

Video Game Journalism

Portfolio

The following articles were written for a small start-up gaming website to build up my experience. Since then, I have worked as audience development editor for Pocket Gamer, in this role I came up with content ideas, helped with the content plan and increased engagement. Working closely with the gaming audience has enabled me to really understand what gamers want us to write about!

30 Years of Hyrule – Why The Legend of Zelda is the Best Gaming Franchise

2016 marks the 30th anniversary of *The Legend of Zelda*. Gamers have been lucky to be blessed with three whole decades of unforgettable adventures with Link, traversing the captivating kingdom of Hyrule and meeting some incredible characters along the way.

1. Ch-ch-ch-changes

The Legend of Zelda is a gaming franchise that is not afraid to try new things, unlike many other Nintendo franchises (not naming any names), it is not afraid to mix up the original formula, changing art styles dramatically along with storyline and even the standard gaming mechanics. For example, the difference between the dark style and story of *Twilight Princess* differs greatly from that of *Skyward Sword*. However, both games are still incredible, showing the diversity of the series that stands the test of time, still producing award winning games, 30 years down the line.

Yes all *Zelda* games do follow the basic formula of solving puzzles in dungeons and beating bosses, however, each game provides a different take on this formula which is exactly why fans cannot agree on the best *Legend of Zelda* game because they are just all so different and so brilliant (*cough* *Ocarina of Time* wins *cough*).

2. Hyrule Field in *Ocarina of Time*

I have by no means hidden my undying love for *Ocarina of Time* but I do believe that this love is not delusional. When *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* first came out on the Nintendo 64 something as breathtaking as Hyrule field had never been seen before. The sheer scale of tiny Link compared to the huge surrounding area really put into perspective just what an epic adventure this game was set out to be. Galloping through the vast field on Epona as the day turned to night truly was a sight to behold.

When the remake for the 3DS was released Hyrule Field took gamers breath away once more, newcomers and veterans alike. No game has stunned me like Hyrule Field in *Ocarina of Time* did, the game itself is an absolute pleasure to play and the vastness of field and surrounding area cannot be matched in the same way.

Ocarina of Time itself is a reason why *The Legend of Zelda* is the best gaming franchise, however, Hyrule Field is a perfect example of a video game environment that has evoked emotions that no other game can compare to.

3. The Characters

Navi

Yes, she is more than a little annoying, I am sure we have all had reoccurring nightmares of Navi chasing us whilst shouting “HEY LISTEN”. I will continue to ignore her forevermore.

Having said this, she can be very useful, for newcomers in particular, always pointing out 'helpful' hints on where to go or what to do next. She is also without a doubt a memorable and very consistent character throughout the franchise, what would *The Legend of Zelda* be without her? (Probably a quiet, peaceful and happy place). We all love to hate her really and *Zelda* without Navi would become an oddly dysfunctional world I am sure.

Happy Mask Salesman

Why is he so happy? What is his real name? Why does he seem to know things he should not?

The Happy Mask Salesman raises so many unanswerable questions which makes him a very memorable character in *The Legend of Zelda* games. He first appears in *Ocarina of Time* in which he becomes decidedly terrifying if you do not return with the rupees for a mask he has given you to sell. However, he disappears for the adult portion of the game.

Happy Mask Salesman returns in *Majora's Mask* in which he features much more prominently. Once again he acts pretty creepily and seems to have a habit of leaving Link with eerie amounts of knowledge and advice.

No gamer truly knows what the deal is with this dude that sells masks, all we know is that there is no other character like him which makes *The Legend of Zelda* franchise so unique and memorable.

Midna

Midna features in *Twilight Princess* as a sarcastic and rude character that rides wolf Link around like a horse, so basically a character we all aspire to be. However, her eventual friendship with Link is a very interesting element and her character is very different from others in the series which makes her stand out as one of the franchises more original additions.

All of the characters in *The Legend of Zelda* franchise are unforgettable whether they are funny, creepy or evil they are all so well designed and developed that gamers will never forget how they influenced the story and helped Link along during his adventures. No other franchise that I have played has provided such a colourful host of personalities to every single one of the series installments.

4. The Puzzles

The puzzles are where *The Legend of Zelda* really shines. Nothing beats that feeling of satisfaction where that one last block is pushed into place or that hidden torch finally found and you hear that wonderful click and the door is opened. You can almost *taste* the accomplishment.

