# NintendoWorldReport
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## SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD
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## EXCLUSIVE ARTICLE
Join Video Games, See the World!

## GOLDENEYE WII INTERVIEW
With Graham Hadmaier

## A LINK BETWEEN WORLDS
Read our review inside!

# WHERE ARE WE?

**By Nicholas Bray**

This issue James Jones explores real world locations vicariously through playing various games, and ponders why more game developers don't set their games in lovingly recreated real world places.

Feature wise, we have articles on grinding in JRPG's, Zach Miller returns with a Poké-fever induced Nerds and Men, along with the sounds and tones of Metroid: Other M.

On the review front, we have a collection of Mario 3D World, Bravely Default, Goldeneye Wii, Mario Party: Island Tour and Zelda: A Link Between Worlds.

On top of that, we have an interview with Graham Hagmaier on the topic of Goldeneye 007 for the Wii, Staff Sez, Extra Life and Staff Profiles.

Please enjoy.

**Any questions comments or game ideas can be sent to:**
**poweredoff@nintendoworldreport.com.**

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# Join Videogames: See the World

By James Jones

There's probably some truth to the old recruitment pitch the US Navy once used – if you found yourself stationed on a ship you probably do get to see the world. If you're an enlistee based in Norfolk life its probably a bit less exotic, but this is rapidly getting off-topic.

Playing games feels a bit like being stuck in port. Allow me to explain.

I've spoken at length about the stultifying lack of quality in my NES game collection. There was one title that I actually enjoyed, the Broderbund non-classic Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego. It's not good. Its historical accuracy is open to interpretation. Its depiction of the world is horribly limited by the NES color pallet. But it did do one thing important thing, besides come bundled with a desk encyclopedia – which seems the kind of thing that would happen before the general availability of the Internet. It instilled in me a sense of wonder about the world.

This seems like high praise for a game that alternately depicts Russia as either Red Square or as a Boyar clad in fur, riding a horse through the snow, but it's true. I was four, what did I know of the world? For me it ended at the street. The fact remains that Where in Time showed me places I didn't even know existed. Then it was off to the encyclopedias. Not the one that came with the game though, it was horrible.
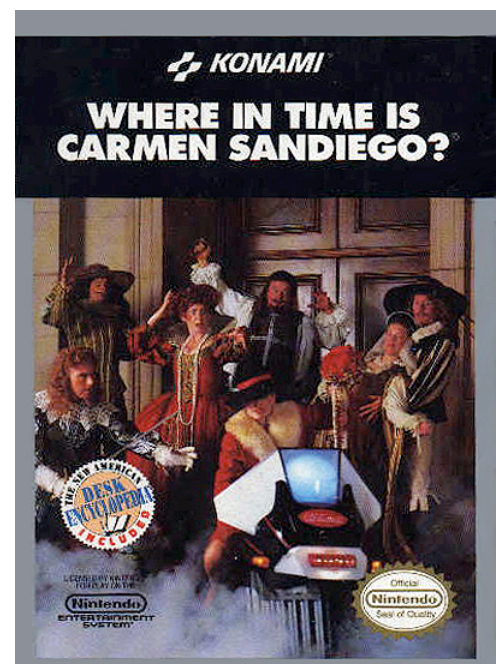
I'm not suggesting a "Learning is Fun" approach to gaming, I had a younger sister and understand that game companies have no capacity to successfully execute this phrase. What I am saying is that the Carmen Sandiego series does recognize one fact that gaming seems to ignore: our world is a very interesting place.

Game developers do a very good job imagining worlds unlike our own, creating places that are alien while seeming just familiar enough to remind us of home. They also do a very good job recreating the same handful of places – Middle Eastern towns (although crucially never specific towns, mostly just stereotypical towns in fictitious countries), North American cities, and maybe the odd foray into places like the streets of Hong Kong.

Perhaps this is why I found Assassin's Creed so incredibly frustrating. I really was just in it to explore Tyre, Acre, and Jerusalem. I couldn't care less about Desmond. If those segments didn't exist, if the game took place in these infrequently visited yet spectacular cities it would have been better – a point Ubisoft even acknowledges as they continue to de-emphasize him. Not only did you get access to monumental architecture half a world away (assuming you live in North America), but you got to climb all over it and experience it in ways you couldn't even in person. I found it captivating. I spent more time climbing to the highest point, trying to sight something worth exploring, and finding my way to my next stop on the tour bus.



There are so many unique places in the world that even if I get to travel as much as I like I'll never see them all. Even if I did I wouldn't be able to see them with the freedom and ease that games offer.

But beyond using games to plan my future travel itinerary, I think there's something a little more breathtaking about a place that actually exists instead of a place that is invented. These places have history, have stories, and are part of the human experience.



When in Germany, I took a photograph of a chapel attached to the nave of Mainz Cathedral. At the time it wasn't a particularly noteworthy corner of the overwhelming cathedral, but I've since hung it on my wall but not because I find it visually arresting. What I find interesting about it is the confluence of a Baroque chapel alter and a Gothic stained glass window that features Romanesque images of the bishops who comprise the cathedral's thousand years of Apostolic Succession. In that one image, of that one corner, there is a much abbreviated history of that city. From that one photograph I've learned more about the history of that city then I did in my entire time there. For example: I've learned how the bishops, whose names are in the window, swung between Papal loyalty and loyalty to the Holy Roman Emperor, and how that effected the political fates of the city.

Again, I'm getting sidetracked.

The fact of the matter is experiencing this very real place set off a desire to learn. While it would be unreasonable to say that games would have the same effect as visiting the actual place, it isn't a stretch to say that moving about a place you never knew was real, or seeing a place you've only seen in images, is bound to trigger just a little bit of curiosity and wanderlust. I'm merely suggesting that more developers would be wise to turn some of their very talented artists onto real-world monuments and less on bombed out husks of San Francisco.

I know setting games outside of cultural comfort zones may prove more challenging, but maybe that will contribute to an overall more creative result.

# The Japanese (Dragon) Quest for Perfection

**By James Charlton**          Original Publication: August 5, 2010

**Or why you have to grind in Japanese RPGs.**



I was asked in our "Ask the NWR Japan Crew" forum thread about why certain Japanese games tend to emphasise monotonous game elements such as grinding and fetch quests.

This got me thinking that a lot of people might be interested in why that is the case and because I've lived in Japan long enough, I think I can take a shot at giving everyone a decent answer.

As with lots of things based around Japanese culture, customs, and belief, it stems from history. For example, do you know why the Japanese drive (and walk) on the left-hand side? it's because the Samurai used to carry their Katana on the left hip and wouldn't want to accidentally maim anyone they walk next to or pass by in the street. The tradition continues to this day, despite the lack of swords being carried around modern day Tokyo, people will instinctively move to the left on an escalator.

You may not realise it, but level grinding in Dragon Quest (et al) is very similar to what the actions of a real Edo-period Samurai master were.

Let me explain. The incredible swordsmanship and deadly bow accuracy of the Samurai was not an accident or some natural born talent, it was in fact due to extraordinary determination and monotonous daily repetition of their arts.

This wasn't like learning some martial arts at your local gym every Saturday afternoon. We're talking intensive training every day without fail, until you could hit that straw target in the centre, on horseback, at 40mph - every single time. (Have you ever got 2000 points in the archery target range in Ocarine of Time? A Samurai would have)

The same thing applies to all other arts (martial or otherwise), from dancing to throwing someone over your shoulder and punching them in the face. Everyone wants to master their art, be the absolute best at what they do.



Doing something by halves is called being "Chuto-Hanpa" in Japanese and has quite a derogatory meaning. It's not something you'd want said about you or your work. That's why the Japanese make sure everything they do is not the least bit Chuto-Hanpa, effort above all else is celebrated in Japan.

Follow this train of thought and maybe now you'll start to see the repetitious parts of games like Pokemon and Dragon Quest in a different light. When Ash vows to be the best Pokemon trainer, he's actually continuing the tradition of the Samurai and other professions. If you tell a kid to master trigonometry or algebra, they might not take fondly to it. Give them some cuddly monsters to train and, heck, they'll take up that challenge any day of the week.

