

Super Mario 3D World Preview - Scratch and Claw to Victory

Nintendo previews Super Mario 3D World and its new Double Cherry power-up.

by [Andrea Castellano](#) on 30th Oct, 2013

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I need more than Cat Mario to ease my Wii U buyer's remorse.

While game design supersedes hardware performance, Super Mario 3D World's reveal on Nintendo's first HD console felt like a lateral improvement on existing 3D Mario titles. To gain a better understanding of what Super Mario 3D World offers as the first 3D, HD Mario title, I ran through four stages at a Nintendo event.

Although I prefer to play platformers alone at my own pace, I ran through each stage

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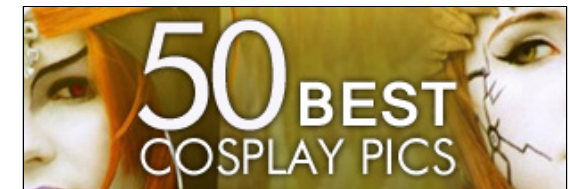
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with another player. Readily equipped with our cat suit's somersaulting scratch attacks, we clawed our way through enemies and climbed walls to their highest peaks. With the ability to climb walls, the first two levels focused on verticality and expanded open gaps. After a few failed attempts to cross a gap with two small moving platforms and my bloodthirsty, competitive partner blocking the way, I instead gripped the furthest wall and shimmied over to the other side.

Nintendo invites competition with tracked individual player scoring. We enter a narrow stage enclosed by walls in every direction. In front of us two piranha plants sit in flower pots. With the hunger to score higher, my partner grabs the piranha plant, eats the neighboring plant and leaves me empty handed. All the way until the end of the stage, he devours everything and occasionally turns to me, letting his carnivorous plant snap at me and send me in a backwards tumble.



While I struggled to keep up with his harassment, roles quickly turned when I finally grab hold of my own piranha plant. Nintendo encourages harassment of other players with a special scoring crown. Knock back the crown wearer and any points gathered with



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wearing the crown further increases your score. At the end of each stage each player's score tallies to provide a clear proof of the better player.

Outside of the conflict found in the competitive stages, I found myself struggling with the problematic depth perception of 3D Mario titles. Unless stages continued forward, I couldn't judge the distance of objects placed behind my character. Without any 3D effect for visual depth or adjustable camera, I often relied on character shadows to predict where I would land.

As soon as I start to grasp the feeling of my character's movement, the game introduces the Double Cherry power-up. Since a single Mario doesn't strain your platforming skills, the Double Cherry power-up makes an exact, controllable clone. As we ran through the stage finding hidden blocks filled with cherries, we amassed a group of three Marios and three blue Toads. If at any point you lose your clones to sloppy platforming, ground pound your one of your partner's clones to snatch a copy for yourself.

And keeping your clones, much the like other power-ups, allows you to access certain secrets. Towards the end of our stage where we dodged explosive soccer balls and climbed infinite ramps, an elevator required at least four bodies. We met the body count with our clones and collected one of the three hidden stars placed throughout each level.



Not all hidden stars require certain power-ups or platforming finesse; some hidden items just need some quick thinking. In the tighter stage with the harassing piranha plants, objects casted shadows to reveal secrets. When we found a hidden passage towards the end of a level, a scared Toad shivered at the shadow of a large Bowser. We then ran towards where Bowser stood. Or at least where Bowser's plywood cut-out stood. The Toad sighed in relief and awarded us with one of the hidden stars for that level.

Upon his defeat we bounced back into the familiar world map with stages placed on a grid. The world map lets players roam freely, but levels still unlock in a planned progression.

That feeling of familiarity followed me out. I expected a Mario title and along the way found Double Cherry power-ups and cat suits. Nintendo continues to expand their weirdly evolving Mario universe with new power-ups and level ideas, but we won't properly understand how it will display the game's creativity until November 22nd.

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