning only a few dollars a week, it took quite awhile to save up that \$50. - **Nicholas Bray**

Pokémon Red and Blue came out at the perfect time in my life. I was 14 and super pumped for the game after reading about it over and over again in Nintendo Power. When I finally got it a few months after the initial release, the game was all the rage at my school...at least among nerds. I spent tons of time catching monsters and even managed to do some trades and battles with friends. Pokémon Red completely changed my outlook on gaming and opened me up to the world of RPGs. Granted, the formula for Pokémon is a bit different than standard RPGs (you're collecting monsters for crying out loud!), but it helped open me up to a new genre and tons of other great games that I wouldn't have experienced. I guess I would say that I'm still a fan of the Pokémon series, but nothing can compete with the originality that Red and Blue had to offer. - **Danny Bivens**



Pokémon Yellow was my first Pokemon game, and I recently replayed it just to see if nostalgia was lying to me. Maybe it's the simplicity, maybe it's the comfort in finding the original 151, I just can't put my finger on it, but this is a game that I picked up again after 14 years and had just as much fun as when I first got it with my special edition Pikachu Game Boy Color. - **Kim Keller**

The Origins of Skylanders: Swap Force

By Neal Ronaghan

How exactly did they put the Swap in Swap Force?

After wrapping up *Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure* on 3DS in 2011, the team at Menands, N.Y.-based Vicarious Visions moved on to their next challenge: the third entry in the, at the time, unreleased *Skylanders* franchise. That's right; development began on this year's *Skylanders: Swap Force* before the series became a phenomenon. It's a crystal-clear example of the faith Activision had in *Skylanders*.

Less than a year after having two major projects cancelled, the team at Vicarious Visions didn't quite know what they were going to do in the third main entry in the *Skylanders* franchise. "We knew that we wanted to do something that built off of that and added new magic to bring toys to life," Vicarious Visions' Jeremy Russo explained. "One idea we kept coming back to was mix and match. The idea of taking apart different characters and recombining them to create something unique."

But Activision had had faith in other franchises Vicarious Visions was working on. In early 2011, their first foray into the lead developer role on the *Guitar Hero* series was cancelled. That followed years of churning out solid Wii and DS versions of the series. There was also the case of *DJ Hero 3D*, which was shown off as one of the few playable 3DS demos at the system's reveal during E3 2010. While there has never been any official word on the status of *DJ Hero 3D*, it can be assumed that, like *Guitar Hero 7*, it was cancelled, probably around the time Vicarious Visions' *Skylanders* involvement was heating up.

The mix-and-match concept, later becoming *Swap Force*'s main gimmick, was in its infancy at that point. The team hadn't figured out much of the gameplay or logistics yet. Still, when Activision's executives visited, the idea was approved. Russo recalled that Activision CEO Eric Hirshberg even called it "magical." From there, the studio was off to the races to make the magic come to life.

"We initially split it into two groups," Russo detailed. "We had engineers figuring out how it would actually work." The original engineer-created character was essentially a mound of clay with an audio jack connecting two parts. It was crude, but effective at laying the base for how magnets would later bring it to fruition.





“Separately, we had designers and artists focusing on the game concept, like what this would actually mean to the player,” Russo said. “That was a lot of fun, but it was all just theory at that point. We knew we had something magical but we just weren’t making that connection between the hardware and the software at that point.”

Then Engineer Brent Gibson made what later became known as the “Frankenlander.” He went home, took apart a bunch of Skylanders and made a three-piece creation (or maybe abomination) using Spyro’s head, Prism Break’s torso, and Voodood’s legs. A video created by Gibson in the wee hours of the morning circulated around some of the team leads, showing, with no audio, Gibson taking Spyro’s head, and thanks to the magic of magnets, attaching it to the torso and the legs with one hand. It was the eureka moment of the entire project. The proof of concept that the Swap Force concept could actually work. And it happened before the first Skylanders game even hit stores.

Gibson was then instructed to make a few more of these beasts so they could use them as the basis for the new characters. No longer using his own home as the workshop, he worked in the New York studio’s own facilities. While cutting Skylanders into pieces for the good of the Cloudbreak Islands, Gibson managed to slice his hand open. Blood pooling in his hand, he tried to cover it up, until someone discovered him and then lead him to a garbage to dump his handful of blood and after that, the hospital. Gnarly scar in hand, Gibson was one of the key catalysts driving Swap Force from theory to reality.

The next debate was how to split up the characters. The Frankenlander was split in three, and a lot of the early prototypes were split up that way.

“Do you divide it at the neck and the waist? Just the waist? Do you socket the arms? Is it easy for kids to use?” Gibson explained the process the team went through.



Eventually, they settled on the two-part characters about a quarter of the way through development, likely in early 2012. “Two part made a lot of sense,” Gibson said. “Simple play pattern. Click, click and you’re back in the game. You don’t really need to explain it.”

With that in minds, the team at Vicarious Visions underwent a two-year journey to create the game behind the concept. The product of that work, Skylanders: Swap Force, comes out October 13.

Nintendo's resolution may not be to lose weight, but they are interesting regardless!

HAPPY NEW YEAR
EVERYONE!

As we post this latest edition of Staff Sez, 2011 is on its last days, and the whole world is looking forward to ringing in 2012 in massive style and grace... for the most part. 2012 promises to be a big year. Some think it might be the end of humanity as we know it, but the new year is looking to bring a lot of new things, like promising movies like "The Avengers" and "The Dark Knight Rises", the London Olympics and the upcoming elections. But most importantly, it will be the year in which we leave behind this current generation of games and move onto the next one. Nintendo is one of the biggest as they have already shown what the future awaits us with the Wii U.



With that little thought in mind, the NWR staff members began to ponder answers to the following question...

What do you think Nintendo's New Year's resolutions should be?

The answers are as follows...

Neal "Wants a salary raise in the new year" Ronaghan said...

"Make sure Wii U has a damn good launch and a reason to exist."

Zach "Wants to see the world in the new year" Miller said...

"Make sure that, when you release the WiiU, it's fully functional."

Josh "Wants improvement in his love life" Max said...

"To continue thinking about how to make good games great."

Carmine "Wants a better life style in the new year" said...

"Multiplayer Wii U tablet support or bust."

James "Just wants a pony in 2012" Dawson said...

"Give us a universal account for the 3DS and Wii U."

James "Doesn't believe in new year's resolutions" Charlton said...