Whether you are navigating through the vast Death Mountain, which has featured in the first *Zelda* game and many others afterwards because fans just love it so much and love how ridiculously difficult the puzzles are to solve (yay!) Or whether you are trying to figure out how the *hell* the water temple works in *Ocarina of Time* you will always be guaranteed an amazing dungeon with challenging but satisfying puzzles to solve.

The puzzles in *The Legend of Zelda* are not the simplest but they are such a pleasure to figure out that you will certainly be coming back for more, although halfway through Death

Mountain you will definitely be wondering why you are putting your brain through this again.

No other video game can compare to the excitement of entering a new dungeon and exploring by solving the puzzles and uncovering hidden secrets. I have never found a game to match the sense of discovery I feel playing *Zelda*.

5. Bringing out the best of Nintendo

The Legend of Zelda franchise has always expanded the boundaries of Nintendo. *Ocarina of Time* pushed the graphical capabilities of the N64 bringing a 3D *Zelda* experience never seen before.

The Phantom Hourglass and *Spirit Tracks* on the Nintendo DS incorporated all of the touchscreen and microphone capabilities, utilising the console like no other games had previously.

Similarly, *Skyward Sword* used all of the Wii's motion controls to ensure that every move was vital to Link's survival and success.

That is what makes *The Legend of Zelda* so fabulous, the series always makes Nintendo's latest consoles look good. If all else fails at least gamers always know that the latest console will most certainly have an amazing *Zelda* game available to play on it that will show off the consoles capabilities.

There is not one other gaming franchise that can do this as well as *The Legend of Zelda* has.

In my humble opinion, The Legend of Zelda is without a doubt the best gaming franchises has to offer. The amazing and memorable storylines with the addictive gameplay and controls suited perfectly for whichever console the game is created for, all come together to create unforgettable video games that ooze quality. If you have never played a *Legend of Zelda* game before I strongly urge you to...NOW.

Here's to another 30 magnificent years of gaming at it's best.

But remember as a wise old man once said some 30 years ago...

It's dangerous to go alone!

Take this.

SteamWorld Heist Review: Caution! Addictive.

Piper lifts her gun and carefully targets a wall above an enemy Scrapper. Her aim shifts with each breath, she waits until the perfect moment to pull the trigger. The singular bullet ricochets off wall to wall before annihilating the enemy, hiding behind the barrel, in slow-motion as the robot's parts are dismantled before Piper's eyes. Success. She has little time to celebrate before an enemy fires a bullet into the flammable barrel she mistakenly used as defence, the barrel explodes, causing Piper to be dismantled and to be defeated. All hope appears to be lost, until her fellow Steambot grabs the last of the loot, an enemy Scrapper shoots at him but it rebounds off the wall and misses him, he sprints for the evacuation pod and is victorious.

SteamWorld Heist differs greatly from its predecessor, *SteamWorld Dig*. *SteamWorld Heist* is a tactical turn-based shooter in which the Steambots that inhabit the game are forced to evacuate planet earth into space. Rather than digging through abandoned mines, our protagonist, Piper, along with her robot squad find themselves invading enemy spaceships, either looting, killing a target or simply surviving until an escape route is found.

The sense of exploration is slightly limited in comparison to that of *SteamWorld Dig*, where abandoned mines can be explored and treasure found. *SteamWorld Heist* offers more of a structured tactical experience where the player is required to be patient and skilled in their moves, rather than running onto an enemy ship and shooting aimlessly.

Sound

SteamWorld Heists' menu screen boasts an upbeat backing track that gives the player a sense of determination and adventure, highlighting the fact that this game relies greatly on working as a team with your characters. However, once on board enemy spaceships and tracking down a target or searching for loot to steal, the music takes a much more eerie tone which really creates an atmosphere. The sound of footsteps, loading of guns and shots are amplified, the consequences of the characters move seems much more significant, a shot being rewarded with the sound of an enemy being dismantled or punished with the dismal sound of the bullet hitting a wall due to a misjudged aim.

When venturing into bars to gather information, purchase items or hire Steambots for battle, the music tends to be mellow and wistful, as if wishing for another time when Steambots could inhabit Planet Earth. The sound in *SteamWorld Heist*, although not breathtaking, does create atmosphere to the areas visited.

Lookin' Good

SteamWorld Heist follows a very similar graphical style to that of *SteamWorld Dig*. The game looks brilliant on the 3DS, the levels look colourful and inviting with crisp, detailed fully animated characters. The Steambots that can be hired to join Piper's crew all look unique, their appearance reflecting that of their abilities, for example, a heavy weightlifting character can wield a rocket launcher to cause a lot of damage in a battle. Unfortunately, the

game can lag when battles get busy with many sprites in one area at a time which can result in the game slowing down at times. Having said this, it does not seriously affect gameplay and is not enough to damage the player's immersion in game.