In RPGs like Pokemon, Dragon Quest, and Final Fantasy, how you go about mastering your "art" is by levelling up all your characters to level 100, a momentous task considering how long it takes to do this. Multiply this across different weapons, upgrades, and side-characters and it might start to feel like a second job.

But in Japan, the idea of repeating something until perfected is taught at a very young age,  a look at the writing system shows proof of that. I've been studying Kanji (on and off) for about 5 years now and I've yet to even reach the proficiency of a Junior High School student, because my way of studying is more of the "do it when you feel like it" approach as apposed to the systematic way that is taught in Japanese schools from the start. I've seen teachers make kids rewrite an entire page of Kanji drills because the curly bit at the top of the character was slightly curved inwards instead of outwards. When that kind of process is drilled into you at an elementary level, it's easy to see why there are fewer complaints about repeating boring tasks in Japanese culture as a whole, when compared to other countries.

Japan has a huge hobby culture, everyone has something they do passionately. For kids it tends to be things like collecting bugs and insects, something that manifests itself in games like Animal Crossing or Zelda: Twilight Princess. More universal are things like collecting trading cards or figures. I'm sure many of you reading this have had a huge collection of something at one point or another, but even collecting gets taken to another level in Japan, sometimes bordering on the excessive.

This is where this noble belief has its downsides, when someone turns the quest for perfection into an obsession. There are people in all cultures that have compulsive or obsessive personalities, but possibly due to the reasons I mentioned earlier, it seems like Japan has more than its fair share.

The word geek is often translated to "otaku", but the actual meaning of otaku is more close to "obsessed geek", something rather different than someone who just reads comic books from time to time. Do a web search for otaku and I'm sure it wont be long until you find a photograph of someone's tiny bedroom filled to the ceiling with figures and toys. I think that the otaku collecting culture stems from this "quest for perfection" that is so integral in Japanese society, it is this very culture that feeds back into the gaming scene. I'm sure if you ask many Japanese developers if they were an otaku when they were younger, the answer will be mostly "hai" (a Japanese phrase meaning yes/OK"). Suda 51, creator of the No More Heroes games, fully admits that he still is one - no surprises there.

I'm not suggesting that all RPG developers and RPG players are obsessive nerds that feed off each other in some kind of circle of nerdom, I'm just saying that the influences are there and most probably do affect how those games are made on some level. This could help explain the gameplay elements, and the fact that the very nature of RPGs makes it so that they require more dedication than most other genres.

People who play RPGs in Japan have a certain expectation that they will be given a traditional story, usually revolving around the idea of a young boy/girl leaving their village on a long arduous task to defeat some evildoer. This is because, like most of us, the Japanese can relate this kind of story to their own lives: leaving their home (village), increasing their knowledge and perfecting their skills at college,(levelling up their character), working hard to please/defeat their boss (enemy) for ultimate fortune and success until you retire (and think about replaying the best bits). The struggles that they (and indeed all of us) have to go through in life are worth it because they know that their hard work will pay off in the end and they will get the ending that they deserve.

This is true in both the virtual and real life, hard work pays off, whether it's schoolwork or monster battling - your efforts will be ultimately rewarded by how much time you put in. As this is such a core belief in Japan, I'm pretty sure that this will exist in Japanese videogames in some way or another for a good while.

I just hope that I've given some explanation, so that at least now you can understand that there is not always something malicious behind level grinding and fetch quests, it's just the Japanese developers letting players have the chance of mastering their character in a way that requires complete dedication so as to separate the "half doers" from the Samurai masters.

If that gives you a feeling of triumph and pride when you reach your goals, and your friends recognise your outstanding achievements and bow to your awesomeness, what's wrong with that? If that means hitting slimes in the face for 100 hours, then so be it, because you know that you'll do it anyway - the reward will be so worth it.
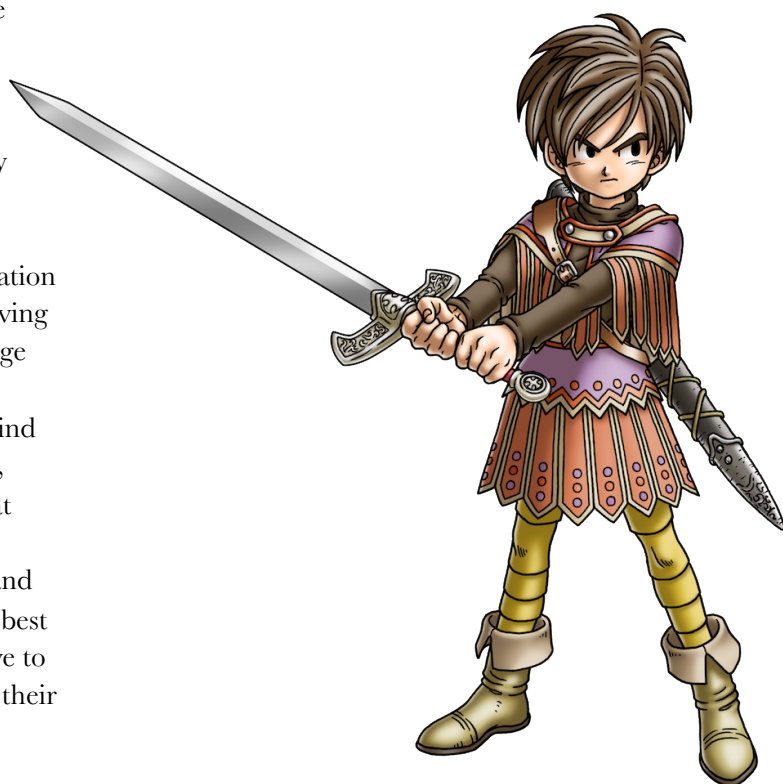
# Of Nerds and Men: Singularity

**By Zachary Miller**

**Once again Zach passes over the Pokémon event horizon.**

It was supposed to be different this time. Yes, I'll admit, I fell head over heels for Red & Blue back in the day…we all did. When Gold & Silver came out Pokémon was more beautiful than I ever could have imagined. In both games my Pokédex was complete. And let's not forget the interesting sideshows: Yellow (which I beat) and Crystal (which I put effort into). You might say that after the GB/GBC run of the series I was satiated. Oh, I also bought the N64 Stadium games and Pokémon Snap. You did too, don't lie to me. And even though I basically skipped the Ruby/Sapphire/Emerald games, which people tell me is for the best, I still bought both Fire Red and Leaf Green because, dammit, I loved those original games. I beat one of them, the other was purely for trading purposes. Despite that, I was clearly done with the series. I would go on to lead a meaningful life, trading in the time I would have spent catching more of them all to curing cancer, diabetes, and genetically engineering a woman to look exactly like Brandy Carter from Liberty Meadows (we all need hobbies).

"RUN AWAAAAY!"

Whatever, man. Pokémon Pearl and Diamond came out for the DS and I poured every second of spare time into that game. I bought a player's guide and collected them all again. I logged well over 100 hours into that stupid little cart, staying up well past my bedtime to catch the 87 legendary Pokémon (seemingly) that these DS games introduced. There's a reason Pokémon games only have one save file: it's because of people like me, who collect every goddamn Pokémon and customize their movesets and give them all different items to hold. When Platin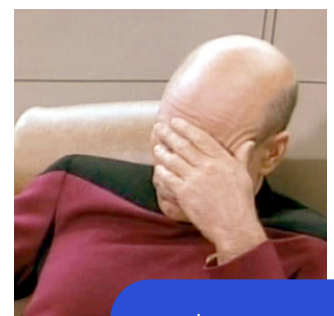um came out, I actually beat the game again, using my secondary team from Pearl. Oh yes, I had multiple Elite Four ready teams. But that was it folks. After fully and completely digesting the DS Pokémon games, I hung up the towel on the series. You have to quit while you're ahead, leave the party before it's over, jump off the wagon before you fall off the wagon, etc. I dedicated my life to education, giving a lecture series on the Dinosauria at the Alaska Museum of Science & Nature and, between classes, I wrote and illustrated a twelve-issue Danger Girl miniseries that J. Scott Campbell personally endorsed.

These were pre-order figurines. I have the Ho-oh one (even though I didn't pre-order the game).
Why's there an Arceus figure and how do I get one? Also, if any of you have a Lugia figurine that you don't want, I will buy it off you.

