

The Handheld Addiction

From the dawn of the console video game system- well, from the Atari VCS/2600 anyway, close enough to the beginning in any event- I have been an avid partaker of home video games. Starting with the Atari, then moving onto Colecovision, NES, Sega Master System & Genesis, then slowing down a little, eventually getting a Playstation, 3DO, and a Gamecube. Absent from all this was any sort of handheld system. Well, if you don't count the single-game LCD games from the early 80s- I did have a handheld Donkey Kong. But as far as interchangeable handhelds, this era just passed me by. From the Gameboy and its successors to the Atari Lynx, Sega Gamegear and Nomad (official portable Genesis) I have known of their existence and even played other people's systems, but as far as owning one...?

A few months ago that changed when I picked up one of these little guys:



Actually, it's bigger than the picture looks- it's the Nintendo DSi XL Super Mario Bros 25th anniversary edition. While others have gaming tastes that lean toward strategy games, shooters, and online games, I have gravitated more toward the Nintendo-esque platformers and adventure games. That is, Super Mario Bros and Legend of Zelda. Currently my library consists of just eight games, but I have access to more through my library. In fact, that got me interested in a puzzle series, "Professor Layton." That is one of my games that I have yet to fire up aside from testing. Besides that game I have three Mario games (Mario & Luigi II, Super Mario 64- an enhanced version of the old N64 title, and Mario Kart DS which came with the system), Zelda Spirit Tracks, a couple Sega titles (Sonic Rush and Phantasy Star 0), and a Konami game collection. I eventually plan on getting the other Zelda title, the New Super Mario Bros, and the two Atari Greatest

Hits collections.

So far, only two have had a lot of play time- two of the Mario games. I have been playing the Mario 64 title most recently. This game consists of the original 15 courses and the secret stars, and adds a bunch more. I believe there are 30 more stars to obtain than the original. Despite being called **Mario 64**, you actually get to play as four different characters, another of many changes from the N64 days. In fact, when you start you can't even play as Mario- you start as Yoshi and have to rescue Mario, Luigi, and Wario before you can play as them, though on many courses you can pick up a hat to play as a particular character until you get hit and lose the hat. In the original, Mario got special abilities from blocks such as flying Mario, transparent Mario, and metal Mario (I'm sure I am not remembering the names correctly). In this game, each character gets one of these abilities from the block, and it adds breathing fire for Yoshi.

To make things more interesting, there are things placed in courses that only one character can access. There are things in ice blocks only Yoshi can melt with his fire ability, giant black blocks only Wario can smash, and of course the various things requiring the special abilities. So far, I have completed over half the courses, and a few stars each from a couple more. I have also collected several castle stars, some of which are not in the original game. And remember the rabbits Mario had to catch? Well, they increased that- a lot. Now you catch rabbits for keys to play mini-games (I haven't played any yet, but my guess is they are like the Mario Party mini-games) and there are different color rabbits depending on who you are playing as. There are also eight glowing white rabbits- if you catch all of them, you can open a special door to get who-knows-what. So far I have only seen and caught four or five of the eight. I think I have some 110 or so stars, well over enough to do the final battle with Bowser (80 required) though I haven't yet.

Controls are a little different from the original as the DS doesn't have an analog control like the N64 did. Instead, they go back to the classic style with a walking speed, but then you can go faster by holding a button while walking. There are a couple other styles by mimicking analog via the touch screen, which shows a map throughout the game, but it just doesn't work for me. The new 3DS adds an analog control, but it will be a few years before I get one of those. Anyway, here's a video you can watch. It's the first part of a walkthrough of the entire game:

