



### Retro Scope: *Super Mario Land*

Shawn looks back at Mario's forgotten portable debut.

By Shawn Wilkins. Posted 03/19/2015 09:00 6 Comments

*Super Mario Land* is a game customarily forgotten when mentioned in discussions about the Mario franchise. Namely, it's not made by Shigeru Miyamoto. It utilizes elements that can only be found in this one game. It has no true connection to the Mushroom Kingdom. The enemies behave differently. The story revolves around space creatures. But, above all, *there's no Princess Peach*.



Super Mario Land Title Screen

However, I find myself enjoying this game more and more each time I pick it up. It finds itself on the basic principles of classic Mario games: rescue the princess. The differences between this game and others arise when you delve in a little bit deeper. The princess you're saving isn't Peach or Toadstool (depending on which name you're loyal to) but rather, Daisy. Daisy is a character that was created for games like these; short, sweet, small mentions. She's similar to Waluigi in some regards, but Mr. Wah has only ever appeared in spin-off games.

Outside of that, you're not in Mushroom Kingdom, you're in Sarasaland, ruled by the newly captured Princess Daisy. The game manages to introduce new mechanics that are almost entirely forgotten. You don't swim in this game, but you ride in a submarine and shoot enemies. You don't time fireball bounces, you watch them hit the ground and then fly away at a 45 degree angle. You aren't here to fight Bowser, you're here to fight Tatanga, a spaceman. Additionally, there are various enemies that have somehow avoided ever making their way to the Mushroom Kingdom in any regard, but Goombas made their way over, and Koopas have managed to come over without kickable shells, but *exploding ones*.

With games like *Mario 3D World*, *Mario 3D Land*, and even the New Super Mario series, it becomes a wonder why Nintendo has yet revealed some of the most intriguing aspects of the franchise altogether. Nintendo took chances with this title and not in the realm of subtle changes that are barely noticeable through a simple play-through, but in ways that were leaps and bounds different from the classic Mario titles of yore, but all the same in practice.



A "mysterious" UFO

When playing a game like this, understanding what had to go into its creation, its work becomes nothing short of art. Released alongside the Game Boy, selling millions of copies, the game is not something people should be forgetting, but it becomes a game that collectively gathers dusts when the discussion of great Mario games comes up— which can be considered art itself. The artwork, the lack of Miyamoto, the quickness of the game's rise and climax, and the overall joy you feel when you finally beat the last level on World 4 goes unseen in any games of its time and genre.

The small things really tie the game together as well. Getting hit by an enemy doesn't momentarily pause the game and neither does getting a power-up. You keep on moving. The exploding Koopa shells being dangerous add a small nuisance, and the mixed mechanics of a submarine for travel as opposed to swimming— it all builds something with a familiar face, but a different voice. It's something we're all used to, yet we don't know how to react to it.

The game is different, yet, all-in-all, very similar. It plays as if it's something that people only get to experience once and it feels that way with only four worlds with three levels each. When you get to sit down and play it, you wonder why, even if it wasn't headed by Miyamoto, why it is so forgotten when there are so many innovative gameplay mechanics packed into something that has a very clear formula. Games don't usually showcase such ingenuity, but when they do, you get the essence of fun that's packed into *Super Mario Land*.

The images used in this post are screenshots from a visual mod made by Arne Niklas Jansson.

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#### 6 Responses to "Retro Scope: *Super Mario Land*"

- penduin says...

What are these screenshots? They looks reminiscent of, but aren't, Super Mario Land...

03/19/2015 at 11:18

Reply
- penduin says...

Ahh, it's right there in italics at the bottom. :\*) Sorry, I found them distracting enough I didn't RTFA in its entirety!

03/19/2015 at 11:19

Reply
- PanurgeJr says...

I recently replayed this, in part because I've been in the mood for Mario's quirkier outings, and in part because I seem to be one of Daisy's few fans, and in the end the game as a whole just doesn't work that well for me. Fundamentally it comes down to gameplay trumping everything else; no matter how interesting the setting—and Nintendo needs to return to Sarasaland (and Subcon)—or some of the mechanics, the jumping just feels off, and no Mario game can truly succeed without getting the jumping right. It was much improved in the sequel, and I far prefer that game I, even though defeating Wario is infinitely less appealing to me than rescuing Daisy.

03/19/2015 at 13:09

Reply
- amishpyrate says...

I played it once then quickly forgot it. I never cared for it. It wasn't bad it was just different. I agree about returning to the world though. Would be a fun, different setting for Mario to explore.

03/20/2015 at 12:35

Reply
- geoffrey says...

My biggest beef with this game was its length. I get that it's the original launch game for the Game Boy and they could only do so much with the system at the time, but holy crap is this game short.

03/22/2015 at 02:25

Reply
- decoupage says...

I kind of viewed the shorter length as a Donkey Kong like experience of getting better and better at the fun/simple stages. I played the levels over and over again, and mastered the floaty, shooty, and overall crazy gameplay.

03/24/2015 at 23:46

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