Yeah, and pigs fly. Before too long Pokémon HeartGold & SoulSilver came out and I immediately noticed that it was a remake of my favorite games in the series. So I was on that like fly on stink, sinking months of my clearly aimless life into capturing every Pokémon known to man at the time. I participated in all the special "go download this Pokémon" events at GameStop. I got that Celebi that takes you on a unique quest in the game. I attached that Pokéwalker to my person and carried it around with the zeal that a proud papa would his new baby boy. I was more attached to that LCD screen than I currently am to my insulin pump, and the insulin pump is always attached to me. I used that Pokéwalker to catch special Pokémon, like Surfing Pikachu and Flying Pikachu and…other Pokémon with special moves that they wouldn't otherwise learn and I achieved a living Pokédex.

I agree, Captain. This endeavor was misguided.

If you don't know what a Living Pokédex is, let me just say, thank god. Go spend time with your children or build a model airplane or something that's actually worthwhile. But I don't have children and I was never into model airplanes, so I spent all of my time breeding, trading, and catching Pokémon like mad in an effort to have one of every kind of Pokémon stored in the PC. That means I had every evolutionary stage of every Pokémon from every game up to that point. Do you know how many Pokémon that is? That is three-thousand, two-hundred and seventy-five Pokémon. At least, that's what it eventually felt like. There came a point, probably during my millionth trip up and down the Bicycle Road (eggs hatch based on steps taken), that perhaps I'd taken some wrong turn down the road of life. But just as those existential thoughts snuck into my mind, the Egg I was carrying around hatched and I finally had that Magby that I'd wanted for so long. But I will tell you this: after I achieved this most illustrious of Pokémon fanatic goals, I was done. What was there left to achieve? And so I left the series with dignity, having completed all my goals. I hung up my Pokémon hat and went on to greater things; namely, game design. I designed and helped produce a side scrolling, Metroidvania-esque game featuring the Danger Girls in a prehistoric "Lost World" setting. Game journalists loved it, except for Polygon, who gave it a 3.5.

didn't even care. I bought Black 2 when it was on sale for fifteen measly dollars at Best Buy and I only plug it in when I need to download an event Pokémon at GameStop (yes, I still do that). Perhaps stupidly, I transferred several of my HeartGold Pokémon over to Black, thinking I'd be spending more time with that game. My Living Pokédex is no more, but my memory of that blessed event remains strong.

Of course, the series' siren song was too powerful to ignore for long and I jumped on board with Pokémon X & Y without hesitation, despite my "meh" feelings towards the game immediately prior to launch day. Even Alex's lukewarm review caused me to, at the time, double down on my rock steady intention to not buy the game at launch. Like Pokémon B&W2, I would wait for that inevitable sale. I am clearly an idiot, and also a consumer whore. I went to Best Buy on launch day and stood in line like a sucker and put down my $40. On the way out of the mall, I stopped outside of GameStop and downloaded my Shiny Giratina too. Upon turning Pokémon X & Y on, you are immediately slapped in the face by the sheer polygonal look of it all. Suddenly, Pokémon has made a quantum leap into the current century and I can no longer go back to how things used to be. Already I hear cries of fowl and wistful longings for the graphical style that defined the series for so long, but I think those people are idiots.

Want me to ruin Oshawott forever?

I'LL TAKE TWO.

Look, we both know that's a complete lie. Pokémon Black & White came out and even though I may have been feeling jabs of franchise fatigue, I bravely pressed on. But alas, this time the pull was weaker. I merely beat the main campaign then looped through the game's surprisingly large second chunk of map area and ended up at the Elite Four again, who had actually gotten stronger. I didn't beat them a second time; I just didn't have it in me. When Black & White 2 hit stores, I

This is how Pokémon was always supposed to look. You know it, I know it, stop pretending otherwise. The graphical appeal is particularly impressive when you consider that there are something like seven hundred goddamn Pokémon now, some with different forms, including Mega Evolutions, and they are all represented with 3D character models. Now, obviously, the Pokémon Company is running out of ideas. There are Pokémon that are ice cream cones, bags of garbage, and gears. There are also now Pokémon that are swords that could potentially be held and used by other Pokémon. But seriously, I am back in at full volume. I've spent almost 40 hours doing whatever and I've only got four Gym Badges to show for it. I've become obsessed with finding and catching each Pokémon I come across, so I've developed a system for doing so. I'm also training a secondary team in case one of my primary team members starts to lose its appeal. My Chesnaught is at Lv. 41 and is already on the chopping block, largely because Grass is a worthless type and he's not learning any good Fighting moves (he's Grass/Fighting). His replacement may include Honedge's lineage, Amaura, or Salamance (currently Shelgon). I started training the Pansage/Pansear/Panpour trio, but I've already got perfectly good Grass, Fire, and Water Pokémon and those monkeys don't develop secondary types when they evolve, so screw 'em. I did just learn that I missed an Abra though, so that will be happening.

You may remember that, in Red/Blue/Yellow, the way to win was to pick up an Abra early, evolve it up to Alakazam, let it learn Psychic, and then beat the game with that guy ALONE. Because of Psychic's imbalance, Dark types were introduced in Gold/Silver/Crystal with the express intent of rebuffing Psychics and not much else. That's not really possible anymore since there are, like I said, about a million different Pokémon now with all sorts of occasionally contradictory types. Some of them aren't weak to anything,like Spiritomb, who is an asshole. It's difficult to keep track of it all now, and with X/Y's new Fairy type, I feel like it's a losing battle. I just know that I can't remember what Poison is weak to and why Trapinch (who is Bug, right?) isn't taking double damage from Flying attacks.

The point I'm trying to get across is that my name is Zach, I'm a Pokémon Addict, and I will probably also buy Pokémon Z (assuming that's a thing).

# The Sound and Tone of Other M

**By Nate Andrews**

**Narrative flaws aside, this Metroid game creates a fitting atmosphere.**



Samus passes through the door and lowers her arm cannon. The camera pulls in to flank her as she takes slow, echoing steps through the abandoned civilian quarters. Her visor burns a bright, greenish yellow against the dark as it sweeps the room, confirming the space's emptiness.

But there is something there, in one of Other M's taut, quiet spaces: a legitimate tension.

It's the last thing I expected to stumble across in a game that manages to foul up so many other world-building devices. When Samus wraps up an emotionless spiel, though, and finally sets off on her lonesome into the Bottle Ship, Other M can conjure a proper dread.

An initial part of this stems from the game's figurative and literal darkness. Before she remedies a power situation early on, the corridors and tight stretches Samus dashes through are almost prohibitively dark—the kind of dark that's paired with ominous drones and far off rattles, bangs, and organic skitters. Powerful as she is, these situations border on scary, encapsulating the sense of clawing isolation the series is closely associated with.



And when the tension breaks and enemies swoop in, their arrival is heralded by contextually appropriate music; low on melody, detail, and personality (a musical theme throughout Other M), it acts as a racing pulse for combat. These tracks, heard in the game's frequent kill room-type encounters, don't let up until the threat is dealt with; afterward, they drop back down to a current of ambient noise under the clanks of Samus' feet.

Unlike most other games in the series, Other M's music generally has one of two practical purposes: to heighten the state of vulnerability in loneliness, or to make sequences of combat as heart attack-intense as possible. No one atmosphere is ever made distinct or memorable because of music. A rumbling slurry of almost industrial tones backs most; there are no Norfairs, no Brinstars—no meaningful themes to punctuate the moment. And in this case, there doesn't necessarily need to be.

If certain aspects of its presentation were stripped away, the atmosphere of Other M would make great fare for a purely 2D game. The dynamic of vulnerability and distance in playing as Samus from an outside perspective it creates isn't wholly unique to the series, but, unlike other parts of Other M, it is done well.

**We all had great childhoods, all thanks to countless hours playing in front of the teevee.**

Welcome back to another installment of Staff Sez! The new year is upon us, and what better way to start it off than by looking back at our better gaming years! Leaving aside the forced comedy for a bit, we all have great memories of playing games as kid, but we have even better memories of playing games with our friends and relatives. We cried, we laughed, we cursed when we weren't supposed to and we made friends and enemies alike. Today we look back at our fondest gaming memories and bring with us our favorites.