"Get online right this time, nay, flawless. Third time lucky!"

Matt "Does the new year's rituals for the fun of it" Walker said...

"Support Wii U strongly out the gate, provide fresh experiences."

Minoru "Gets excited when the ball drops on New Year's" Yamaizumi said...

"Provide games for Wii/Wii U Virtual Console Every week."

As you can see, everyone had one thing in common in their answers: the Wii U. 2012 is believed to be the premiere year for Nintendo's latest console, and it promises to move forth with the innovation seen on the Wii but with the advancements in technology gamers want and expect out of the system. Nintendo has a lot to ride on after the slow start of the 3DS (though it has been doing great in the last couple of months), so all eyes will be on the Wii U when it premieres at E3 and arrives on store shelves. And you can bet we will be there to cover it all.

Happy new year from all of us at Nintendo World Report, and may your new year wishes come true and bring forth lots of great Nintendo games!

Pokémon X and Y Interview with Game Freak

By Josh Max & Justin Berube

We had the pleasure to sit down with some of the minds behind Pokémon X and Y.

We recently got to talk with Hironobu Yoshida, Chief Designer at Game Freak on Pokémon X and Y and Junichi Masuda, Viewing Director at Game Freak for Pokémon X and Y about their next work and 3DS debut, Pokémon X and Y.

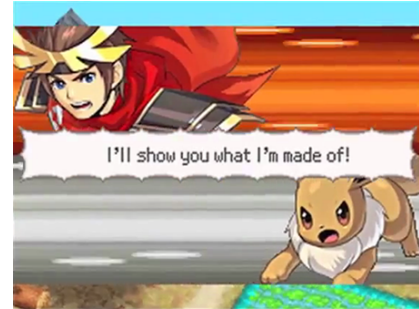


Topics of conversation included Mega Evolutions, Pokémon Snap, Masuda's favorite Pokémon, and some of the new battle mechanics. For the inside information on the new Pokémon games from the creators themselves, read on!

Nintendo World Report (NWR): The Pokémon franchise has taken such strides in connecting the world through its games. Where does the online connectivity in the series go from here?

Junichi Masuda (JM): This time around since the games are coming out at the same time around the world on October 12, right on the release day, there will be a lot more people on a global scale connecting, battling and trading with each other. Up until now, games that come out in Japan first have a lot of information about them, including story details, up on the internet before international players have a chance to even get a hold of the game. But this time, there is not going to be any information on the internet, so players are going to have to connect and communicate amongst themselves.

NWR: Since Pokémon Conquest has gathered such a following and been a pretty big success, are there any other games that you would like to personally bring Pokémon into? Any other crossovers?



JM: Not just as someone from Game Freak, but as someone who works on the Pokémon brand, I think we're always challenging ourselves to try new things and I also feel that, like Pokémon Conquest, there are a lot of possibilities that have yet to be realized. We're always trying new things, trying to surprise our players and allow them to have quite a bit of fun with the games. There will be further announcements as time goes on.

NWR: Since you're responsible for countless classic tracks from Pokémon, I was wondering if you were planning on continuing writing music for games rather than focus on other things such as directing?

JM: In Red and Blue not only did I create all the songs in the game, I also worked on the programming and a variety of other tasks. After I started working as the director, it was really about the desire to focus on my role as director and with each game I created fewer and fewer songs. However, with that said, we have a sound team at Game Freak and they always ask me to create the battle music for the games because they feel that it's very difficult to keep that distinctive style when it's not me that's making it. So this time, in Pokémon X and Y, I did the wild Pokémon battle music, trainer battle music, Gym Leader battle music and Elite Four battle music. But with each game the amount of songs I do definitely is fewer and fewer.

NWR: Who are your favorite Pokémon in general and who are your favorite Pokémon in X and Y? If you can't give us names, can you give us their National Dex numbers so we can figure it out at a later date?

JM: Amongst all the Pokémon, some of my favorites are Psyduck, Pichu, Victini; I tend to like the more cute Pokémon. This time, in Pokémon X and Y, my favorite at the moment is Sylveon and the reason for this is that over the course of development I'm always play-testing the game, usually from a variety of perspectives, like in the mindset of a beginner or a young child, and each time I had Sylveon in my party and I just think it's a cute Pokémon. It's a new Fairy-type and it's pretty strong in battles too.

NWR: Competitive Pokémon battling has had many high barriers to entry. It seems as though you have been trying to lower these barriers with things like Super Training in order to make EV training easier and more visible to the player. However, I still feel the biggest barrier preventing more people from battling competitively is the difficult and necessary task of obtaining Pokémon with perfect IVs. In X and Y will there be a way to alter an already captured Pokémon's IVs?

JM: In general in Pokémon X and Y we've tried to make it a lot easier to train Pokémon. Of course, with the existing Pokémon and new Pokémon, we have a lot in the game, and we have the philosophy that we want players to be able to use a lot of different Pokémon when they're battling and can choose which Pokémon they like and use that. Also with the Super Training we made some information more visible and made raising Pokémon a little bit easier. The example I like to use is two siblings and the older brother is always really good at battling and the younger brother keeps losing. With Super Training and being able to do these sports games as an alternative to raising your Pokémon's stats, it'll give the younger brother a better chance to be able to compete against his older brother.

However, looking at Pokémon as living creatures, we think that it's important to have differences between them. At competitions, it comes down to a variety of elements, like how you've raised your Pokémon, what moves it's learned, combined and worked into your strategy. I don't think it would be really that interesting if, like at the Olympics, it was just clones of the exact same competitor. I think all these different combinations of elements, and a little bit of luck as well, come into play in competitions and make them more interesting and exciting.



NWR: Where did the idea or inspiration for Mega Pokémon come from?

JM: The idea was one of the original concepts of X and Y when we began developing the games about three years ago. We had the concept of beauty, the concept of bonds, to deepen the relationships between people and Pokémon, as well as the concept of evolution. On the concept of evolution, we were literally just trying to do something new. One thing we were saying was “evolve evolution.” Evolution is one of the defining characteristics of the Pokémon games; however, if we were to just add another stage of evolution and make it a permanent thing, that would mean there is just now stronger Pokémon than the current highest evolution stage. It would make the previous Pokémon weaker and mess with the balance. So, when thinking about how we could do something new with evolution as well as make it a lot of fun for players, we came up with the idea of using Mega Stones and making Mega Evolution just a temporary change during battle.

