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Metroid: Zero Mission

Metroid: Zero Mission^[a] is a side-scrolling action-adventure video game published by Nintendo, and developed by its Research & Development 1 (R&D1) division for the Game Boy Advance. It is a remake of the 1986 game *Metroid*—the first installment in the *Metroid* video game series, and is designed to retell that entry's story with modernized gameplay. It was initially released in North America in February 2004.


Like the other titles in the series, the player controls space-faring bounty hunter Samus Aran, who travels to planet Zebes after learning that Space Pirates are experimenting with Metroids in an attempt to duplicate them and use them for their own gain. The gameplay focuses on exploration, with the player searching for power-ups that are used to reach previously inaccessible areas. The remake also features new items, additional areas, mini-bosses, difficulty levels, and a rewritten story which explores Samus's past.

Reviews were generally positive towards the game. Praise focused on the new content, while criticism targeted the game's short length. *Metroid: Zero Mission* received several honors, including a 46th-place ranking in a list of the Top 200 Games compiled by *Nintendo Power*. It was also chosen as the 9th Best Game Boy Advance Game by IGN. The game has sold over 439,000 units in the United States and 69,000 in Japan as of February 2005. The game became available as a Wii U Virtual Console title in Japan in 2014, with other territories later.

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Metroid: Zero Mission



North American box art

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|--------------|---|
| Developer(s) | Nintendo R&D1 |
| Publisher(s) | Nintendo |
| Director(s) | Yoshio Sakamoto |
| Producer(s) | Takehiro Izushi |
| Composer(s) | Kenji Yamamoto Minako Hamano |
| Series | <i>Metroid</i> |
| Platform(s) | Game Boy Advance |
| Release | NA: February 9, 2004 AU: March 19, 2004 EU: April 8, 2004 JP: May 27, 2004 |
| Genre(s) | Action-adventure |
| Mode(s) | Single-player |

External links

Gameplay



Samus faces off against Mother Brain. The scene from *Metroid* is shown on the left, while *Metroid: Zero Mission* is on the right.

Metroid: Zero Mission takes place on Planet Zebes, a large, open-ended world with areas connected by doors and elevators. The player controls Samus Aran as she travels through the planet's caverns and environments, hunting Space Pirates. Along the way, the player collects power-ups that enhance Samus's armor and weaponry, as well as grant her special abilities. These abilities allow Samus to access areas that were previously inaccessible,^[1] so that the game can be played linearly or non-linearly. For example, the player may come across caverns that bypass

certain sections, a method termed sequence breaking. To save their progress, players can enter either Save Rooms or Samus's ship on Crateria. As a remake of *Metroid*, *Metroid: Zero Mission*'s layout bears a resemblance to the original, and various powerups and items make reappearances from previous games in the series, with similar uses, effects, and appearances.^[1] However, the game adds new items, areas, and mini-bosses,^[2] as well as a completely new area named Chozodia.^[1]

Zero Mission is the first game in the *Metroid* series to include a sequence in which the player controls Samus without her Power Suit. In this portion of the game, Samus is more vulnerable to damage, must crawl through ducts on her hands and knees without the help of her Morph Ball mode, and has a weak pistol that briefly stuns enemies as her only weapon. However, Samus retains all energy tanks she acquired previously.^[3]

Completion of the game unlocks an emulated version of the original *Metroid* game. *Zero Mission* also allows players to unlock the *Metroid Fusion* picture gallery by linking between *Zero Mission* and *Fusion* cartridges via the Game Boy Advance Game Link Cable.^[1]

Plot

Space Pirates attack a Galactic Federation-owned space research vessel and seize samples of Metroid creatures. Dangerous floating organisms, Metroids can latch on to any organism and drain its life energy to kill it. The Space Pirates plan to replicate Metroids by exposing them to beta rays and then using them as biological weapons to destroy all living beings that oppose them. While searching for the stolen Metroids, the Galactic Federation locates the Space Pirates' base of operations on the planet Zebes. The Federation assaults the planet, but the Pirates resist, forcing the Federation to retreat. As a last resort, the Federation decides to send a lone bounty hunter to penetrate the Pirates' base and destroy Mother Brain, the mechanical life-form that controls the Space Pirates' fortress and its defenses. Considered the greatest of all bounty hunters, Samus Aran is chosen for the mission.^[1]