Story

The story within *SteamWorld Heist* is fairly basic, Piper and co. initially set out to defeat the no good space 'Scrappers' that are causing havoc to innocent space dwellers. Later on in the game they target the corrupt Royalists. The story is definitely not at all memorable or all that significant to the gameplay. However, terms used in the game such as 'Mothertecher' and 'Techromancer' keep the game fresh and inventive, making the story light-hearted and not to be taken too seriously.

Gameplay

The gameplay is where *SteamWorld Heist* really shines. The satisfaction of pulling off a perfectly aimed shot that rebounds off multiple surfaces before destroying the target is highly rewarding and makes the game dangerously addictive. Then the anger felt when a mission is completed and your one remaining character left has irresponsibly low health and you desperately want to flee for the evacuation pod. However, the enemy is allowed to move first and they shoot the deadly bullet your way, the game goes into grim slow motion, following the bullet's path...and...your character dies.

SteamWorld Heist unrelentlessly poses a challenge that causes the player to be all the more determined to not make the same mistake again. You will die. Many missions will be failed and restarted. The great thing about the game is that you *will* want to restart the missions and start again, applying different tactics and strategies.

Even if defeated at the end of a completed mission, the game will still make you start from the beginning of the task. Steambots run on water and so if a mission is restarted it will cost the player valuable water to reassemble their crew, making battles all the more tense and important. This means that collecting loot as you move your way through the mission is very important as water is often hidden in amongst the steals.

At the end of a completed mission the loot your characters have picked up is unloaded, this is often very exciting and there are a lot of rewarding steals such as new powerful weapons and items. Therefore, taking the risk of spending a character's turn on picking up loot rather than killing an enemy, is often worth it.

Levelling up your crew is incredibly satisfying as new powerful abilities are unlocked which are vital assets in the more difficult missions. The reward of a character being ambushed near death and then having the ability to fire a mini nuke, causing mass destruction and clearing the character's path to victory, is well worth the potential grinding and levelling up it took beforehand.

Missions are fast paced and exciting due to each turn allowing for a generous number of spaces to move with the sprint function. This makes each turn seem unrestricted and makes missions rapid with each move vital to the outcome of the task. The choice of whether to sprint or move forward slightly and shoot an enemy becomes an increasingly more difficult choice to make the further into the game.

The environments of the enemy spaceships can be destroyed however the player would like. Highly flammable barrels that enemies are hiding behind can be shoot, causing them to explode, potentially killing multiple enemies at once. However, if one of your characters is standing too near, they can also be a victim of the explosion.

A fun feature that is highly amusing is that if your character aims their shot slightly too high above an enemies head, the bullet can shoot their hat off, allowing your characters to nab the hat for totally cool customization. Similarly, enemies can shoot off your characters hats, leaving your character hatless forevermore (unless replaced with a shiny new hat of course).

Gameplay can become slightly repetitive with similar items in the loot that characters pick up and missions that do not differ greatly. Missions in *SteamWorld Heist* tend to be either steal something/certain number of things or kill a certain character. The fun gameplay largely makes up for the repetitiveness, however, if playing the game for a few hours the missions can get a bit too familiar.

Replay Value

SteamWorld Heists' story lasts a good 8 hours on regular difficulty, however, if wishing to obtain every item and hire every potential addition to your team the game could take well over 15 hours to complete. The highest difficulty level is 'Elite', during early levels in the game, 'Elite' does not pose much more of a challenge in comparison to regular difficulty. However, as the game progresses, the 'Elite' difficulty provides a steep learning curve and packs in a lot of challenge.

SteamWorld Heist has a very significant replay value if a player wishes to complete the game on the highest difficulty level and obtain all of the upgrades and items. The turn-based game is so addictive that many players will revisit once completed to relive the most challenging levels and approach them from a different angle.

Furthermore, level maps are randomly generated each time a mission is restarted, meaning that a level will never look the same twice, making the mission feel fresh each time and ramping up the difficulty as the player cannot predict where enemies or loot will be. This further adds to the replay value as levels feel different each time meaning the game could easily be played through multiple times, feeling different with each playthrough.

