

## Legacy Gaming Through the Scope of *Super Mario 3D All-Stars*

If there is one thing Nintendo has made perfectly clear since the launch of the Nintendo Switch in 2017, it is their fall from grace in the handling of legacy content over the past decade. “Legacy content” in this sense of course refers to older games being carried over to next gen consoles and re-releases, which in this case refers to *Super Mario 64*, *Super Mario Sunshine*, and *Super Mario Galaxy*, a beloved trio of games featured in *Super Mario 3D All-Stars*. For each game individually in this package, I could rave endlessly about each; none of them are perfect to be sure, but all feature the warm, lovable charm Nintendo fine-tuned more and more with each new game. The level design is engaging and creative, the worlds are unique and bizarre, and each new 3D Mario game incorporates a totally fresh series of concepts that takes the player from Mario’s foray into the 3D world in *Super Mario 64*, to movement and gameplay centered around the use of a versatile multipurpose water pack in *Super Mario Sunshine*, to jumping from planet to planet tackling obstacles and feats of literally cosmic proportions in *Super Mario Galaxy*. That being said, I’m not writing this evaluation for the purposes of praising the individual games within the package, but rather the package itself in a rare instance of feeling reasonably authorized to judge a book by its cover.

First of all, I did indeed purchase *Super Mario 3D All-Stars* for myself and played through each of the titles bundled within, titles I have already played many times over starting when each was originally released. In fact, the “purchasing” aspect is a perfect starting point in this discussion, as I was somewhat on the fence about buying it at all, given the full retail price of \$59.99, plus tax of course. For all the “legacy collection” games or “collection” games I’ve ever purchased, I don’t recall ever paying full price, which should make clear, logical sense, considering the fact that I’m paying for games that, at some point, already existed. Because that’s what a collection does, it’s taking older games and bundling them into one nice package, sometimes even with updated graphics, completely new content, or even bonuses such as concept artwork gallery. The *Sonic Mega Collection* released in 2002 for the Nintendo Gamecube not only featured a myriad of games in the compilation itself, but also features original videos and illustrations, and even high-resolution scans of the original game instruction manuals and *Sonic the Hedgehog* comic covers and contents. All of this content was for \$39.95 back at its original release. The *Kingdom Hearts* franchise also released a compilation, *Kingdom Hearts – The Story So Far*, released initially in 2018 on the PlayStation 4, which not only had more games than *Super Mario 3D All-Stars*, but more content, such as the HD enhanced

cutscene compilations for certain games assembled as “movies” you can watch in the game. I purchased this entire package for \$39.99. The *Spyro Reignited Trilogy*, released 2019, sold for \$39.99, the *Crash Bandicoot N. Sane Trilogy*, released 2018, sold for \$39.99, and as a bonus kick in the backside, the *Mega Man X Legacy Collection* from 2018 sold for \$19.99, and yes, includes bonus content such as production artwork, classic MegaMan commercials, and brand new in-game challenge modes. *Super Mario 3D All-Stars* includes the games in HD, and also a soundtrack of songs from the games on the title screen. Songs you can listen to for free on the internet, but hey, you can at least pick a classic Mario tune to listen to while you take what should be no more than ten seconds to choose a game to play on the exceedingly simplistic select screen. And that’s it. That’s what Nintendo decided to charge full retail price for, despite surely being well aware of what so many others before them charged for their compilation games.

Nintendo seems to hold themselves to the high enough standard that Mario is such a legendary icon of gaming, that surely a compilation featuring him should warrant a higher price? In my opinion, Nintendo, the incidentally richest company in Japan, should have sold the game for \$35. After all, *Super Mario 3D All-Stars* was released to honor Mario’s 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary; it would have been a cool, classy move. But this entire game is devoid of class; I haven’t even mentioned the limited release of the game itself, being only available to purchase physically and digitally up until March 2021. For some odd reason, Nintendo wanted to encourage its fans to panic buy this trilogy akin to so many who still have mounds of toilet paper locked away in their basement, you know, just in case. But why? Is the limited release of three games that have already each existed for well over a decade supposed to appear as some merciful act of God? Nintendo seems to have this misplaced aversion to their fans having any means to play their legacy games, as if they’re offended that anyone would play a game like *Super Mario 64* any other way than dusting off their old Nintendo 64, hooking up all its cables to a TV that may or may not even have the necessary ports anymore, and playing it the way the Nintendo gods intended. Just recently, Nintendo announced another re-release of what was originally a Wii U exclusive, *Pikmin 3*. Now being released on the Switch as *Pikmin 3 Deluxe* featuring fairly feeble new gameplay content (at full retail price of \$59.99 for your information), Nintendo sneakily removed the game for purchase on the Wii U eShop ahead of the Switch release. They pulled a similar trick with *Donkey Kong Country: Tropical Freeze*, pulling it from the Wii U eShop before releasing it for the Switch, although at least in the case of *Pikmin 3*, Nintendo did put it back on sale amidst public outrage. I wish it wasn’t so blatantly conspicuous that their intentions with these acts of limited release and eShop tampering are to force people who want to play

these games into buying them (or making their hapless parents or guardians buy them for them) at full price, and with limited gameplay changes and improvements