Samus lands on the surface of Zebes and explores the planet, traveling through the planet's caverns.^[1] She eventually comes across Kraid, an ally of the Space Pirates, and Ridley, the Space Pirates' commander, and defeats them both. Along the way, Samus finds and destroys Mother Brain. However, while Samus leaves the planet in her gunship, it is attacked by Space Pirates, causing it to crash back onto Zebes, near the Space Pirate Mothership.^[4] Exploring the Mothership, Samus eventually reaches the Ridley Robot,^[5] a robot built in the likeness of Ridley. After defeating it, Samus escapes the planet using one of the Space Pirate's shuttles, while the Mothership self-destructs.^[4]

Development

Metroid: Zero Mission was directed by Yoshio Sakamoto, a Nintendo veteran who has been involved with the *Metroid* series since it first appeared on the Nintendo Entertainment System,^{[6][7]} and has played a role in every *Metroid* game except for *Metroid II*.^[8] Official positions that he held include director of *Super Metroid* for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System and *Metroid Fusion* for the Game Boy Advance, producer of *Metroid Prime* for the Nintendo GameCube, and supervisor of *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*. Sakamoto is the only member from the *Metroid* development team to also work on *Metroid: Zero Mission*.^[6] *Metroid: Zero Mission* was the last game developed by Nintendo R&D1 before the team was disbanded due to Nintendo restructuring.

While working on the concept for the next *Metroid* game after *Metroid Fusion* was released in 2002,^[6] one of the developers for *Metroid Fusion* suggested that *Super Metroid* be ported to the Game Boy Advance; however, Sakamoto decided to port the original *Metroid* instead.^[9] The development team decided to return to the roots of *Metroid* gameplay by creating a game based on the NES original. Sakamoto, noting that *Metroid Fusion*'s gameplay and structure were drastically different from previous *Metroid* titles, wanted to "show people who had never played a *Metroid* game prior to *Fusion*, the roots of the *Metroid* franchise, that this is what *Metroid* is, this is the style of gameplay that *Metroid* sprang from [...] at the same time, retell the story of Samus's original mission".^[6]

One of the biggest challenges that the developers faced was in adding enough elements to *Zero Mission* to make it feel new, while keeping the spirit of the original *Metroid*. Because both games were made for the Game Boy Advance, *Metroid: Zero Mission* uses a rebuilt version of the game engine used for *Metroid Fusion* so that it did not need to be built from scratch.^[6] This marked the first time two *Metroid* installments have been released for the same video game console. *Metroid Fusion* had offered connectivity with *Metroid Prime* on the Nintendo GameCube, and *Zero Mission* was planned to offer similar functionality with *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* but ultimately fell through. Sakamoto explained that because there was not enough development time for *Zero Mission* compounded by the fact that both of their release dates were too far apart prevented them from doing so. However, they managed to include the ability for *Metroid Fusion* to connect with *Metroid: Zero Mission*.^[8]

In addition to retelling the plot from *Metroid*, *Zero Mission* introduces new cinematics to push the story forward. Sakamoto believed in the importance of having a story to complement a game. He found it particularly difficult to convey the game's plot accurately in a way that the player can understand, because of

the sparse use of dialogue in the *Metroid* series. The story for *Metroid: Zero Mission* was rewritten to explore Samus Aran's backstory more than in the original *Metroid*. Cinematics are used to show Samus' memories to move the story forward and to keep the plot open for interpretation. Sakamoto claimed that this was intended to expand the original story while retaining some mystery. The game is the first *Metroid* game to let the player choose a difficulty level at the start of the game; each of three levels varies in the amount of damage caused by enemies with the third option only unlocked after finishing the campaign once.^[6] The battle with Mother Brain marked the end of the original *Metroid*; however, *Zero Mission* offers an extra story segment featuring Samus in her blue Zero Suit.^[8]

Release

Nintendo first revealed *Metroid: Zero Mission* at the E3 convention in 2003,^[10] and its North American release date of February 9, 2004 was announced later that year.^[11] In other territories, *Zero Mission* was released in Australia on March 19, 2004,^[12] in Europe on April 8,^[13] and in Japan on May 27.^[14] The Wii U's Virtual Console version of *Zero Mission* was released in Japan on June 19, 2014.^[15] This was followed by the release in Europe on March 12, 2015,^[16] and in North America on January 14, 2016.^[17]

Metroid: Zero Mission was ranked the best-selling Game Boy Advance game in the United States in its debut month of February 2004, selling 151,807 units, and it was the 3rd best-selling game across all video game systems in that month.^[18] In May 2004, the game's sales dropped to 7th among Game Boy Advance games, with 31,619 copies sold and \$938,681 in revenue.^[19] By February 2005, the game had sold over 439,000 units in the United States and 69,000 in Japan.^[20]