The Verdict

SteamWorld Heist is accessible to newcomers whilst posing a challenge to veterans alike which is not an easy feat. This is a satisfying turn based shooter that will have the player punching walls due to a miscalculated move or laughing maniacally when a perfectly timed shot causes mass destruction. *SteamWorld Heist* creates a perfect balance between rewarding the player with satisfaction when completing a challenging mission and punishing the player unrelentlessly for leaving a character undefended and exposed to the onslaught of enemy fire. This is a seemingly light hearted game that will grab a hold of you and not let go until you are sweating out of your eyes, it is great fun.

Nintendo Planning to Release First Mobile Game by the End of 2015?! – So many mixed emotions

What is happening? Nintendo is releasing a mobile game, that's what!

I have so many mixed emotions about this latest development. A part of me thinks that this is a great idea as Nintendo will reach out to a wider market, and, perhaps, encourage younger generations to get into gaming. Also, it will allow students to play Nintendo games in more sneakily fashion while in class, as whipping out a 3DS is much less conspicuous.

As you can see there are a lot of positives.

However, there is part of me that still loathes the new look of Pokémon on the 3DS and misses the old-school gaming aesthetic (I mean, if it ain't broke...), and that part of me is horrified at the idea of Nintendo creating games for mobile.

I just feel that it is belittling the company; once Nintendo branches out into mobile gaming I feel it will take the focus away from the classic gaming. I also believe that if they are creating games for mobile devices (which are, of course, portable), it defeats the purpose of having a handheld portable console.

I know I am being dramatic as this app will most likely just be a *Candy Crush* spin-off that has you matching up Mario characters instead of sweets, but **STILL**, the principle is the same. I just think that mobile games lack quality control and are often derivative and the pretty basic. I fear that Nintendo will tarnish their reputation if they begin making basic mobile games that are mainly aimed at children. Maybe I am just being snobby. Probably.

Anyway, this exciting and much-anticipated (sarcasm) Nintendo IOS release is to be expected soon. Seeing as it's nearly November, I am expecting this game to be released in the next few days or weeks, and I can hardly wait.

Sony to Make No More PS Vita Games – Lost Opportunity

The PS Vita is such an under-appreciated Sony console. The graphics are some of the best seen on a portable console and most of the big PS1/PSP titles can be purchased and downloaded onto the device, allowing gamers to relive the old classics and play them wherever, whenever. Some big AAA games have been released on the console, such as *Killzone* and *Borderlands*, both of which play very well on the Vita (along with classic JRPGs such as *Final Fantasy*).

So, what went wrong? People just were not interested. The PS Vita has, fairly embarrassingly, only **sold 5 million units**. Compare this to its competitor, the Nintendo 3DS, which has **sold 53 million units**. The Vita simply does not stand a chance.

It is almost as if the Vita was too good to work. This can be explained by its extraordinary graphics and spec. This makes games very expensive to create and (inevitably) an expensive end product. This means that companies did not want to risk making PS Vita games, which explains the shortage of new games for the console. Without consistent game releases, the console was doomed to fail.

This is such a shame, because the console is actually awesome. It is the closest a handheld will ever come to competing with a home console experience, and the games available were actually really good (*Uncharted* on the Vita is incredible).

Sony promised more than they were able to deliver, which resulted in what the public saw as a disappointing and expensive console with a very little selection of games. This has resulted in the sad death of a powerful little machine that had the potential to work very well alongside the PS4.

So no more new games for the poor little Vita. However, this does not mean the old classics cannot still be played, I will stick by the PS Vita whilst Sony turns it's back on it.

R.I.P PlayStation Vita. 2012-2015.

Doge Meme in The Legend of Zelda: Triforce Heroes?! – Such Triforce, Very Hero

Nintendo has decided to insert some internet humour into the latest *Zelda* adventure, *The Legend of Zelda: Triforce Heroes*.

Link visits a library within the game to find out more information about some ancient ruins he will later explore. He then whips out an absolute winner of a joke in which he describes the ruins as, ‘So ancient. Such ruin.’ The only reason I find this funny is because it is so unbelievably random and out of the blue that it’s hilarious. However, may I add that the statement would be much more Doge-esque if it read “Such ancient. Much ruin.”...Just sayin’.

The slightly strange thing about this Nintendo banter is that the reference only appears in the American version of the game, and not the European version. Nintendo probably believes that us Europeans would not find it particularly funny (which is probably true).

Nintendo America



Nintendo Europe



Zelda fans have reacted in a very mixed fashion; some love the Doge joke whilst others strongly disagree with the idea of bringing that kind of humour into a *Zelda* game. I just hope that Nintendo is not trying too hard to ‘get down with the cool kids.’