So without further ado, let's get the memories rolling!

**J.P. "Hogs the controller" Corbran said...**

Perfect Dark: Everybody gang up on the guy with the Farsight

**Zach "Screams at the TV" Miller said...**

Man, I loved me some NES TMNT2, bro. That sh*t was off the chain!

**James "Has Cheeto cheese covered fingers" Dawson said...**

Jump Ultimate Stars: I played it for years with my DS-Play pals

**Andrew "Is stuck with the third party controller" Brown said...**

Bomberman 64 and Mario Party 1. Good times

**Minoru "Screams at his mother that the sibling is being annoying" Yamaizumi said...**

M.U.S.C.L.E. With your friends, no game is boring

**James "Brags about his victory" Charlton said...**

Super Mario Kart, green shell Vs red shell - jousting match!

**Patrick "Stands in front of the TV" Barnett said...**

Playing Donkey Kong Country with my brother

**Daan "Turns off the gaming console out of spite" Koopman said...**

Playing Mario Kart DS with my friends and family

**Josh "Gets made fun of for losing" Max said...**

Anytime I turned on Smash Bros on the ol' N64

**Neal "Picks the worst game to play" Ronaghan said...**

GoldenEye 64 - Rocket Launchers on Complex

**Pedro "Cries about the game being too hard" Hernandez said...**

Mario Kart 64, though I have too many memories to mention

# GoldenEye Wii Interview With Graham Hagmaier

**By Neal Ronaghan**

We interviewed one of GoldenEye's producers about how the game came to be, what goes into making it, and more.

At the recent event in San Francisco, we talked to Graham Hagmaier, producer at Activision, about GoldenEye Wii. He talks about what goes into being a producer, how they adapted GoldenEye to modern times, and where he thinks the Bond franchise is going next.

**Nintendo World Report (NWR):** How did you start out in the games industry?

**Graham Hagmaier (GH):** I began working in quality assurance, and then moved my way into production. So now I'm obviously working on GoldenEye.

**NWR:** What exactly do you do as a producer?

**GH:** That's a tough question. You kind of wear a lot of hats. You do things such as events like these. Our main job is to make sure that the developer gets everything that they need to make the game, whether that be finding a cinematics house to in-game cinematics, licensing a middleware for them to use as a game engine, or going in and looking at different weapons for our legal department. Also, staffing events, promoting the game, dealing with retailers, doing demonstrations for first parties, and also going through that quality assurance process, and making sure we hit that quality bar for the consumer. We make sure that we're making great games that deserve the Activision moniker.

**NWR:** How exactly did the GoldenEye project begin?

**GH:** That really an Activision/Eurocom idea. We basically worked together to create that. I've been on the production team for about a year and a half now, so it started a little bit before I got on the project.

When Activision got the license for James Bond, obviously one of the greatest Bond games is GoldenEye 64. We looked into reimagining that game for 2010 and bringing Daniel Craig into it.

**NWR:** What did you do to separate it from the original GoldenEye?

**GH:** The first thing is to give it a big graphical upgrade. It's a huge upgrade.

Also, you know gameplay has gone a lot further since 1997. I mean, it's been 13 years, so things like running were added, which wasn't in the first game. There's little things like that and bits of nostalgia, such as moments and levels.

We did a lot of updates, and introduced new elements of gameplay. The original was more of a run-and-gun-style shooter, a bit more firefight friendly. Here, you can go guns-blazing, or you can do more of a stealth angle for it. There's a little bit more updates like that, and obviously level design, for a 2010 audience, has been upgraded. Players expect an 8 to 14 hour game, so our design has expanded to include that.

**NWR:** How did you go about updating the tank level, which was shown off at the event today?

**GH:** In the original level, you had the option to jump out of your tank, look around, and jump back in the tank. It was a bit more slower-paced than our new, updated version. We've got a new tank design, heat-seeking missiles, a gatling gun. We want to keep it more intense.

Also, the terrain has changed. It's 2010, and obviously St. Petersburg has changed. In 1995, it was the post-Cold War era and was still developing. It's been 20 years, so we wanted to update it. There are freeways you can drive onto or through.

**NWR:** Why did you make GoldenEye a Nintendo-exclusive title?

**GH:** It's really synonymous with the Nintendo 64. Activision also really thought there was an opening for the game on the Wii. There hasn't been a console-defining shooter for the Wii. Obviously World at War and Reflex has been good, and The Conduit was pretty good. We just think it's a perfect time for GoldenEye to come out and really take advantage of that audience and really bring that core shooter audience, that maybe played Modern Warfare or is going to play Black Ops, and get them to pull out their Wii again and play another shooter on the Wii.

It also supports our nostalgia for the multiplayer split-screen. I mean, the Wii's perfect for that. A lot of people play Wii Sports, and now they can play GoldenEye multiplayer with their friends. It's really accessible with the new Classic Controller Pro. You can also play it with the Wii Remote (Ed. note: I assume he means with Nunchuk), the Zapper, or the GameCube controller. You can just jump right in, and I just think it's a really accessible game. I know it sounds cliché, but it is really one of those easy to learn, hard to master things. It's one that you can with your little sister, or play it with your buddies.

**NWR:** Do you feel that there is a preferred control scheme between the traditional controls and pointer-based controls?

**GH:** I think they're both viable options. I've commented on it before, and our developer is split. There are people on the team who swear by the Wii Remote, and others who love the Classic Controller Pro. It's really the type of audience you are. Do you play a lot of Wii shooters and are more comfortable with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk, or do you play a lot of 360 or PlayStation 3 shooters and are more comfortable with the dual analog? Truly, I like both. There are advantages to both. You can lean with the Nunchuk and do melee moves with a shake. The controls are fully customizable, so that's great, too.

**NWR:** How do you feel about Conduit 2 being delayed until 2011?

**GH:** I have no idea. I have no comment. I obviously don't work for Sega or High Voltage or anyone like that. I think GoldenEye and Call of Duty: Black Ops are going to be great shooters this holiday season. It's going to be something, and I hope fans will buy both games.



**NWR:** Do you GoldenEye and Call of Duty: Black Ops will cannibalize each other since they're being released a week apart?

**GH:** I don't know. I can't really speculate on that. I have no idea what the audience will go out and pick up. They'll be happy no matter what they pick up as there are two great shooters coming out for the Wii.

**NWR:** Where do you see the Bond franchise going from here?

**GH:** The movie is on hold right now, but they'll start up eventually and we'll be making movie games again. We'll be making Bond games from here until our license expires. We're definitely going to take advantage of that. I would say you'll see a mix of original games and movie tie-ins. It's a great franchise.
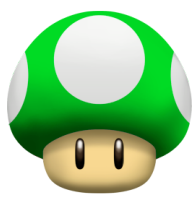
## The Rescue of Princess Blobette
**By Alex Culafi**

### It's a game, all right.

The Rescue of Princess Blobette is the Game Boy sequel to the NES A Boy and His Blob game. I'm not actually a fan of the series per se. Blobette was one of those games I had when I was younger that I definitely didn't buy and probably didn't receive as a gift; it was just lying around in my house. The game doesn't play like anything I would ever buy for myself, either.

The story goes that the protagonist from the first game and his alien blob friend are trapped in the castle tower of a crazy alchemist. Meanwhile, Princess Blobette sits captured and caged above a pot of boiling water. It's the job of the two protagonists to save her, escape the tower, and pick up some valuable treasure along the way. That's what the Internet told me—I couldn't actually gather that information on my own by playing. This is actually a running theme in Blobette. Having only the cartridge and without any kind of tutorial, I had to learn everything through action and experimentation. Of course, this is not always the best situation to be in when playing A Boy and His Blob.