For example, in order for Mewtwo to Mega Evolve, it will have to hold one of two Mega Stones, since there is two different versions of the Mega Evolved Mewtwo, or it could hold other regular hold items. By requiring the Mega Stone to Mega Evolve, it prevents the player from holding any other items that may be useful in battle, like Leftovers, berries or a variety of other items. What this does is add quite a bit of strategic depth to the battle, because now you have to read your opponent's strategy if they're using a Mega Evolving Pokémon, especially in Mewtwo's case because since there are two different versions and the types actually change for each Mega Evolution. It really throws your opponent off and they have to decide what move they will use based off of what they think you will do with Mewtwo.

To trigger Mega Evolution, you have your Pokémon holding a Mega Stone and a button on the bottom of the screen will appear that says “Mega Evolution.” Tap it, choose a move and then on that turn the Pokémon will Mega Evolve.

But you could also use strategies, for example, like on the first turn, don't Mega Evolve and trick your opponent, make them think you have a different held item, and then on the second turn, Mega Evolve and confuse them.

NWR: How does the team behind the games go about balancing both old and new Pokémon for competitive play? It seems increasingly difficult thinking of new moves, new Pokémon, new battle types and a new Pokémon type.

JM: Every time at Game Freak, especially this time with Pokémon X and Y since we've added a new type for the first time in over ten years, we spent a lot of time and had a lot of people at Game Freak working on the battle balance spending their entire days look at all the combinations, doing a lot of experimentation and coming up with what we thought would be the perfect balance. We also have a lot of competitions within our company and players constantly playing and adjusting the balance as needed until we get to where we think is just right. Of course there is a limit to what we can do with our resources at Game Freak. So every time we release a game there's always players making new discoveries and we're surprised at some of the combinations people come up with. This time with Pokémon X and Y we feel that we got it right with probably the perfect balance. But of course, we're not going to know until the games are released. That's why I'm really excited to see the World Championships in 2014. See just what kinds of strategies players have. I think if we see a wide variety of Pokémon being used we'll consider ourselves successful.

NWR: On average how many Pokémon designs get thrown out over the development of the game? Have any rejected designs come back in subsequent generations and if so, which ones?

Hironobu Yoshida (HY): With each game we are always working with a different theme with the Pokémon for the generation. And the designers themselves, depending on the time, they'll have different things they're passionate about and different things they want to try. Although we come up with ten times the amount of ideas for Pokémon that make it into a game, even the ones that get rejected don't typically come back in future games because we're trying new things and match the theme of the new game. The things we're passionate about are different than they were in the past. Also, in terms of the design process, even once an idea is selected, even from that point the design changes quite a bit since it takes about six months to a year to finalize a Pokémon design.

NWR: Follow up question- what's the theme of this Pokémon game? What's the theme to Pokémon X and Y?



HY: In terms of creating the Pokémon designs, what we really focused on, this time especially, was giving each Pokémon, even more than ever, a defining characteristic or something that makes them stand out and be pretty unique.

NWR: Have you ever thought about using the Wii U Game Pad for a new iteration of Pokémon Snap?

JM: Not really speaking as Game Freak, but as part of the Pokémon brand, at the Pokémon Brand we're always challenging ourselves to try new things, to come up with new ways to surprise our fans and come up with new ways to play the game. So with Pokémon Snap I don't think doing the exact same thing on Wii U would be the right way to go. We'd really have to come up with some new ideas to make it surprising and interesting for the players. If we were able to do that, then yes, I think we'd have something to announce.

NWR: Great to hear! If we can know, what's next for you guys? Pokémon Z? The fabled Hoenn remake?

JM: Of course at Game Freak we're always thinking about what people want. I always get lots of request on Twitter to make certain games. Right now we're still focused on Pokémon X and Y. It's not released so we're still unsure if it will be received well, if people will have fun playing. So right now we need to see the success of Pokémon X and Y before we move on to anything else.

NWR: For what it's worth, we're looking forward to it immensely!

JM: Me too!

NWR: Who chooses which Pokémon will appear in Super Smash Bros.? Does Sakurai go to you with specific ideas, or does he ask your team personally for suggestions? Can you explain the process?

JM: I talk with Sakurai in real life and we're connected on twitter so we're in communication. With the first Smash Bros. game he was first designing the game and he came to us with a presentation. He wanted to feature Pokémon in the game as well. So he came to us first to get the approval that Pokémon could be featured in the game as well as asked our advice saying, "What Pokémon could be used in it?" We helped him select what Pokémon would be best fit into the mix and match the world of Pokémon. We're thinking about what Pokémon fans around the world would really like to see the most. That's the basis of our selection process.

NWR: How come the Azure Flute was never made available in Diamond/Pearl/Platinum?

JM: When we were first developing the games we thought about including it. I thought it would be fun. But once the game was complete and released, I changed my mind down the road and didn't think it would be – I thought it would be confusing for people and kind of hard to understand how it worked. So I eventually made the decision not to distribute it.

NWR: Our wrap up question – We're really looking forward to this. I know both of us are. We would like to know, from anyone in the room, if there's anything that they want to say personally to the fans. Anything we should look out for? Easter eggs, perhaps?

JM: A couple of things. First, in regards to the story, this time we made it an adventure where you travel with four friends and really get to know them over the course of the adventure. I

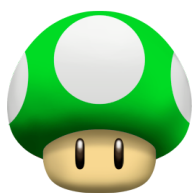
really hope people enjoy the story we have crafted and look forward to it. Another feature of the game that I hope people enjoy is the Mega Evolutions. This time you get the Red and Blue starters from the Professor and you can take those to their Mega evolutions, which I think people will enjoy. The Professor is researching what they call "the greatest mystery of the Kalos region," which is Mega Evolution. So that's why he gives you one of these three original starters. Also, since this is going to be a global simultaneous release on October 12, it's going to be the first time, on a global scale, that everyone will really be connected with Pokémon. I want to look at it as

a worldwide Pokémon Day. I'm really hoping people pick up the games and trade and battle with each other. One thing we did with the Pokédex this time was there's going to be multiple Pokédex entries. So if you trade a Pokémon that comes from a different language in the game you'll unlock that entry in the Pokédex for that language. So there is kind of another element to trading.