I think no real harm has been done in relation to the in-game doge reference, it’s just a light-hearted joke and is definitely not to be taken seriously.

Cut Link some slack, all he does is hang out in ancient ruins anyway.

Why we should all be excited about the Nintendo NX (Now the Nintendo Switch)

Contrary to my earlier pessimism. What has changed my mind? Well, after doing some further research into the Nintendo NX I have uncovered some interesting pieces of information.

The Wall Street Journal's article 'Nintendo Begins Distributing Software Kit for New NX Platform' contains a very exciting statement, 'Nintendo would aim to put industry-leading chips in the NX devices.' This is so exciting because it suggests that finally, FINALLY, Nintendo could compete with the latest PlayStation or Xbox consoles, something that the company have never been able to achieve. This makes the little Nintendo fan-girl inside me leap for joy and burst with pride for Nintendo finally believing in itself enough to risk taking on the big boys of home console gaming.

I just love how the NX console was announced, Nintendo were discussing the fact that they were tragically diving into the world of mobile gaming. Then they were basically just like 'but do not worry guys we actually also have something exciting and worth your time to announce too' and BAM new console. It was like announce the disaster of creating a mobile game, then making up for it by creating something very special and that is what the NX is.

Nintendo have not had a particularly exciting year, let's be honest here. They released the disappointing Wii U, which no-one really knows what it is, is it a stand-alone console? Is it a tablet? Is it worth my money? No, not really. There has been a lot of pointless games released this year on Nintendo consoles. For example, *Legend of Zelda: Triforce Heroes*. What is the point of it? A multi-player Zelda game, with no use as a single-player game...okay. *Animal Crossing: Happy Home Designer*, a game where you can do all the customization you can do in any *Animal Crossing* game but you cannot actually do anything else. I am sorry Nintendo but that was a waste of time. Then there is *Mario Tennis: Ultra Smash*...that is just ultra pointless, am I right?

Basically, what I am saying is that 2015 has not been particularly exciting for Nintendo. This only suggests that they have been putting all of their time and effort into developing the Nintendo NX and all of the games to go with it.

I have a very happy warm and fuzzy feeling about the Nintendo NX, I think the company has really pulled out all the stops for this console. Get ready for Nintendo's greatest victory yet.

Why Virtual Reality is so Exciting (and scary)

VR is an awesome concept. Entirely immersed gaming, making the player feel more 'in the game' than ever before possible.

Just imagine the possibilities for the horror genre. Every time you slightly turn your head you will be terrified that a monster will jump out at you. You want to run but you also want to stand still and cry. Being attacked and dying will feel like a real threat to you now, being injured will feel much more physical as if it is really happening. What more could you want? Fear of impending death and potentially having a heart attack. Gaming at its best.

Whilst we are on the physical side of things, there have been recent big steps in making VR even more terrifying. A team of researchers from the Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) lab at Germany's Hasso Plattner Institute have created a device which they are called Impacto (sounds cool right?). The device can be attached to the player's arm or leg and is linked to the Virtual Reality headset being worn. The purpose of the device is to cause the user to actually feel the impact of a punch, for example.

In the video below we see a player feeling the effects of being punched in a boxing game or feeling the strike of a football on his foot.

This clever piece of technology takes VR to a whole new level. The team of researchers have spoken about also creating similar devices for the shoulders and abdominal region, meaning impact can be felt all over the body.

Although this obviously does not cause the user any pain, this still would be terrifying when used in gaming. Imagine not seeing your attacker in the dark and suddenly feeling the impact of their stealthy attack. I can imagine there will be an abundance of gamers wearing these headsets screaming randomly whilst others look on in concern.

I think that VR and Impacto together is a beautiful combination that could potentially change the face of gaming and how we interact with video games. The idea of being able to explore the beautiful jungles in *Uncharted* or the apocalyptic world in *Fallout 4* through the use of a VR headset is incredibly exciting.

Virtual Reality will make gaming much more psychological as players will be much more cautious when making a move due to feeling like they will be physically impacted if a mistake is made.

I cannot wait for Virtual Reality to be available to everyone worldwide, I also cannot wait to be psychologically tormented by video games.

Nintendo Direct 11.12.2015 – Exciting Announcements...and Pokémon Picross

I tuned in to watch Nintendo Direct live with baited breath and nervous apprehension. Will Nintendo deliver any big announcements that were not predictable? Will all of my money be spent on Nintendo next year? Or will it be all a little disappointing?