The gameplay is sort of like an adventure game, but with a strong puzzle influence. You play as the boy, who carries a limited number of jelly beans of various flavors (like tangerine, vanilla, and apple), which he can feed to the blob to turn it into things like trampolines (to reach higher places) and keys (to get through doors). The flavors are listed but the resulting forms are not (until the action is taking place), so it's a game of guessing and sampling each option. There isn't a ton of room for experimentation, however, as one of the ways of losing occurs when you deplete your jelly bean supply, and since no ability to save or checkpoints are available, losing is as good as resetting your Game Boy. Making matters worse, the controls are terrible and
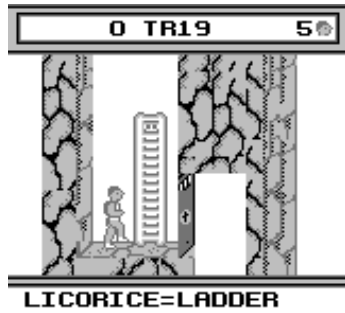
imprecise, making some jelly bean tosses completely inaccurate for little reason at all.

Thankfully, the game length can be incredibly short if you understand what you're doing (with minor glitching, a speed run can go through the game in under two minutes). Of course, that playtime can also be extended by spending hours in front of the first doors, where the key isn't immediately available and the game doesn't tell you how to use the trampoline to get the jelly bean that makes the key accessible. I'd be lying if I said getting the puzzle-completion rush from accomplishing a basic game mechanic wasn't part of the fun, though. Of course, the impreciseness can be infuriating too, like when the stiff falling controls cause you to miss a platform and pull a Donkey Kong by accidentally landing on a much lower level, which kills you.
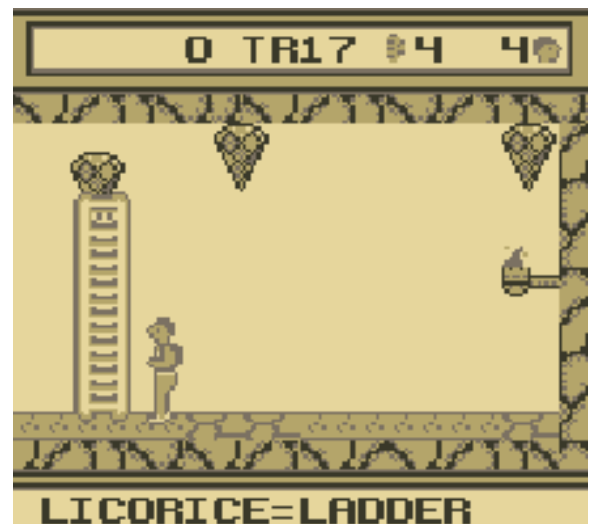
Like many Game Boy games, Blobette's technical stuff is nothing especially significant. The graphics are simplistic and the music—almost exactly the same as the original A Boy and His Blob—is equally limited.

So, this may not be the warmest Extra Life ever, but there is also a reason why Blobette gets one. If you already own this game, and want to dust it off for a good nostalgia trek, I recommend giving it another try. If you're a fan of the other games in the series, or just intrigued by the mechanics, you could very well have a blast with this. It's certainly interesting, and is not without its enjoyable aspects. Amidst the frustration, the game still has plenty of those "Oh! Now I get it!" moments.

*Images from The Video Game Museum and Wikipedia*

**Jon Lindemann**
**Nickname:** Lindy
**Age:** 39
**Location:** Atlanta, GA
**Favorite Pokémon:** Blastoise, just because I've always thought that a badass-looking turtle with two huge cannons poking out of its back is the coolest thing ever.
**Hobbies Outside Gaming?:** Sports, Music, Books
**Nintendo ID:** MrDiamondJ

**Game of the Month**
I just got a Wii U, so my game of the month is one I'd been looking forward to playing for a while: New Super Mario Bros. U.  I played it at Best Buy a couple of months ago, and that planted the seed in the back of my mind. I hadn't played a 2D Mario platformer on a console in a long time, so I'm having a lot of fun with it.  HD visuals really allow the environments to come to life.

**What New Character Would you Make for Nintendo?**
I'd make a grizzled soldier reminiscent of Solid Snake with a hint of Master Chief, with one key difference: he doesn't like to fight. In fact, he does everything in his power to avoid fighting. Not so much because he's a pacifist, but because he's lazy and just thinks that fighting is a waste of his time. Therefore, instead of training for war, most of his time is spent figuring out more and more elaborate schemes to get out of battle duty. Sort of a Nintendo Yossarian, for those familiar with the novel Catch-22. It would be a hilarious send-up of the soldier archetype used in many video games.

**Jonathan Metts**
**Nickname:** Jonny, j00ny
**Age:** 31
**Location:** Colorado
**Favorite Pokémon:** Snorlax
**Hobbies Outside Gaming?:** Podcasting, Movies, Music, Skiing
**Nintendo ID:** JonnyNWR (please follow -- friends list full)

**Game of the Month**
This is tough to answer at the end of the year. The most absorbing game has been Zelda ALBW. It's almost like a Zero Mission remix of my favorite Zelda game, A Link to the Past. It pushes all my pleasure buttons but isn't exactly original. I'm also gaining a lot of interest in Mario as the post-game content gets weirder and crazier, and my initial experiences with the multiplayer are genuinely fascinating -- it becomes a different game, with different objectives.

**What New Character Would you Make for Nintendo?**
Since I'm not creative, I'm going to dodge that question and just say that I want Birdo to get his/her own game, or at least be playable in more of the Mario series. I think it would be really cool to play as Birdo in 3D World, shooting eggs as his/her special ability and making all kinds of cute and hilarious sounds. Don't you want to see Fire Birdo and Tanooki Birdo?

Original Publication: November 29, 2013

# Super Mario 3D World By Andrew Brown

# REVIEW

**A world of difference over the 3DS game.**

When I was a kid playing Super Mario All-Stars and Super Mario World on my SNES, I was fascinated by the manuals that came included with Nintendo games of the era. Rather than the lazy black and white screen- captures of pixelated items, alongside poorly--translated descriptions that were normal for SomE GAmes (subliminally sublime, eh?), Nintendo manuals more often than not were tomes of beautiful artwork, entertaining back stories and multi-page enemy indexes.



Thumbing through hand--drawn renditions of Chargin' Chuck, colorful charts showing power-up hierarchies and the complete world map of Dinosaur Land, I would often think to myself; Some day, Mario games will match these drawings. We'll be able to play games that look so perfect that it's almost like playing this art, the way these pictures represent Mario's world, the way it's meant to be. Super Mario 3D World brought memories of those daydreams flooding back, and made me realize I was playing the reality of my childhood imagination. Welcome to Mario's world, 3D Land was just the beginning.

The game manages to successfully combine the best ingredients from every game the series has given us in the last thirty years of its existence, paying tributes to elements I didn't even know were sorely missed. Most obviously is that the latest adventure can now be played with up to five players. Four can jump into the game as one of Mario, Luigi, Toad, Peach (and of course Rosalina, but I won't whine about that Nintendo Direct here), and a fifth player can use the GamePad as an unseen assistant who can touch the levels to uncover secrets, bash blocks, restrain enemies and even blow certain enemies off their feet via the microphone. You need not be concerned about the single- player experience being any less of a focus however. Regardless of how many players there are, each type of play – single, two, three-player, etcetera, holds its own unique merits and all are a blast to experience.

Despite not playing as Toad or Peach since the days of the NES, I was taken aback by how familiar they played. The jumping and speed mechanics are so spot--on to the physics in Super Mario Bros. 2 that you'd almost forget it's been nearly three decades since the last time the whole gang adventured together like this. Each character is also diverse enough to require fine-tuning your playing style, making multiple playthroughs of the game just different enough each time.

The game's levels are a pure joy to navigate, capturing the true essence of a 2D Mario adventure in a 3D space in such a way that 3D Land before it could only vaguely touch upon. Each stage is creatively built and features memorable elements that sets it apart from the others, no two levels feel like simply "more of the same", even the multiple steam train levels found throughout 3D World have their own quirky twists. The soundtrack is another particular high note, taking some cues from games before it and expanding them into booming orchestral themes, whilst also dishing out plenty of catchy new tunes. You won't find any New Super Mario Bros. "bah"s in this game!



Gonna catch some tail.