HY: From a graphic design perspective Mega evolutions are something we spent a lot of time on. It was a big challenge to take these refined designs to a new extreme. Also, the move to full 3D the visuals are very different this time. I think players are really going to enjoy that. At the same time at Game Freak we're big fans of 2D graphics as well. So there are some elements in there that I think fans of 2D will appreciate as well.

NWR: Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us; we're both huge fans since the beginning! Masuda: Thank you!





Contact's open is especially cold. You happen upon what appears to be a low-bit, white-haired old man, clacking away at keys in front of his computing machine. You let a moment or two slip passed while you wait for the inevitable greeting and/or identification, but he's clearly deep in his work. And so you wait, or, if you're less the patient kind, take to thumbing buttons, making the rounds to find the one that will get things in motion. Nothing. Clack clack clack.



It's a puzzlement, at least until you slide the stylus from its sheath, prod at one of the two animate objects on the screen, and find yourself smacked with a curious reality: there's no intermediary between yourself and this man, the Professor. He feels that jab, and reciprocates the action by speaking directly to you—the you holding the DS. Seems the system in your hands has bridged the respective planes of existence, giving you a window into and a modicum of control over his world. After running you through a gamut of identifying questions, the Professor requests your assistance with the retrieval of some particular items. Some kind of cells.

"Help me control the outcome," he suggests. "We can even pretend it's a game."



Contact, or rather the subsection of it in which you control the actions of a character in the Professor's world (a young boy named Terry), is indeed much like a game you might play. If you take the Professor's advice, you'd likely pretend it as a role-playing game, dense with exotic worlds and items and people, and that assumption would be partially accurate. Terry—the boy zipped away from his home and directly manipulated by you—fills the silent protagonist role roundly. He fights battles on his own once you toggle him into his aggressive stance (though you can equip him with a weapon or a stat-boosting sticker, activate his higher-tier attacks, and tend to his health), moves when and where you need him to, and requires little additional fuss. He's a surrogate, and when you exercise control and steer him through the relatively sparse trappings of the "game" to help out the Professor, you play a role through him.



What Contact lacks in what could be called traditional RPG personality is kind of inconsequential. The tone of disconnect and dissonance it imparts through aesthetic, gameplay, and conversation is intentional, and often more in service of inspiring puzzlement or genuine thought than a memorable moment of action or spectacle. For example: The Professor, though a friendly composite of detached humor and partial helpfulness, can't really be bothered to give a convincing damn about Terry or how he uses him, even though they exist in the same world. His disposition toward the boy, though, is probably not unlike your own, a commentary the game makes and revisits poignantly over the course of its surreal road trip.



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Sonic Lost World

By Jared Rosenberg

REVIEW

Sonic's new Wii U adventure delivers on both the speed and exploration fronts.

Sonic's been on a roll as of late. Both *Sonic Colors* and *Sonic Generations* succeeded where past 3D efforts failed by returning the focus to platforming. Thankfully, *Sonic Lost World*, Sonic's latest adventure on the Wii U, is not only built from the same mold, but its best moments feel like the first accurate representation of classic 2D Sonic gameplay in three dimensions.

One of the great things about the Genesis Sonic games were the branching pathways through the levels. While recent 3D Sonic titles have offered different routes, *Sonic Lost World* has taken things to next level with its spherical land masses. Reminiscent of *Super Mario Galaxy*, Sonic can run 360 degrees around the game's floating islands and the developers take full advantage by filling every nook and cranny with obstacles and shortcuts.



To make Sonic's journey through the sometimes-devious stage layouts a bit easier, Sonic Team has endowed the hedgehog with some new moves. The new parkour system

lets Sonic automatically hop over small obstacles and allows him to run up and along walls. A new kick move lets Sonic disable the armor of certain enemies and can also let him send other Badniks flying into the air. The Spin Dash and Homing Attack make a return, and now Sonic has a dedicated run button to give the player precise control of his speed.

Another important part of Sonic's arsenal is the return of Color Powers. Favorites from *Sonic Colors* like the Yellow Wisp Drill are back and are still a lot of fun to use. However, a number of the new Wisps utilize the Wii U GamePad in sometimes unexciting fashion. For example, the brand new Magenta Rhythm Color Power lets you to tap on musical notes on the touch screen to bounce around the stage. Instead of being enjoyable and intuitive, it feels like more of an annoyance that slows down the action.

Along with the wonderfully inventive spherical-filled zones, *Sonic Lost World* also features a number of 2D areas that play quite similarly to those found in *Sonic Colors*. Sonic's new parkour system can be used in the 2D areas as well, but you will mostly need to use your standard jumping skills to traverse these areas. The jumping controls can be a bit floaty and will sometimes result in an unintended plunge to Sonic's doom.

Along with Dr. Robotnik (I will never call him Eggman), Sonic must faceoff with six menacing creatures known as the Deadly Six. The boss battles against the Deadly Six are quite varied and range from throwbacks to Genesis boss fights to one in particular that feels like it could have come straight out of *Super Mario Galaxy*.

Sonic Lost World does a good job of playing on the nostalgia of old Sonic fans. There are returning Badniks in every zone of the game, and there are number of other nods to the past such as the return of casino pinball.

Another area of the game that appears to take some inspiration from the Mario series is the inclusion of a Super Guide-like help system. If you die numerous times in a section of a level, you will be given the option of skipping to the next checkpoint. There are a few 2D sections that are quite aggravating near the end of the game, making the skipping ability quite welcome.

Sonic Lost World has a very simple and clean graphical style so that the game can run at a smooth 60 frames-per-second. While the game does feature occasional bouts of slowdown, Sonic races through the levels at a silky smooth clip for the majority of the time. However, you will notice a bit of scenery pop-up when running through the levels. While the game's soundtrack is quite pleasant and fits with the scenery, the absence of music by Kenichi Tokoi, who composed many of the great tunes for Sonic Colors, is certainly noticeable.

When Nintendo first brought Mario into 3D in Super Mario 64, it was clear that, while the gameplay had evolved, the basic essence of Mario had remained true. One could argue that it has taken Sega 17 years to finally allow Sonic to make that leap. It's exhilarating to race across cylinders and use Sonic's new moves to wall jump through a spike-filled area, although not every stage of Sonic Lost World is a true playground for Sonic's new abilities. Despite the uneven level of polish on the stages, Sonic Lost World is a great platformer that shouldn't be missed.