The answer to those pressing questions is not a straightforward one. I had many mixed emotions when it came to this year's latest Nintendo Direct.

Firstly, *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess HD*. This was exciting. *Twilight Princess* has always been one of my favourite *Zelda* games because I love the darker graphical style and storyline. The fact that a game as awesome as this is getting a HD facelift is brilliant. However, considering I do not particularly rate the Nintendo Wii U, I was a little disappointed that they did not decide to also remake the game for the Nintendo 3DS. I know this would be unrealistic and very unlikely, but a little part of me was secretly hoping Nintendo would remake *Twilight Princess* for both Wii U and 3DS but no such luck.

'And the brand new *Zelda* game' I hear Reggie say and I perk up with excitement as a clip of a very new style Link gallops through a beautiful field, then he finishes his sentence, '...headed to Wii U'. Noooo! All I wanted out of this November's Nintendo Direct was a new *Zelda* game on the Nintendo 3DS. But alas it was not meant to be. Having said this the new Wii U *Zelda* game does look very good indeed. Nintendo did release a trailer for the new game at E3 2014 and this short unseen 10-second clip shown in Nintendo Direct sheds a little more light on the style of the new *Zelda* game. It is a much more open-world style of game than previous *Zelda* instalments, with the environment reacting to every move either Link or Epona makes. For example, in the short clip we see birds fleeing when Epona gallops through and the grass being pushed aside. This is a level of detail never before seen in a *Legend of Zelda* game. All in all I am very excited for this game, even if it is on Wii U.

Next announcement was a free update for *The Legend of Zelda: Triforce Heroes* on the 3Ds. The update includes a new area called 'The Den of Trails' which boasts more than 30 stages. This is a fairly hefty level of new content for the slightly disappointing new co-op *Zelda* game. Two new outfits have also been added (a feature of the game in which I love). Linebeck's uniform and Fierce Deity Armour, both of which have special powers that can give the player a significant advantage. I believe this is a generous update considering it is free, however, the fairly non-existent single-player mode in *Triforce Heroes* makes the update seem more like an apology (sorry Nintendo).

Animal Crossing has gone a little astray recently. What with *Happy Home Designer* recently released on the 3DS which is essentially just *New Leaf* but only with the home designing part and now *Animal Crossing: amiibo Festival*. To give them credit, they are trying new things. The *Animal Crossing* formula is being shaken up and the end product is considerably different to the usual *Animal Crossing* adventures players are used to. *Amiibo Festival* appears to be very family friendly due to the board game structured way of playing. This game is much more about little minigames rather than building up your own town as mayor or as a villager etc. While this may be more appealing to children and families, I think I will miss the endless customization and rewarding gameplay that was traditional *Animal*

Crossing where there was no set structured way on how to live out your life within the game. I just do not want to play by your board game rules, Nintendo.

So what is the news on Nintendo 3DS? *Pokémon Picross*. Yay. What a innovative idea! I am being horrifically sarcastic. The idea is nice but when will Nintendo stop recycling franchises and using them for useless money-grabbing games? This might aswell become one of those 'mobile games' for all those hardcore iPhone gamers out there. Yes, I know it is free-to-start but of course there will be copious amounts of in-game purchasing. I am sure many people will disagree but the Nintendo 3DS is becoming a console purely for casual gamers and that is all. So, I, for one, will not be playing *Pokémon Picross*. Thanks but no thanks.

Fire Emblem Fates on the 3DS introduced an interesting concept, players can either purchase the *Birthright* version of the game or the *Conquest* version of the game, both show different sides to the story and I assume have different characters and outcomes. This is an interesting concept and as *Fire Emblem: Awakening 3DS*, released in 2013, was a visually stunning and impressively deep game, I will definitely consider investing in the *Fire Emblem Fates Special Edition* package that comes with both games, an artbook and an exclusive 3DS pouch. I have been drawn in to the hype. Help.

I felt a nostalgic tremor pass through the Nintendo world when both *Mega Man Legacy Collection* AND *Pokémon Red, Blue and Yellow Versions* were announced to be available in the Nintendo eshop for the 3DS. I am so incredibly excited to relive the beautiful moments in those games, I mean, am a Nintendo fan, I live for nostalgia. It would have been more impressive if the games had received a slight graphical update but I am content as they are. I have missed the old school *Pokémon* adventures and classic platforming like that in *Mega Man*. I will be snapping up these old school gems as soon as they are available. I am a sucker for retro.