Much like in the original Super Mario World, some of the classic enemies are replaced with strange new Sprixie Kingdom variations. Flying Dry Bones and Snow Pokeys? It feels both nostalgic and fresh at the same time. If I had one complaint to make, it would be that the boss battle standard is starting to show signs of age. Hisstocrat, the snake-like boss shown in trailers, is a great step in the right direction with some interesting new mechanics, but it's still the same old "three stomps and it's over." Likewise, one appearance of Boom Boom or Prince Bully is plenty for the game to establish their presence, but they show up repeatedly with very minor difference in execution. I would have adored seeing 3D battles with Bowser's Koopaling kids, their individual tricks being applied in creative new ways. Fortunately, you have hands down the coolest final boss sequence in any Mario game ever to look forward to, which completely outweighs any mediocrity of the bosses before it. I won't reveal spoilers, it's up to you to play it and find out.



Not since Super Mario World on the SNES has a game felt so chock--full of hidden bonuses. I won't reveal the specifics, but Rosalina really is just the tip of the iceberg. Added to that are the often minuscule hidden Luigis I mentioned in my feature, (remember to link!) which give you no reward beyond a smile to discover and serve no purpose other than a cool little Year of Luigi send off.

I want to personally shake the hand of whomever it was at Nintendo who came up with the idea of collectible stamps to use in Miiverse posts, it's such a simple feature but the practicality makes such sense to the Wii U's design, and I greatly look forward to seeing this feature implemented into many new games to come.

Super Mario 3D World is thoroughly enjoyable any way you look at it. If this is the new standard for Mario, any doubts about Nintendo's future are quickly laid to rest.

## Score

### 10

**Pros**
+ Fun GamePad features and Miiverse stamps
+ Gorgeous visuals and music
+ Many great new items and ideas
+ More secrets than any Mario game before it
+ Smooth, nostalgic Mario action

**Cons**
- Still waiting for 3D Koopaling battles...

# Bravely Default By Daan Koopman

# REVIEW

**Nintendo and Square Enix team up to close this year off in the best way possible.**

Final Fantasy has turned into somewhat of an incomprehensible beast. The series is now an unwieldy playground for outsiders. Bravely Default, on the other hand, is an attempt at stepping away down from the overly complex mechanics, and it's a win-win situation for newcomers and veterans alike. You give the bigger JRPG crowd something fresh and keep the door unlocked so that anyone can wander in. Bravely Default goes back to the basics, while giving the genre some tweaks of its own.

The center piece of every RPG is the story, and Bravely Default is no exception. Meet Tiz Arrior, who lives a normal life in a small town called Norende. However, fate has different plans for the 16-year-old, as a mysterious hole engulfs Norende in darkness. As the only living survivor, he begins rebuilding the town. While doing so, he meets Agnès Oblige, a vestal of the Wind Temple . She and the other players at the temples pray to crystals every day, but only recently have all of them been imbued with a dark aura, causing some terrible side effects.

The two decide to work together to find out how to bring the world back to its original state, and in doing so, they encounter many dangers along the way. Their biggest opponents are the Eternian Forces who are pushing for an anti-crystalism agenda to the whole world of Luxendarc. Along the way they team up with two other characters, Lee and Ringabel. The interplay between the various characters is done not only through cutscenes, but also through small banter sections called Party Chat. The regular cutscenes feature voice acting, which can be set to Japanese and English. At first, I was really unsure if I would like the English voices, but after a while I got used to them. Even so, you can change it on the fly at any moment.

You explore the world of Luxendarc on foot or with an airship. The world is quite varied, as you travel to oceans, deserts, and a land filled with flowers. The world map is your main HUB, and it is here that you find your next destination. Towns and important places standout on the map, making them easy to find. In these towns, you can progress the storyline or tackle some side objectives. These side quests will get you some rewards, so it is easy to get distracted and move away from the regular course for a while. Luckily, the handy map on the touchscreen will tell you about specific points of interest. If you are still lost on what happened before, you can look back at certain events in D's journal. This gives the game a sense of freedom without forcing you to walk about aimlessly.

Attack with the equipped weapon.
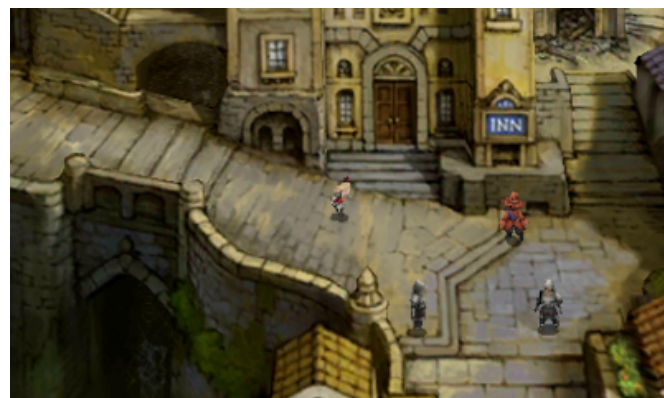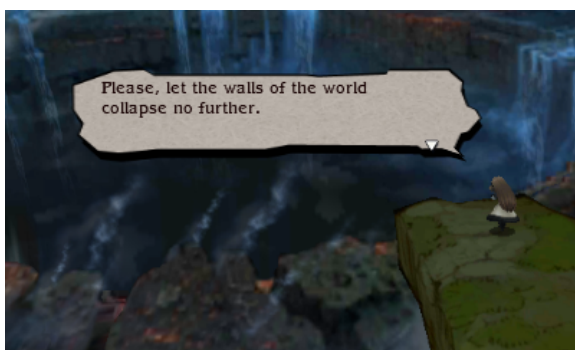
This sense of freedom extends to the battle mechanics, which brings elements of the old and new together. The game is a turn-based RPG, where you make decisions in various menus to find a winning strategy. The real twist is the Brave Points, which can be used to attack multiple times during a character's turn. There are two ways you can go about this, and it really depends on how defensive your strategy is. You can activate the Brave command directly four times, which allows you to give four blows to your opponents. While this can be useful with smaller enemies, your BP points will drop below zero, meaning that you will have to wait a number of turns to strike further. Sometimes it is wiser to use the default first, as it gives you a way to defend yourself, but it also adds an additional Brave Point. Juggling between these options and finding out which risks are worth taking, makes Bravely Default truly worth playing.

There are also SP, which allows you to attack outside the regular course of action. With SP, pressing the Start button will stop any enemy's movement in its tracks, allowing you a full frontal assault. While this sounds awesome, SP is mostly earned by putting your Nintendo 3DS in sleep mode for eight hours. Another option is to purchase a SP Drink from the eShop. I personally find this to be an extremely cheap idea. I say this because the game already allows you to customize your preferences in difficulty to a large degree. You can turn the destination marker off, decide if you want to gain experience, change your difficulty at any time, and change up the encounter rate in some major ways. It makes the SP Points and Drink quite worthless and a cheap way to include microtransactions.

Another unique element is the Summon Friend command, which allows you to use your registered Nintendo 3DS friends and StreetPasses to benefit combat. By selecting the option, you make room for a friend or guest to attack the opponent and to use a move they have pre-selected for you. There is actual benefit to using Summon Friend as much as possible, as it will raise your affinity and make your friends more effective for you in the long run. You must not forget, however, to update your information every so often at any of the save points in the game. It is also a good at showing how your friends are progressing throughout the adventure.

The final element in the battle trifecta is the job system, which adds another layer of depth to it all. In Bravely Default, you are able to change your abilities and possibilities on the fly with various jobs. To acquire new jobs, you will need to collect Asterisks. These can be given to any character, however many times you want. Each of the 24 jobs has its own perks behind it, and experimenting with them is the true way of pushing yourself forward. You have your traditional ones like the Knight or Black Mage, but there are also some less conventional ones like Ninjas and Pirates. Jobs have their own leveling system, separate from the character's level, that caps at fourteen. Through this manner, you can unlock brand new actions that require Battle Points. Another point is to check what kind of weapons prove effective for jobs and have them on standby for the surprising challenges ahead.



Hack and Slash

Next to all the regular content, you can also take on the task of rebuilding Norende Village. By using the same course of action as the Friend Summon, you can receive workers for the restoration cause. If you put them to work and they prove successful with their endeavors, shops and other buildings will open that reward your adventures with some sweet bonuses. You can even decide to upgrade stores to change up the things that are offered to you. It is a hefty piece of content that takes hours to complete, but the rewards can prove helpful in the long run. Nintendo and other players can also unleash special bosses in Norende called Nemeses. You can get special items by defeating them, but they won't respawn after you've beat them.