Score

9

Pros

- + Great level design
- + Lots of content
- + Smooth 60 FPS

Cons

- Certain Color Powers utilize the Wii U GamePad in silly ways
- Jump controls are a bit floaty



Original Publication: October 4, 2013

Pokémon X and Pokémon Y

By Alex Culafi

REVIEW

A weaker Pokémon game is still better than most other games out there.

Pokémon X and Y are the first true Pokémon games on 3DS – a pretty big deal not only for us as fans, but for Game Freak and Nintendo as well. And while expectations are as high as ever and Nintendo has been releasing a constant stream of information for months, many fans still don't quite know what to make of these games. For some very positive and somewhat negative reasons, defining X and Y is no easy feat even after seeing the credits roll.

Immediately apparent in my play through Pokémon X is that, regardless of its promises of series evolution, this is still very much a Pokémon game. It's still a JRPG series in which you catch monsters, train them, and battle other monsters by abusing elemental exploits in a rock/paper/scissors fashion.

Water beats fire, fire beats grass, and so on. Like previous Pokémon games, you're a new trainer who starts in your hometown, you still aim to get the badges from Gym Leaders and become the champion, and you still go head-to-head with an evil team who wants to take over the world. The series is still as masterfully designed as ever and the story is just as good as it was in Black and

White, but the core gameplay has experienced very little evolution. That is not to say these new games are totally barren of innovation, however.

Separating X and Y from previous Pokémon games are a few key updates to the gameplay mechanics. For instance, Pokémon now easily earn experience points regardless of whether they enter battle extensively or not. Using two Pokémon during battle originally resulted in experience points getting divided equally among participants, but now all Pokémon who participate, regardless of contribution, get what appears to be the full EXP bounty.

This might sound like it makes for an easier game, but making Pokémon training easier also gives Game Freak the opportunity to make a much more challenging game than Black and White ever was. It's still nowhere near a difficult game, but I did lose several battles by the time I hit the credits (which is more than I can say for the last few entries in the series).

On a more practical level, Pokémon X and Y introduces two new battle types, a new evolution method, and a new Pokémon type. The new battle types, Sky Battles and Horde Encounters, are as simple and benign as Triple Battles and Rotation Battles were last time around. Sky Battles are optional trainer encounters where the only Pokémon who can battle are most Flying-type Pokémon and all non-Flying-type Pokémon who have abilities like Levitate that allow them to float in the air, and Horde Encounters are encounters with wild Pokémon in which you fight five low-level Pokémon at once. At best, these battles do a great job of not getting in the way of the experience. At worst, neither feature does much to improve the gameplay.





Mega Evolution and the new Fairy type are features that I have a much greater fondness for. Mega Evolutions are temporary evolutions that take place during battle and allow Pokémon to transform and change both physically and stat-wise. Charizard looks like a dragon, Blastoise gets three cannons, and Mewtwo has a form that simultaneously makes it both Psychic and Fighting type. Because only one Mega Evolution can be activated per battle and it's only a temporary change, the new feature adds a brand-new layer of strategy without crippling the balance Game Freak has spent so many years achieving. Even better, there are plenty to find and they all look really cool.

This comment likewise carries over into the new Fairy type, a new type that acts as both a new threat to Dragon and as something new for Poison to be strong against. While some were right to be skeptical, I am extremely pleased to state that the type does wonders to balance the chart further. More important than that, though, it is populated by a healthy number of Fairy Pokémon (both new and old) to play around with. For the first time in a long time, a Pokémon game is forcing me to re-learn a small part of the rulebook, and for that I am extremely grateful.

Outside of battle, the rules of the game have also changed slightly with the introduction of new forms of movement. While old games force you to walk in four directions on a clear grid, the new games have updated movement to allow you to move in eight directions. X and Y also introduce rollerblades, which allow free (and fast) movement in most parts of the map. In addition to this, bikes return for super-fast speed, and you can ride certain Pokémon in certain sections of the game (though these are limited and mostly just act as a fun diversion). These new ways of movement have a learning curve that feels slightly awkward initially, but getting used to it makes for a traversal that feels far more fluid than ever before.



For those of us looking for some new things to do outside of battle, X and Y introduces Pokémon-Amie, Super Training, and trainer customization. Pokémon-Amie is a new Nintendogs-like feature accessed through the bottom touch screen involving a direct way to interact with your Pokémon. You can play basic mini-games with them, pet them, feed them, and more, all in the name of some basic effects (like a higher critical rate in battle). Also accessed through the main menu, Super Training allows you to boost and track hidden stat values in your Pokémon by playing a simple game of aiming and shooting balls at your opponent. Lastly, for the first time, your in-game trainer is customizable by skin color and by clothing that can be purchased at several stores throughout the game. Though a bit too expensive, there are plenty of clothing options to choose from in many different styles. The side stuff is well implemented, optional, and actually carries benefits into the main gameplay.



But perhaps the largest change in X and Y to be seen lies in the presentation. The music sounds beautiful and close to orchestrated, the cries are no longer aged Game Boy sounds, and most battles are in full 3D. The battles are extremely beautiful and look smooth, and they are also reminiscent of the old Stadium games on N64. Featuring the amazing spectacles that are attack animations in addition to fainting that looks almost identical to the old style, the only thing missing here is the announcer. I don't know if the 3DS will ever have a game that looks better than these battles unless it's another Pokémon game.

While moving around the world outside of battle, the game is almost entirely in 2D with no option to turn on 3D via the 3DS slider. When off, the game looks like a slightly smoother Black and White with character models that are human proportions – which is good, if unexciting. In certain situations, like in some caves and some interiors, the 3D turns on for effect. Because the game actually looks much better with the 3D on, it leads to inconsistent situations where the 3D isn't quite on all the time and not quite off all the time either. And ultimately, this lack of universal 3D feels jarring and wholly unjustified. It still looks pretty good, but I feel like keeping the 3D on would make it look much better.

I wish I could say this is the only problem I have with the game, but there are two other substantial issues I have that keep this from being a game that stands above previous entries. While recent Pokémon games have had some major content to enjoy throughout, this one has a more limited longevity and replayability. Somewhat negatively, I would compare the amount of content you get in these games to Ruby and Sapphire.

My other complaint is that the game carries a greater reliance on repurposing old Pokémon rather than introducing new ones this time around. Game Freak tries to make up for this through cool Mega Evolutions, re-typing old monsters to Fairy, and re-introducing some forgotten classics like Deliberd and Granbull, but it was a bit of a bummer to see the full extent of what the Kalos region actually introduced. Far more importantly, the Pokémon designs introduced this generation are a somewhat noticeable step down in quality from past entries.

