

GAME REVIEW

by Costantino Oliva

Super Mario 3D Land delivers the Mario heritage to a new generation

GAMES SERIES continuously repeat concepts, content, and mechanics. Nintendo's idea of digital gaming consists largely in establishing franchises and expanding endlessly. The most famous series is *Super Mario*, and its main character has appeared in more than 20 games. The Italian plumber has confirmed some reassuring notions: you kill *goombas* by jumping on them, mushrooms make you bigger, and yes, the princess has been kidnapped.

As you might expect, *Super Mario 3D Land* does not do much to destroy our ex-



pectations, but builds on top of them to construct an experience carefully aimed at both veteran players and newcomers. It successfully hits both targets.

With an intelligent use of 3D space, the game keeps you running frantically for your life while keeping an eye open for that last golden coin, hidden thanks to an astute perspective trick. The attention is constantly shifted through 2D and various interpretations of 3D, constructing dozens of minor levels, each with a different experience.

Many Mario classics are brought back for a true nostalgia-fest: the *tanooki* suit from *Super Mario Bros 3*, spooky ghost houses, and even the classic boss fight from the original *Super Mario Bros* — with a twist. Such homages and citations are used to bring back memories in *Super Mario 3D Land*, a joyful

ride topped with new perspective innovations.

Newcomers are going to find one of the most carefully balanced *Mario* games ever: frustration is calmed by power ups appearing only when you seem stuck on the same level.

Originality in games is a problem and massive franchises can bar new gaming concepts, but there is a deep heritage, history and culture connected with series like *Mario*. In *Super Mario 3D Land*, these aspects have been tastefully reconstructed and reinvented. The future of videogames seems bright. ●



FACT or FICTION?

SITTING ABSOLUTELY STILL

☞ Everything moves. Our galaxy rotates with our sun spinning in its arms. The Earth zips round the sun at 107,300 kilometers per hour, while its surface rotates faster than a rocket. Even atoms constantly vibrate. However, when we close our eyes it still seems as if the Universe has stood still.



ARE WE ALL MADE FROM STARDUST?

☞ Sometimes truth is stranger than fiction: yes, we all are made of stars. The oxygen we breathe, the calcium found in our bones, the carbon that forms the core of all our molecules, they were all once in the heart of a giant star.

Less than a second after the big bang, the simplest elements (hydrogen and helium) formed. Four hundred thousand years later, matter started to cool down and more complex atoms took shape. The drop in energy let particles coalesce and stars begin to form.

At the heart of a star, temperature, pressure, and density are high enough to form iron (found in our blood). It requires a supernova, a star exploding, to form the heavier elements. From this mix, our sun, the Earth and then we were formed.