Dragon Quest VII and *Dragon Quest VIII* are up next. This did not particularly interest me. Do not get me wrong, I loved *Dragon Quest*, I just feel like it is the same game it always was and will never change. I have played it once, I do not need to play the same game again, it never really hooked me. Sorry. I just do not see anything special about *Dragon Quest* compared to the next JRPG. These games set to be released on the 3DS in 2016 look very similar to previous titles, however, if you like hours and hours of in depth gameplay and huge worlds than you are in the right place.

There is a bunch more information and release dates on other games that I have not mentioned shown in the video, which I will link below.

All in all this month's Nintendo Direct did not blow me away and so far I cannot see my purse crying too much next year over how much money I am forking out towards Nintendo. However, we still do have the Nintendo NX to look forward to...

Top 10 PlayStation 2 Games that Should be Made Playable on PS4

The gaming world rejoiced when Sony made the following statement to Wired Magazine, “We are working on utilising PS2 emulation technology to bring PS2 games forward to the current generation. We have nothing further to comment at this point in time,”.

However, the statement has raised many questions in my mind. Will we have to re-purchase the PS2 games from the PlayStation store? Or will our original PS2 discs be playable on the PS4? Will the games receive a graphical update or will they be played in their original quality?

The fact that Sony have said in their statement, ‘bring PS2 games forward to the current generation’, suggests that the games may receive a graphical HD update, in order to bring them into our ‘current generation’. This is incredibly exciting as how I remember my PS2 games looking is probably vastly different to how they actually looked.

There are so many PS2 games I want to see on the PS4, the following is just a selection.

1. Crash Bandicoot Collection

Imagine all of the PlayStation 2’s Crash Bandicoot games being combined into one HD downloadable collection. This would be so beautiful I think I would shed a reminiscent tear. Battling Cortex all over again on the PlayStation 4 in Crash Bandicoot’s greatest adventures would honestly be so perfect.

2. TimeSplitters: Future Perfect

In my opinion, this is the best TimeSplitters game to ever grace the PS2. I spent hours of my childhood playing as Ninja Monkey on the amazing multiplayer mode with my brother and sister.

If Future Perfect got a graphical update and could be played on the PS4 I would buy it again without a doubt and would not be seen again by the outside world for weeks.

3. Silent Hill 2

After letting down the entire world. No, universe. No, actually, the entire galaxy. With the cancellation of Silent Hills for the PlayStation 4, I believe that making the PS2 classic, Silent Hill 2, available to be played on the PS4, may begin to make up for the tragedy of never receiving Silent Hills on PS4.

Silent Hill 2 was a masterpiece. It was even creepier than the original with an amazing storyline and even foggier fog.

4. Okami

The closest to a Zelda game on PlayStation. It was also an amazing game. Imagine a HD remaster of *Okami* on the PlayStation 4...this would be incredible.

The game was a beautiful tale told by Japanese folklore and myths and the graphics took on the style of a Japanese ink wash painting. With gameplay similar to the style of The Legend of Zelda, where could this game go wrong?

5. Resident Evil 4

Resident Evil 4 defined survival horror on the PlayStation 2 and I think this game needs to grace the PlayStation 4 with it's awesomeness. It was a massive game that ruined many a player's underwear with jumpscare and the very spooky atmosphere.

6. Burnout 3: Takedown

The perfect racer. An awesome soundtrack with crazy boosts and dramatic crashes. This game was amazing on the PS2 and would be even better if made playable on the PS4. The encouragement of destruction in Burnout 3 is something not seen in many racing games and is something very good indeed.

7. Tony Hawk Pro Skater 4

Before Tony Hawk's become a tragedy in Tony Hawk Pro Skater 5 there was Pro Skater 4. I played this game for far too long, a worrying amount of time and I am willing to spend a worrying amount of time on it again, on the PS4 please.

8. The Simpsons: Hit and Run

Essentially this was The Simpsons dropped into the world of a GTA game and it was very good indeed. Hardcore The Simpsons enthusiasts loved this game along with newcomers (if you are a newcomer to The Simpsons you may need to consider your life decisions).

This would be a wonderful trip down memory lane for many gamers and I am sure loads of players would love to have this on their PS4.

9. SSX On Tour

SSX On Tour was the best snowboarder on the PlayStation 2 and I believe would stand the test of time on the PlayStation 4.

SSX was another game that dominated my childhood and I desperately want to play old-school SSX again, bring it back!

10. Shadow of the Colossus

Complex puzzles and boss battles made the Shadow of the Colossus a unique masterpiece that was a pleasure to play.