Oh its the giant green thing.

One thing that must be said about the title, is that the game looks and sounds great. The environments and characters have this uniquely drawn look to them, which makes them adorable to look at. There are moments when it all looks like a painting in motion. The 3D effect helps bring all of this to life, as it gives the dynamic camera angles and details more legs to stand upon. The music adds even more to the experience.

Bravely Default is a reminder of why the Nintendo 3DS was so strong this year. Various gameplay elements have never been this balanced before, and the story will keep you interested for many hours to come. The same goes for the presentation, which shows how lush and endearing games can truly be on the system. As a farewell to 2013, Nintendo of Europe couldn't have picked a better title. Not only because of quality, but also because it will last you for the remainder of December.
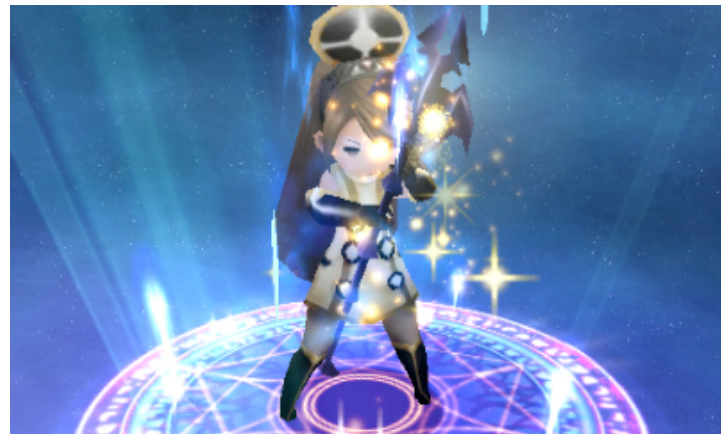






## Score

# 9.5

### Pros

+ Brilliantly connected with StreetPass and online
+ Enjoyable Norende restoration sidequest
+ Lush and strong presentation
+ Plot that never stops being intriguing
+ Trifecta of interesting gameplay elements

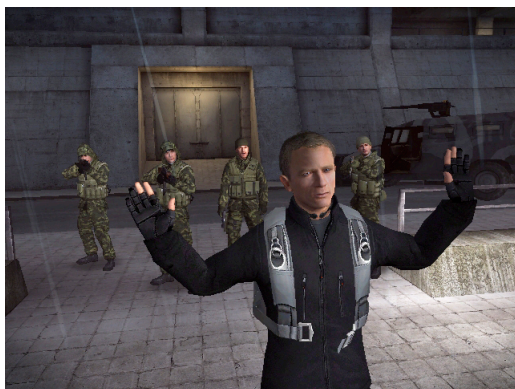### Cons

- Useless microtransactions

# GOLDENEYE 007

## Goldeneye 007 By Zachary Miller

# REVIEW

**James Bond heeds the Call of Duty in this impressive, action-packed shooter.**

I really didn't have any idea what to expect going into this game. I knew it was a remake of a beloved N64 shooter that doesn't really hold up today. I knew that Daniel Craig was replacing Pierce Brosnan, that the game was being hyped for its strong focus on multiplayer, and that almost nothing was known of the single-player campaign. That last part had me a little worried, honestly. During my time with the game for this review, I was able to rock the local multiplayer and the solo campaign. Impressions of the online multiplayer, which, judging from the match settings, looks surprisingly robust, will have to wait until I get to experience it with a gaggle of people. As of this writing, the game has not actually been released, after all.

It wouldn't be entirely fair to call GoldenEye a remake. It's more like the writers took the overall GoldenEye storyline and completely rewrote it to take place in the Daniel Craig Bond universe. This is a GoldenEye for the modern era, with modern gadgets and weaponry, and a James Bond who forgoes witty one-liners for fisticuffs and assassinations. It's not just Craig's face in the game, either—the man has extensive voicework, as does Dame Judy Dench. The campaign takes the big benchmark sequences from the original game, but connects those dots in very different ways than you remember. Whenever you do find a scene that tickles your nostalgia bone, it feels more like homage than anything else.

The gameplay is straight out of the recent Call of Duty games, right down to having an on-screen icon to remind you whether you're crouching or standing. Most of the time, it's Bond vs. The World, but there are occasions where he's got some backup. There are also times where he's driving a tank, which is still a blast. The vast majority of gameplay involves you, as Bond, shooting fools and collecting intelligence for MI6 with your Smartphone. The phone can also be used to hack certain pieces of electronic equipment.

The game adds a nice stealth aspect, too: Bond can assume a crouched walk, sneak up behind dudes, and quietly break their necks so that nobody raises an alarm, which would produce more guards.

There is a plethora of control options. You can use the Wii Remote and Nunchuk, Classic Controller, Classic Controller Pro, or GameCube Controller. All of these have unique default button layouts that can be customized to an extent. Of course, each one has its own pros and cons. The Wii Remote, for example, isn't as responsive when it comes to aiming. For me, the best option is the Classic Controller Pro, but there's something for everybody. You can even flip between the Remote itself and both Classic Controllers during the game without any hiccup.

Local multiplayer is pretty fun, but not because of the maps, which are quite small. Even with two people playing, the maps felt claustrophobic. The few open-air maps still felt very limited in dimension. What saves the local multiplayer is the fact that it is just plain fun in the first place, but also you can customize matches to your heart's content with unique game types and modifiers. There is no shortage of multiplayer content here; it's comparable to Smash Bros. Brawl in its sprawling scope.

GoldenEye looks great, and not just for a Wii game. It really does look good, with atmospheric outdoor areas, moody interiors, and great-looking character models. Enemy AI is pretty amazing. They find cover, run to safer places, call for backup, and eagerly use the butt of their guns whenever possible.

The sound design is similarly excellent. In addition to the voice acting, Eurocom and Activision were able to get David Arnold, who has scored every Bond movie since Tomorrow Never Dies, to provide an epic soundtrack. The game's script is penned by Bruce Feirstein, who wrote the original GoldenEye film. Finally, the theme song is a cover of the original film's sung by Nicole Scherzinger of the Pussycat Dolls. These guys spared no expense.

With high production values, an impressive solo campaign, and fun multiplayer matches, this GoldenEye certainly evokes the feel of the original while offering a modern take on the beloved game. Frankly, I haven't seen a more impressive Wii shooter. Old and new fans alike will find much to love, and I encourage everyone here to give it a shot.

Siri, detonate the bomb.

## 007

### Score

### 8.5

Pros

+ Fun local multiplayer with lots of customization
+ Great solo campaign
+ Impressive production values
+ Lots of control options

Cons

- Multiplayer maps are pretty small
- Some controller-specific oddities

# Mario Party: Island Tour By Kimberly Keller        REVIEW

**The bitter rivalry is now in 3D.**

Mario Party: Island Tour is the first of the franchise to come to 3DS, following the format of the overhauled Mario Party 9. However, instead of sticking to one formula, Island Tour presents various boards with unique gameplay and radically different play times. Island Tour is very clearly designed to complement the system, especially with an expanded solo mode and new styles of mini-games. Island Tour is a fine entry in the series that should bring out the competitive streak in all Mario Party fans, old or new.

Island Tour wastes no time inviting you and your friends to the party. From the moment you first select Party Mode, you can choose between six shiny new game boards and a seventh unlockable board, each one more unique and gimmick-filled than the last. Toad is the very gracious host this time around, as every board has a helpful description that lets you know skill or luck-based it is and also how long it should take. It's always good to make informed decisions when you go to a party, and time estimations are especially useful if you just want a quick game or are in the mood for something more traditional. Island Tour even manages to

make its solo mode engaging and competitive. Solo players have unique access to options like StreetPass Mini-games, Bowser's Tower, and Collectables.

Bowser's Tower, the jewel of the solo experience, is a fun way to keep the game going when there is no one around to play with. Players must make their way to the top of the tower by defeating computer players of varying difficulty on each level. Every five levels, Bowser sends down a boss to challenge the player in a battle game unique to the villain, culminating with Bowser himself at the top. Conquering the tower multiple times brings new rewards, ensuring new reasons to continually pick up the game. The only downside is inability to set the computer players' difficulty. For most floors, the computer will default to easy, which can hurt replay value once players start repeating mini-games.