Reception

Metroid: Zero Mission was given "generally favorable reviews", according to Metacritic.^[32] The game was praised by a number of reviews, several which called it one of the best games available for the Game Boy Advance. Japanese game magazine *Famitsu* gave the game a score of 34 out of 40.^[14] *X-Play* and *GamePro* enjoyed the game; *X-Play* said the game was "perfect for blasting space pirates on the go",^[30] and *GamePro* was "constantly surprised" with what the game offered.^[25] GameZone found it "hard to imagine a Game Boy Advance game that could match the style and addictive action of '*Metroid Fusion*'", but admitted that *Metroid: Zero Mission* surpasses the game quite

Reception

easily.^[26] Agreeing with GameZone, Nintendo World Report called the game a masterpiece and the perfect example of how a *Metroid* game should be done: "The designers carefully mix all the best elements from the other games and layer them on top of the already brilliant level design and concepts of the original *Metroid*."^[29] Eurogamer appreciated every minute of the game, affirming that *Metroid: Zero Mission* should be considered one of the best games available for the Game Boy Advance.^[22]

A number of reviews were pleased with the new content added to *Metroid: Zero Mission*. *Game Informer* appreciated the new material, and believed that fans of the *Metroid* series would "absolutely adore" *Metroid: Zero Mission*, which they considered one of the greatest video games in the history of gaming.^[24] 1UP.com considered *Metroid: Zero Mission* to be one of the "most ambitious, comprehensive and successful" remakes for a game such as *Metroid*, noting that "[*Metroid: Zero Mission*] expands on its source material with refined control, gameplay ideas retrofitted from its sequels, new plot hooks for subsequent chapters of the saga, and some jaw-droppingly cool innovations which add new layers of complexity to the series."^[21]

Criticism of the game stemmed from its short length. Regarded as a "weak one-shot experience", IGN felt that players would enjoy the game only after they had completed it and played it again^[28] Eurogamer stated simply: "We can't help but wish that it had been longer." Even though GamesRadar liked the game's quality, they said that Nintendo should have "[made] the experience last longer."^[22] GameSpot was disappointed with the "short-lived experience", but blamed the game's captivating quality that compelled them to complete the game in a few sittings.^[2] Calling *Metroid: Zero Mission* stale, GameSpy asserted that players less familiar with *Metroid* games would get more enjoyment out of it because of its similarities to previous *Metroid* games.^[7]

The game was ranked the 46th-best game for any Nintendo system in *Nintendo Power*'s Top 200 Games list.^[33] In their March 2010 issue, the magazine also ranked *Metroid: Zero Mission* as the eighth-best game to be released on a Nintendo console in the 2000 decade, in their "Best of the Decade" feature.^[34] *Metroid: Zero Mission* was voted IGN's Game Boy Advance Game of the Month for February 2004,^[35] and the website's staff picked the game as both the Best Game Boy Adventure Game of 2004,^[36] and the 9th Best Game Boy Advance

| Aggregate scores | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Aggregator | Score |
| GameRankings | 90.19% ^[31] |
| Metacritic | 89/100 ^[32] |
| Review scores | |
| Publication | Score |
| 1UP.com | A ^[21] |
| Eurogamer | 9/10 ^[22] |
| Famitsu | 34/40 ^[23] |
| Game Informer | 9.5/10 ^[24] |
| GamePro | ★★★★★ ^[25] |
| GameSpot | 8.5/10 ^[2] |
| GameSpy | ★★★★★ ^[7] |
| GamesRadar+ | 89% ^[27] |
| GameZone | 9/10 ^[26] |
| IGN | 9/10 ^[28] |
| Nintendo World Report | 9.5/10 ^[29] |
| X-Play | ★★★★★ ^[30] |

Game.^[37] *Electronic Gaming Monthly* also picked it as the Best Handheld Game of 2004.^[38] *Official Nintendo Magazine* ranked the game 94th in a list of the best Nintendo games.^[39] *Nintendo Power* also ranked it the best Game Boy Advance game of all-time in its August 2011 issue.^[40]

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Notes

- a. Japanese: メトロイド ゼロミッション Hepburn: *Metoroido Zero Misshon*

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- *Metroid: Zero Mission* (<http://www.metroid-database.com/mzm/>) at the Metroid Database

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