Pokémon X and Y is an odd pair of games to quantify because, on one hand, they are still solid entries in an incredible JRPG series and they offer some select new features that go above and beyond to make this feel like a brand new generation. On the other hand, inconsistent presentation, insubstantial core innovation, a low Pokémon count, and a minimal post-game keep them from achieving the total nirvana that this series has always been capable of.

We weren't able to discuss the multiplayer due to certain review restrictions and the impossibility of finding anyone to play with, and as such this article did not contain any mention of it. Look forward to a post-launch article in which we discuss this heavily touted series evolution in detail. This review is based on the Pokémon X version of this software.



Score

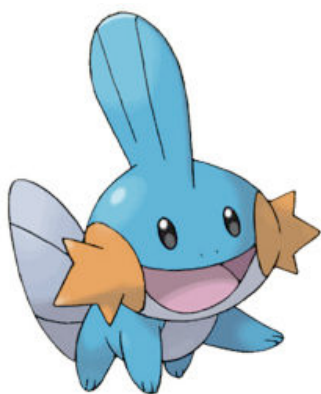
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Pros

- + As well designed as you could expect from a Pokémon game
- + Fairy type and Mega Evolutions are great
- + Improved movement
- + More challenging than recent series entries
- + Presentation is occasionally amazing

Cons

- Could use a bit more innovation
- Less reliance on introducing new Pokémon
- Not quite as substantial as past entries
- Presentation is inconsistent



Original Publication: March 17, 2003

Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire

By Ty Shughart

REVIEW

"The air is tasty here!" is the new "Hi! I like shorts!"

Finally, a Game Boy Advance version of Pokémon! Ruby & Sapphire are thoroughly upgraded versions with great graphics & sound and tons of new features, even if it's almost the same old game under all of that. For the benefit of the clueless, the game is a turn-based RPG in which players collect, battle, and trade monsters (Pokémon) and can link up with other players. The player controls a trainer, either a boy or a girl (the other becomes a friendly rival) and leaves home to become a Pokémon master!

The sounds consist of the usual menu sounds and a distinct sound for each Pokémon. The music is pretty good - there're some great sounding songs, like an upbeat marching tune along some of the routes. There are stereo effects in the songs, too. The graphics in Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire are bright and colorful, and also include a bit of scaling. It looks quite a bit like Advance Wars. There are a couple more nifty effects, like leaving footprints in the sand. Instead of generic icons for Pokémon, the game menus show scaled down pictures of the actual Pokémon. Someone can easily see every Pokémon in a box instantly. It's very convenient.

Speaking of convenience, there are a good number of new features that make in-game tasks less of a chore. There's no need to switch to a bicycle to move fast - early in the game (once running shoes are acquired), running can be done with the 'B' button. There are new bicycles though, like the MACH BIKE which moves insanely fast. Items can be registered to the select button for quick use, just like before - but the the L & R buttons don't seem to be used at all in the game. Why the heck not?

The core gameplay is still the same, though, excepting the 2 on 2 Pokémon battles. Catch the Pokémon, beat the rival, and get the gym badges. Since the game doesn't connect to old versions, however, it's a completely fresh start. Many of the old Pokémon have been dropped entirely - there are about 200 Pokémon total in this game.

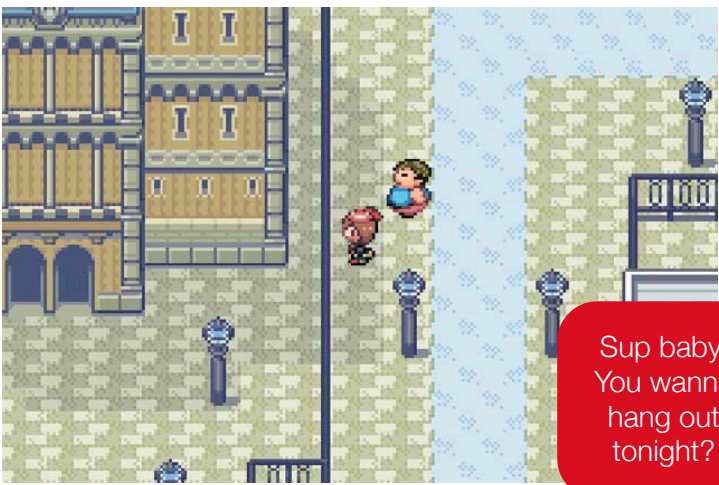
The 2 on 2 battles are a simple new addition to gameplay; each trainer has two Pokémon playing at the same time. It doesn't seem to happen very often in the single-player game, but four players can link up and play battles on teams. Players can also mix "Records" which exchanges various data between the games. For example, if a player encounters a news crew in the game and selects a comment such as "LOL" from the menu, it will appear on a TV in the game. If players mix Records, other players can see their friends' televised shenanigans within their own game. There are many opportunities to share information about yourself in the game - one character asks you to create a profile from a list of pre-selected words. It might seem limited, but it's still possible to create fantastic phrases like "I AM A DANCE MACHINE".

Like in Pokémon Gold & Silver, there are berries that regrow regularly. They now bear more than one berry, but the catch is that they need to be replanted. This way, you can replant what you want and forget about the useless ones.

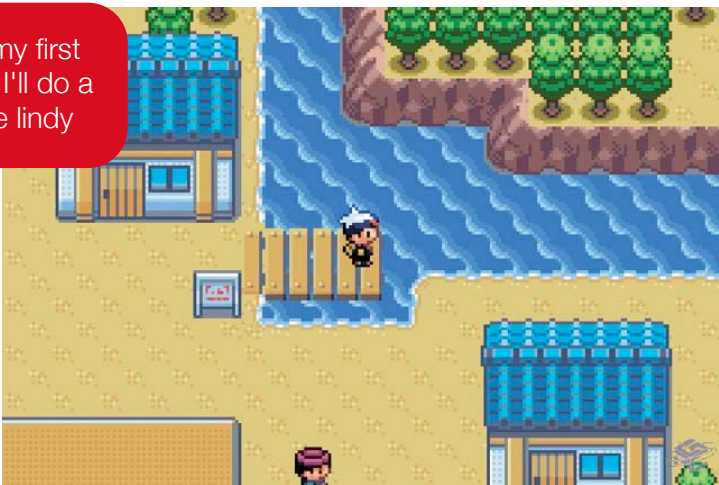
There's another big feature with Pokémon Contests - you can try to win over the crowd in a popularity contest in the categories of Cool, Beauty, Cute, Smart, and Tough. There's a bit of strategy that needs to be used in this mini-game; each move that a Pokémon uses affects the performance of others and affects the judging of the Pokémon. Four players can play this, too.