Speaking of gameplay, let's talk about what's going on with the controls and accessibility of the trio of games featured in *Super Mario 3D All-Stars*. This would be a good time for you to audibly groan or perhaps look visibly confused, because why should I bring up the controls at all? Shouldn't they be the exact same as they were originally if not better? Well when I sat down to play *Super Mario 64* and *Super Mario Sunshine*, my brain must have short circuited when I found the controls for the camera and other aiming techniques were inverted compared to their original scheme. And no, there is currently no way to change the camera controls in any way, but I'm sure Nintendo will send out a "Multiple Camera Control!!" update two months from now, patting themselves on the back and being praised for their innovation. And if you're playing *Super Mario Galaxy* with the Nintendo Switch Joy-Con controls, you better not be left-handed, as the only Joy-Con you can use to aim and interact with objects on screen is the right one. No option to change that either, a strange irony, as both Joy-Cons have gyroscope functionality. Did you want to use your Nintendo Gamecube controller to play *Super Mario Sunshine*? A controller that, is indeed supported to use with the Switch and what the game was originally played with? No, you cannot. You have to play these games the exact way Nintendo wants you to, as if a bunch of angry men in a conference room spent hours writing out the "Rules and Regulations of Playing Our Games." I cannot possibly fathom that it is that difficult for Nintendo to very easily give players access to different controls schemes and accessibility options to at least help preserve these classic games the way they were originally played, but instead, they somehow got finicky and altered some otherwise completely intuitive gameplay aspects. Initially I assumed perhaps I was just so used to the controls from having previously played the games, but as I watch Twitch streamers and Youtube let's players experience these games for their first times, they had similar looks of incredulity with certain control aspects. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Perhaps the most disappointing part of all this is the fact that Nintendo was once happily aboard the bandwagon of making old releases completely accessible to play, and for a heavily reduced price. When the Nintendo Wii came out in 2006, Nintendo introduced the "Virtual Console," an online shop of old Nintendo games all the way up to the Nintendo 64, and had routine releases of old games. Back then, you could buy a Nintendo 64 title for just \$10, and older console games were cheaper; Super NES games were \$8, NES games were \$5, and so on. It was a system that just made sense, allowing players to revisit classics for fair prices, and

giving access to a large, constantly growing catalogue of games. A “legacy” Virtual Console existed on the Wii U, functioning essentially the same as the original, just on a different console, also providing access to a few additional titles. Then, the Nintendo Switch came out, and Nintendo’s thought process about what players should and should not have access to in terms of legacy games changed substantially. Enter “Nintendo Switch Online,” a service players must subscribe to if you want to experience a drip feed of older game releases. Compared to the ultimately vast library of the Virtual Console, the only two platforms the Switch currently supports for classic releases is the NES and the Super NES, and with far fewer titles per console than what the Virtual Console had. Realistically, I should just be able to purchase games like *Super Mario 64* individually and for no more than \$10, and at this point should even be able to purchase Nintendo Gamecube, or even Wii games using the Switch’s online services. Almost fifteen years ago I could buy all sorts of old games for my Nintendo console, so what changed? Why the incredibly limited library of games being released at a glacial rate? Perhaps Nintendo assumes most people are emulating many of these classics on their PCs or even on a hacked Switch, and feel less motivated to make them available in their own way. But if you ask me, the amount of money to be made by just porting old games to their newer consoles is likely not trivial. After all, these are games that already exist; is it really that difficult to emulate them, charge a few bucks, and call it a day? The answer is no, it is not. Pretty much any individual person can emulate a game if they really want to, so I have to assume it’s no chore for the \$85 billion company. But for some reason, Nintendo has grown to admonish the idea of allowing its fans to play many games from its vast catalogue, preferring instead to make them wait several years before announcing a re-release of one game or a compilation of a few, and at full retail price of course.

*Super Mario 3D All-Stars* is a terrible package wrapped around three incredible games. From a software and hardware perspective, Nintendo almost never misses, creating amazing content that has stood the test of time for decades. But from the “marketing” perspective, the part of the company responsible for picking and choosing what games fans are allowed to play and at what price and at what point in time we get to see our favorite classics brought back into the light, that’s the part I find reprehensible. You don’t need to buy this collection, and no one at Nintendo is holding the gun to your head demanding you do so, but the very existence of this game is what irks me, and I’m still the sucker that bought it anyway. Three games I’ve already played and own dressed up to look like something new and important, but are nothing more than re-releases that I should kiss the feet of the Nintendo overlords over. It would please me greatly if Nintendo stop pretending they’re still the gods of the gaming universe and start acting

like it, because it's one thing to make an incredible game, but when it feels like the real game is a carrot on a stick being cruelly dangled just out of reach in front of me, the whole process starts to feel impudent.