Video Game Reviews: Reach new dimensions with the latest 'Mario'

by Jeb_Haught

Game: "Super Paper Mario"

Publisher: Nintendo

System: Nintendo Wii

Cost: $50

ESRB rating: E

Review rating: 3 stars

The infamous Italian plumber Mario makes his platforming debut on the Nintendo Wii in "Super Paper Mario," an out-of-this-world escapade.

Gamers don't get to use motion-sensing controls, but for the first time in console history, they can switch between two- and three-dimensional surroundings at will.

When Princess Peach is tricked into marrying the nefarious Bowser, their unholy union rips open the very fabric of reality. Out comes a scheming madman named Count Bleck, and - you guessed it - only Mario can save the world. Some may find the plot to be a bit thin, but at least it isn't the typical "save Princess Peach" scenario.

'SUPER PAPER MARIO' - Infamous Italian plumber Mario makes his debut on the Nintendo Wii in 'Super Paper Mario.' CNS Photo courtesy of Nintendo.

CRANK IT UP - In 'Super Paper Mario,' players can still level up their characters like before, but now they can switch between playing as Mario, Bowser and Peach. CNS Photo courtesy of Nintendo.

'TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 07' - In the Tiger Woods game, players swing the Wii-mote like a golf club and the ball goes down the course. CNS Photo courtesy of EA Sports.

SWING THING - In the Tiger woods game, you can practice your swing before every shot. CNS Photo courtesy of EA Sports.

"Super Paper Mario" forgoes the slower, turn-based combat system found in its predecessors in favor of a real-time classic adventure. Players can still level up their characters like before, but now they can switch between playing as Mario, Bowser and Peach. Each character has special abilities, like Bowser's fire breath or Peach's extra-long jumps, but only Mario can switch the game between 2-D and 3-D.

The game is played mostly in 2-D, but with the simple press of a button, Mario can switch the screen to 3-D to get around objects or solve simple puzzles. This element alone adds fantastic new strategies, and it's incorporated in interesting ways throughout the game.

My only complaint is the long-winded speeches that everyone seems compelled to give to the player. They wouldn't be so bad if some voice acting was included, but instead, all conversations are displayed in dull text bubbles. But don't let this small gripe stop you from playing such an enjoyable action role-playing game.

Game: "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07"

Publisher: EA Sports

System: Nintendo Wii

Cost: $50

ESRB rating: E

Review rating: 3 stars

When Nintendo's latest console was released, it included a sampling of the unique controller's potential called Wii Sports. Most of the included games were fun for a few minutes, but for me, the golf game stole the show. That's why I was so thrilled to find out that "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07" would be released for the Wii.

At first glance, the graphics look no better than those found in the last-generation Tiger Woods games. Fortunately, golf games don't rely on high-definition graphics to be successful, and the authentic control scheme more than makes up for the average visuals.

The controls aren't perfect. Sometimes the game registered a swing before I had finished. But for the most part, players swing the Wii-mote like a golf club (make sure to use the safety strap or it'll be time to buy a new television), and the ball reacts as it should. It only took a few holes for me to get the swing of things, and before long, I had sunk my first birdie.

Subtle bonus features, such as the ability to practice swinging before every shot, really stand out and make the game more accessible for a wider audience. I also enjoyed creating my own character, starting a career and playing against real-life pro golfers on genuine courses. Don't forget to practice with the wide variety of arcade games.

If you get tired of playing against computer-controlled opponents, 12 multiplayer games await your virtual golfing prowess. Up to four people can compete against each other side by side, but sadly, there's no online game play.

Still, virtual golfing doesn't get much better than "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07."

RATING KEY

4 stars - Must have

3 stars - Pretty good

2 stars - So-so

1 star - Don't waste your time

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Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

E: Everyone

T: Teen (13 and older)

E10-plus: (Everyone 10 and older)

M: Mature (17 and older)

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