To improve stats for Pokémon contests, Pokémon need "Pokéblocks" - these are made by gathering certain berries and playing the mini-game with the Berry Blender. Up to four players can play this, or a single player can play this with computer characters. It's fun and easy; it's a cooperative timing game in which the player attempts to tap 'A' when the arrow on a spinning disc matches with their own. The disc gets faster with each successful hit, and records are kept for the fastest speeds reached.

At a ballpark guess, it might take about 40 hours to beat the game, or more if your name is Daniel Bloodworth. There's a good chance you'd want to catch all of the Pokémon or raise an ultimate team to battle your friends with, so in reality, a person could play it endlessly (and some die-hard players do). It's definitely an improvement over previous Pokémon games, but it's also still very similar to the past ones. If you're a veteran player, you can decide for yourself if you want to catch 'em all (again). For someone new to Pokémon, this is a great buy - you don't need prior experience with the games to fully appreciate Ruby & Sapphire.



For my first dive...I'll do a triple lindy



Score

8.5

Pros

- + 2 on 2 battles
- + 4 player link games
- + Improved in about every way over older Pokémon games

Cons

- Doesn't link with old Pokémon games
- L & R buttons go unused
- Possibly too similar to older Pokémon games



Original Publication: September 23, 2013

Etrian Odyssey Untold: The Millennium Girl

By Justin Baker

REVIEW

We return to Etria, this time with an actual plot!

I'm sure that some Etrian Odyssey fans were turned off by the announcement of the Story Mode to Millennium Girl, Atlus' newest entry in the series. The Etrian games are known for their rock-solid combat and intricate dungeons, not their vibrant stories. Those people will likely fire up the Classic Mode, start exploring and forget that Story Mode was even an option on the title screen. But, for newcomers like myself, the Story Mode seeks to make a rather opaque and hardcore RPG just a tad easier.

I'll touch on Classic Mode briefly, since most fans of the series already know if they are or aren't going to purchase it. To put it succinctly: it's Etrian Odyssey. More specifically, it's a remake of the original title complete with new visuals and music. The dungeon itself is also largely redone. In comparing the maps, I found that some of the floors were similar, but they were, for the most part, redone completely, which is good news for anyone who has recently played (or replayed) the original game. The overworld from more modern entries is absent, but, to be honest, the overworld is just a distraction from all the dungeon crawling to be had.

Story Mode is the big draw for this entry, and, if nothing else, it delivers an even healthier dose of



content. You're introduced to the main protagonist through a very beautifully done anime cutscene, the first of a handful

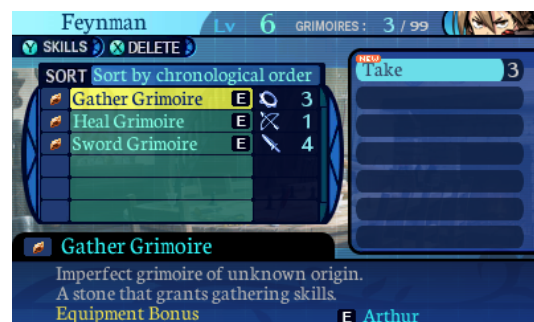
peppered throughout the game. Then in your early travels, you're teamed up with a static party (that's right, no customization here) to discover the secrets hidden not only in the Yggdrasil dungeon, but also in the Story Mode-specific Gladsheim dungeon.

The characters are relatively cookie-cutter, but with the story spread so thin over the basic dungeon-crawling nature, it never gets grating. The story feels a bit stereotypical in the beginning, but opens up later on. After a few hours, enough interesting quirks showed up to keep me interested, but it wasn't too engrossing.

Of course, the story and static characters are just the window dressing on the main event: the dungeons. You'll fight your way down into both Gladsheim and Yggdrasil, mapping every detail along the way with the stylus. While it feels a bit burdensome to map things in the beginning, since this was, again, my first real foray into the series, I turned on auto-mapping and soon enough, it felt like second nature to slap down a door or minor note as it went on.

The map itself responds well, and does its best to be unobtrusive. You can, of course, choose not to map anything, but you'll

probably find yourself lost and frustrated pretty quickly. Being able to jump around on the floors after mapping them makes it worth the effort either way.



The combat system employs items called Grimoire Stones, which enable you to customize your static Story Mode characters with unique abilities. At a glance, it just looks to be a simple way to add axes to a character or a fire attack to another, but close inspection reveals a very intricate synthesis system that had me counting stats and meticulously combining stones to empower each of my characters. In fact, during some of my shorter play sessions, Grimoire Synthesis would take up my entire playtime.

Even after synthesizing stones, you'll still need to employ decent strategy in combat. While you're constantly assailed by small encounters, the ability to auto-battle lessens the more monotonous ones and lets you focus on enemies that require more strategy. A large portion of the dungeon is spent avoiding F.O.E enemies that are large, usually very difficult enemies that show up on your map and wander the dungeon halls. They require planning and strategic movement, and break up the monotony of mapping and random battles well. If you're not careful, they can even trap you, forcing you to return to town and try the level all over again.



much more efficient party, or at least one more suited to my tastes. In the end, the Story Mode serves as a great introduction to the mechanics, but I doubt it's going to be

After several hours in Story Mode, I was curious to try out Classic Mode. The story was never gripping enough to keep me from wondering if I couldn't create a

very gripping for people who just want to jump right in and play. Overall, it's a very nice addition, though I would have loved to see a few more of those awesome anime cut scenes.

The 3D effect works very well with the new graphical engine, and many areas (especially the 3rd Stratum) really pop out of the screen. In battle, the enemies are constantly writhing and bobbing about, and things like vines wrapping around the nameplate of bound characters make them come alive. Players have the option of listening to the new soundtrack or the old MIDI version from the original game. The new music sounds great, if a little flowery, but the low-fi hum of the dingy original music still lends itself to the atmosphere much better.