However, Download Play is where this game shines. Up to four people can play at a time, choosing between Party and Mini-game modes. The two modes share the same features as they do in their solo version, with two exceptions. The Shy Guy's Shuffle City board, is exclusive to multiplayer mode and requires three to four real players, prohibiting any computer characters.
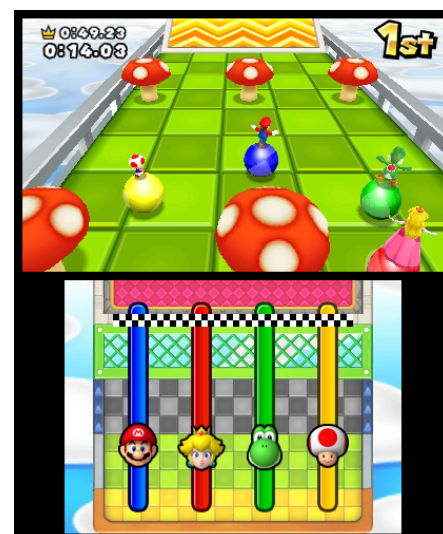
Island Tour departs from Mario Party 9 with a return to splitting up character movement, and only requires the collection of Mini Stars on one of its boards. Other boards feature special boosters or bonus cards to use, event spaces on the dice, or even no dice at all. It shakes things up quite nicely, ensuring there is more to each board than just a theme change. Even the usual focus on mini-games is lost on some boards, such as Rocket Road, where a mini-game only appears once every three turns.

Regardless of what board you play, inventive mini-games that take advantage of console features like the 3DS's gyroscope keep things fresh. They are all easy to grasp, though the directions and controls are repeated a little too often (and can't be skipped), which can get annoying pretty quickly in modes that utilize frequent mini-games. All of the mini-games can be played separately as well, in addition to several ones that can only be played outside of boards. A few puzzle games amp up the competition in Tetris/Dr. Mario-style multiplayer, while other games make use of the microphone and AR cards. The mini-games can also be played in a variety of other ways, too, including Time Attack and Hot-Air Hijinks, where players compete to reach a set number of wins. These modes are a nice way to play in a structured format beyond simply scrolling through and clicking mini-games in Free Play.

Unfortunately, Island Tour doesn't support any type of online multiplayer use. It's a shame, as it would've been a nice bonus to be able to play against live people anytime. True, it would be hard to imagine it in long game boards, as you would have to depend on people keeping the connection for up to an hour on some, but short and mini-game competitions could have thrived with this sadly absent feature.

StreetPass helps ease this a little bit as you can play against shadow characters from other systems. Stars appear next to their profiles, indicating difficulty level, and players can choose whether to compete against others on a randomly chosen mini-game or pass instead. Using StreetPass also unlocks special collectables.

The collectables tie directly into Mario Party Points. These points are earned by doing pretty much anything in the game and are used to buy bubbles that contain characters and memories (board game areas). When viewed in the gallery, these bubbles contain music or voice audio files used in the game. It's a nice touch, but it's nothing more than a mildly interesting bonus. Unlocking most bubbles is an easy process, and earning points is

so easy anyone could complete the gallery quickly if they really wanted to.

Mario Party: Island Tour is a fantastic addition for the 3DS. The graphics are crisp and utilize 3D well, while the music fits each game and board without becoming monotonous. Every mode and board is easy to pick up and play with anyone, anytime.. Island Tour is a perfect balance of old and new that keeps the game fresh with playing styles to meet every need. It's exactly what you want out of a portable party game, complimenting the 3DS effortlessly, and bringing a perfectly suited party game to the console that is long overdue.

## Score

# 8.5

### Pros
+ Diverse choice of game boards
+ Extensive solo mode
+ It's a portable Mario Party in fabulous 3D!
+ Utilizes almost all 3DS features

### Cons
- Can't change Bowser's Tower difficulty
- Can't skip repetitive instruction screens
- No online multiplayer

# The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds   By Neal Ronaghan   REVIEW

**Does the Link to the Past successor live up to the its legacy?**

The past few Zelda games, while still very good, have been designed around gimmicks. Phantom Hourglass and Spirit Tracks featured touch controls and Skyward Sword hung its hat on motion controls. The first original 3DS Zelda game, The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds, bucks that trend, eschewing gimmicks for a rock-solid, streamlined 2D Zelda game that delightfully straddles the line between a faithful recreation of a classic formula and a fresh experience that feels wonderfully new.

Taking place hundreds of years after Link to the Past, the story focuses on an evil wizard named Yuga who wants to revive an ancient power by capturing the seven sages (+ Zelda). Essentially, it's the same setup for Link to the Past, and there's a winking nod to the fact that this all happened before. This is par for the course in the Zelda series, but luckily the characters you interact with and the world you explore make the tried-and-true story sing. Both Hyrule and the newly introduced Lorule feature well-written, colorful characters, some of which are inspired by the cast of Link to the Past, including the latest in the line of Sahasrahlas and the new rapping bomb maker.

The major change-up is the usage of items. For the most part, you no longer find items in dungeons. Instead, you rent or buy them from a weird rabbit-ear-wearing human named Ravio. The mechanic opens up much more of the game at an early stage. You can, if you scavenge enough rupees, get almost every item before the second dungeon. That also makes it so you can access dungeons in whatever order you want. When you reach Lorule a few hours into the

adventure, A Link Between Worlds becomes the closest the series has gotten to granting the freedom of the original. The world opens up in a marvelous way, and the second half can be played along any path you desire. Because of that, you can explore nearly every area of the world whenever you feel like it.

Aside from the way you use items, the general structure follows the blueprint of Link to the Past closely, even featuring spectacular musical remixes and an interesting art style that harkens back to the original. You go to three dungeons in Hyrule that recall the opening portion of the SNES masterpiece, and then you go to the alternate version of Hyrule called Lorule, where you battle your way through seven more dungeons, all located in roughly the same areas as the seven dungeons in Link to the Past. The dungeons themselves are all completely different, though, and with the need to hide an item completely removed, the dungeons feel faster and less bloated. The "aha!" moment of discovering a new item happens as you enter, not halfway through, making each dungeon a concentrated dose of combat and puzzles that is fantastic, fluid, and fun. Add in the ability to merge with walls to become a movable Link painting and any residual familiarity is washed away entirely.

A variety of side quests and mini-games are nestled throughout, with the best one being the hunt for Maiamais. Hidden throughout Hyrule and Lorule are little octopus-looking creatures that are hidden in trees, walls and more that, when you collect enough, upgrade your weapons. It's like the seashell quest from Link's Awakening but more rewarding and more entertaining. The mini-games aren't as engaging, but they serve as a fun way to earn rupees, which are instrumental in progression since items cost money to rent or buy. There's even a really fun StreetPass mode where you duel Shadow Links that are created by the people you pass by.

The excellent dungeons and fun distractions are made even better with the spectacular gameplay and controls. Link Between Worlds is fast paced and filled with content. It has an ease of play that no recent Zelda game has even come close to matching, all while lacking a hampering tutorial. The game even makes exploration simple, as you gain the ability to warp to different points on the map quickly. The easy-to-read map itself can be marked with pins to remind yourself to check that area out later.



A lot of folks consider Link to the Past to be the greatest Zelda game, if not the greatest game of all time. A Link Between Worlds matches that masterpiece every step of the way, creating one of the finest Zelda games since Link to the Past. Since it follows the roadmap so closely, it's not quite as fresh as the SNES classic was in 1992, but that doesn't make it any less of an amazing experience. A Link Between Worlds is a delightful adventure that hits every high note a 2D Zelda game has ever produced while creating many new hallmarks of its own. In a year filled with quality 3DS games, A Link Between Worlds is another fantastic entry on a system that is quickly becoming home to a number of instant classics.

**Score**

**9.5**

**Pros**
+ Awesome music
+ Excellent puzzles and controls
+ Fun new gameplay concepts
+ Great sense of exploration
+ Just as good as Link to the Past

**Cons**
- Hews too closely to Link to the Past's world and structure

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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



Got some ideas? Or just want to have your say? Then send your mail to:

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