It was atmospheric and emotional as the lone wanderer and his steed battled the Colossus.

The ending. Oh the ending, that is something that needs to be experienced on the PlayStation 4.

I really hope at least one of these incredible games will be playable on the PS4, with (fingers crossed) a graphical improvement to make the experience feel fresh.

Next year looks set to be a very interesting year for the PlayStation 4.

Nintendo NX – Optimistic Shipment Target?

The Nintendo NX is set to enter mass production by the end of March 2016 which suggests that the gaming world could be getting their hands on the shiny new console as early as the summer of 2016.

According to a report by Digitimes, Nintendo's shipment target is that of 20 million units in 2016. However, upstream component suppliers predict shipments to reach around 10-12 million units, around half the original target. The reason for this is unclear, it could be due to waiting for components or the inability to manufacture that many consoles in a fairly short timescale.

Digitimes also states that the Xbox One and the PlayStation 4 are expected to achieve shipments of 13 and 18 million units by the end of 2016. Therefore, if Nintendo is able to ship at least 10 million Nintendo NX's to retailers, the company may be within a fighting chance of competing with the dominators in the gaming industry, those being Microsoft and Sony.

With Nintendo's large and dedicated fan base, coupled with the company's appeal to all ages and genders, means that the Nintendo NX could potentially be breathing down the necks' of Microsoft and Sony competing with the staple home consoles and shaking up the world of gaming.

I hold out a lot of hope for the Nintendo NX to smash the sales targets and shimmy its way up the console food chain, hopefully putting a little pressure on Microsoft and Sony along the way. You heard it here first, unless I am wrong, then you heard it somewhere else.

Watch this space.

Eiji Aonuma on Link's Voice – Should He Remain Silent?

Throughout the epic adventures in *The Legend of Zelda* franchise, Link has always remained silent, only ever uttering sounds of exertion whilst he fights enemies, performs his athletic forward rolls or falls to his death. Falling to his death produces a scream which is probably the most emotion portrayed by Link, the voiceless protagonist.

In a recent interview with GamesMaster, Eiji Aonuma suggests that he is actually considering supplying Link with a voice, however, he does seem very unsure as to whether to make that decision or not. The full quote is as follows:

We've had a lot of requests from fans to hear [Link's] voice, and while in some ways I do feel that it could be good to have a game where he speaks, part of me also feels that that air of proud independence he has because he doesn't speak is a precious part of the individuality of his character. I want to think long and hard about whether changing that would be for the better or not before I make any decision.

The Legend of Zelda has been around for thirty years and Link has been silent throughout so why change that now? The series has been highly successful and I believe that giving Link a voice will not affect this either way, however, it may remove the personal connection each individual fan has to Link's character. Due to the fact that Link has no voice, players are much more easily able to picture themselves as Link as he has no annoying lines (Navi I am looking at you).

Having said this, it would be very interesting to hear what Link would actually sound like when having a conversation and the interaction between Link and Zelda would be highly entertaining. Furthermore, poor Link has no freedom of speech and so players have no idea what he is thinking or feeling, maybe sometimes our much loved protagonist just wants to be able to stay in bed and not be awoken by Navi's incessant shouting of 'HEY'.

Moreover, the lack of Link's voice causes *The Legend of Zelda* as a franchise appear to be stuck in the past a little. Most triple-A titles these days contain voice acting which defines the characters and gives them each their own personalities and traits. The fact that Link is silent suggests that the franchise is reluctant to let go of the past where few games had voice acting, perhaps giving Link a voice is the breath of fresh air that *The Legend of Zelda* requires to bring Link into the 21st century.

Although, I do wholeheartedly agree with Eiji Aonuma's suggestion that giving Link a voice would remove his 'proud independence' as Link's lack of narrative makes him seem separate from the other characters within the game as if he is almost otherworldly and does not feel the need to use words to get his point across. After all, actions do speak louder than words. Link's silence causes his character to seem at one with nature and the animals surrounding him, which makes his connection with the forest much more evident.

Furthermore, if our silent protagonist become vocal we could have a situation similar to that of *Detective Pikachu* on our hands in which Link would end up with a disturbingly deep voice that is just quite frankly terrifying and completely opposite to that of his appearance.

However, Nintendo could get it right and Link could come across as intelligent and witty, although I believe he comes across this way without the need for a voice.

Giving Link a voice is a risk that I do not think is worth taking, we each have our own idea of who Link is and the connection we have to his character. To give him a voice could entirely alter our perceptions of his personality and perhaps ruin what he is to each of us.