In the end, the game's best feature is how well it respects the player's time. With some

minor options tweaks, even boss battles can be lightning fast. Growing your characters and working out new strategies with Grimoire Stones is incredibly rewarding. One unfortunate flaw is that players can't have both a Classic Mode and Story Mode game going at the same time, which may leave some with the difficult decision of which to choose. Story Mode offers a bit more content, but Classic Mode offers ultimate customization. Whichever you choose, the game is a rock-solid dungeon crawler that fits the 3DS very well.



Score

8.5

Pros

- + Great combat
- + Grimoire Stones are very addicting
- + Lots of content

Cons

- Only one save slot
- Story isn't very engaging



Original Publication: November 4, 2004

Kururin Squash

By Ben Kosmina

REVIEW

Kururin 'copter shot the sky! Kururin 'copter landin' on my eye!

Kuru Kuru Kururin debuted for both the Japanese and European Game Boy Advance launches. The idea was deceptively simple -- all you have to do was guide a constantly rotating stick through a maze and reach the goal without hitting any obstacles. Doing so makes you lose time and health. Three hits and you have to start again. Kururin Squash is the third game in the series, and as such, it expands on this basic idea of navigating your way through a maze. In addition to the standard helicopter, you're now able to guide specially designed helicopters that allow you to punch, dive, shoot flames and throw tornados.

As mentioned in my impressions, the first thing that will strike you about the game is the incredible graphic style. (Take a look at the intro, which is available for download to see for yourself.) The graphics are crisp and bright, and all the characters in cutscenes are moved around as though they were puppets on sticks, with additional sticks used for controlling their arms. If they want to change expressions, the character will flip around and a completely different version of the same character will be on the other side. It's a really refreshing look, and I've never seen anything like it before.

The levels themselves are fully polygonal, which is a massive leap from the 2D (but still excellent) sprite graphics of the previous games. The mazes have some great transparency effects that allow you to see, for example, forests with butterflies underneath you. Other high points for the GameCube version are the lighting and particle effects. It's quite strange to see such great effects in a puzzle game, but

there they are. Dust will kick up when you punch walls, lasers will leave light halos, and there are surprisingly massive explosions for destroying enemies. Enemies caught in tornados will be spun high in the air and fly right towards the camera. The effects are subtle, but very pretty.

The game's soundtrack is quite decent. Although the music tracks clock in at around a minute before they begin to loop, they're pleasant enough for you not to notice. There're a large variety of instruments used, including a very Seventies-like "wikky-wa" guitar melody when you successfully complete a level. Each level's music suits its area - the sky levels have airy, futuristic music, the ocean level music is wonderfully mellow, and the boss theme is suitably frantic. Most of the sound effects are strikingly similar to the Game Boy Advance games, which is not a problem, as it keeps a sense of familiarity. Most other sounds are similar to typical video-game sounds, but it's wonderfully satisfying to hear the "whoosh" of the flamethrower Heririn (or helicopter). The only problem that I have with the game's sound are the noises used for the character speech. It's a kind of high-pitched tweeting, and because I use headphones a lot, it rattles right through my brain.



Kururin Squash mixes elements from the previous games -- that is, the guiding of a constantly rotating stick through a maze without hitting anything -- and adds new helicopters that cause the player to think a bit more carefully when guiding them. The Punch Heririn can be used to destroy obstacles and enemies, but you get a bit of recoil from it, so you need to allow a little leeway when you use it. The Dive Heririn will cause you to think on two different levels, as you'll have to play through sections of levels which need to be quickly navigated by rising and submerging again, in some cases fighting strong currents and whirlpools. The Flame Heririn makes things incredibly tough, as the levels take place entirely on-rails. Using the Control Stick will freely rotate the Heririn, and you'll occasionally need to dodge precariously placed crystals and massive enemies that chase you throughout the level. The Tornado Heririn also allows for some clever puzzles. Some will see you temporarily blocking an enemy dispenser; others will have you safely riding in a tornado as you launch it down a corridor full of flamethrowers. You'll also need to learn to use those special Heririns for clever boss battles. Eighting have gone all-out in using the GameCube to create an expanded Kururin experience.

Kururin Squash is also the first game in the series to introduce currency. Strewn throughout the stages are gold coins -- collect all of them in a stage in addition to not getting hurt at all and you'll earn yourself a perfect clear. Coins can also be earned by defeating enemies. You won't need to collect those, as they'll be collected automatically. Coins can be used in the various shops on the map screen (the Carnies from Kururin Paradise make cameo appearances in running the shops), where you'll be able to purchase various items. They include world maps, a GBA to GC Link Up Mini-Game, additional Heririns, Customizable HUDs, and Teacher Hare Movies that show you how to beat the stages safely. Some of the Heririns include a Chocolate Bar, a Tank, and a Heririn with Nintendo logo blades that plays the Super Mario Bros. coin sound when you press the horn. Collecting all of the shop items is purely optional, but it makes for a good reason to return to the game.



The Battle Multiplayer in Squash definitely seems to be more fun than the Race Mode. In Race, avid Kururin players have a distinct advantage over novices, whereas with Battle it's all about beating each other up, powering up, and collecting the most coins. The tables can quickly turn if you have the right power up. In Race, although the leader gets a handicap of becoming larger, they can easily overcome this if they're a skilled player. The GBA to GC link-up game is basically just a memory match game, which is a bit of a shame.

The biggest injustice is that this will be the third Kururin game to not see the light of day outside of Japan. It's totally bizarre as to why, as the game represents everything that Nintendo could possibly want -- a simple, yet fun concept, a new franchise, and a game that can be played without having to worry about the language barrier. If you like your puzzle games and have not heard of the Kururin series before, I'd highly recommend getting this game. Actually, I'd recommend all three, as they're all stellar games. Kururin Squash continues the series' legacy of great fun, lastability, and typical Japanese wackiness. As an import game, the language barrier is zilch.



Score

9.5

Pros

- + BRILLIANT art style.
- + The different Heririns make for some brilliant new puzzles.

Cons

- The GBA-GC link game is lame.
- The high-pitched bird voices during cutscenes.



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The original RFN shirt design features "character art" of Jonny, Greg, James, and Lindy, all provided by listener David Ochart. The overall graphic design is by Amanda Albert. The front features all four beloved RFN personalities arranged in the style of the classic "black box" NES packaging; the back says "NintendoWorldReport.com" and "Est. 1999".



NEXT ISSUE



Next month we hit 12 issues of Powered Off!

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poweredoff@nintendoworldreport.com

Classic Staff Fan Art

By Nicholas Bray

