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# Metroid: Samus Returns

***Metroid: Samus Returns*** is an action-adventure game developed by MercurySteam and published by Nintendo for the Nintendo 3DS in 2017. A part of the *Metroid* series, the game is a reimagining of the 1991 Game Boy game *Metroid II: Return of Samus*. Players control Samus Aran, who is sent by the Galactic Federation to exterminate the parasitic Metroids on their home planet.

The story and structure are similar to *Metroid II*, but the game adds controls, visuals, and gameplay, and introduces features new to 2D *Metroid* games, such as a melee counterattack, the ability to fire freely at any angle, and a selection of abilities. Development began in 2015, produced by longtime *Metroid* developer Yoshio Sakamoto. The game received positive reviews for its visuals and improved gameplay over the original game, with many viewing it as a return to form for the series.

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## Gameplay

*Metroid: Samus Returns* is a side-scrolling action-adventure game played on a two-dimensional plane with three-dimensional graphics.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Players take control of series protagonist Samus Aran, a bounty hunter who explores labyrinthine environments, kills hostile aliens, and collects power-ups to gain access to new

<i>Metroid: Samus Returns</i>	
	
Developer(s)	MercurySteam
Publisher(s)	Nintendo
Director(s)	Jose Luis Márquez Takehiko Hosokawa
Producer(s)	Yoshio Sakamoto
Designer(s)	Jacobo Luengo Aleix Garrido Oberink
Programmer(s)	Fernando Zazo Enrique Jesús García Amezcu
Artist(s)	Rafael Jimenez Rodriguez
Composer(s)	Daisuke Matsuoka
Series	<i>Metroid</i>
Platform(s)	Nintendo 3DS
Release	15 September 2017



The player controls Samus Aran from a side-scrolling perspective on the 3DS top screen, and sees the HUD and map on the bottom screen.

areas.<sup>[2][3]</sup> *Samus Returns* is a reimagining of the 1991 Game Boy game *Metroid II: Return of Samus*;<sup>[4]</sup> as such, it features a story and structure similar to the original game, but with new controls, visuals, and gameplay.<sup>[2][3][5]</sup>

<b>Genre(s)</b>	Action-adventure
<b>Mode(s)</b>	Single-player

The game introduces some features that are new to the 2D *Metroid* games.<sup>[5]</sup> Samus can perform a melee counterattack to deal critical damage on foes. In *Metroid II*, her firing direction was limited to specific angles, whereas now she is capable of firing freely at any angle.<sup>[3]</sup> Samus also has a selection of new powers, called Aeion abilities, that rely on an energy gauge for their usage. One example of an Aeion ability is the Scan Pulse, which lets Samus scan the surrounding environment for hidden pathways and items. The game also features Teleport Stations, allowing Samus to fast travel between areas.<sup>[6]</sup> Several abilities introduced after *Metroid II* are implemented in *Samus Returns*, such as the Grapple Beam, Power Bombs, and Super Missiles.<sup>[7]</sup>

*Samus Returns* features Amiibo support,<sup>[3]</sup> with compatible figurines being based on the *Metroid* series. When scanned, players can unlock reserve tanks and a Metroid Marker which can be used to locate nearby Metroids. After the player finishes the game at least once, certain Amiibo-exclusive content is unlocked; such content includes a new Fusion Mode, which features Samus's Fusion Suit and offers an increased level of difficulty, and multiple art galleries.<sup>[8]</sup> A standard hard mode is also unlocked upon completing the game, but it does not require an Amiibo figurine.<sup>[7][9]</sup>

## Plot

In the year 20X5, a lone bounty hunter named Samus Aran is sent by the Galactic Federation to infiltrate the Space Pirate base on the planet Zebes, where she foils the Pirates' plans to use the parasitic organisms called Metroids and defeats the Pirate leader, the Mother Brain. Seeing the threat posed by the Metroids, the Federation sends a special squadron of elite soldiers to the Metroids' home planet of SR388 to investigate, but the squadron soon goes missing. After retrieving a small sampling of data confirming a Metroid presence within the planet, the Federation sends Samus to SR388 to destroy the species.<sup>[10]</sup>

Samus lands on the surface of SR388 and explores the planet, travelling through its caverns. She encounters the Metroids in different evolution stages, growing from small jellyfish-like creatures to large reptilian beasts. After killing most of the planet's Metroids, Samus finds and destroys the Queen Metroid.<sup>[11]</sup> Shortly afterward, Samus discovers a Metroid egg that hatches in front of her. The Metroid hatchling imprints onto Samus, thinking she is its mother. Refusing to kill the infant Metroid, Samus decides to take it with her.<sup>[12]</sup> As Samus and the infant Metroid reach the planet's surface to return to her gunship, they are attacked by a half-mechanical Ridley.<sup>[13]</sup> After a long battle, Ridley is defeated, and Samus and the Metroid leave the planet together in her gunship.<sup>[14]</sup> In a post-credits scene, a Hornoad is seen wandering on the planet's surface,

gnawing at Ridley's discarded mechanical claw, before being attacked by an X parasite.<sup>[15]</sup>

Based on the item completion rating, players may unlock a series of images, depicting the history of the Chozo race inhabited SR388. After landing on the planet, the Chozo encountered the X parasites, which use the planet's creatures as hosts. To this end, the Chozo created the Metroids using their advanced technology to combat the X parasites. Although the Chozo lived in peace when the X parasites were gone, the Metroids grew out of control and the civilisation came under threat. A discussion was held between two Chozo leaders; the final image reveals one leader seemingly killed the other, standing over its body while overlooking its army.<sup>[16]</sup>

## Development

*Metroid: Samus Returns* was developed by the Spanish studio MercurySteam and the Japanese company Nintendo.<sup>[17][2]</sup> Yoshio Sakamoto, executive officer of Nintendo's Entertainment Planning & Development division, was the game's producer,<sup>[5][18]</sup> while Takehiko Hosokawa of the same studio was the co-director, along with Jose Luis Márquez of MercurySteam.<sup>[19]</sup> MercurySteam head Enric Álvarez described their collaboration with Nintendo as an "incredible" achievement,<sup>[20]</sup> and Sakamoto in return stated that the studio was the best choice for a Metroidvania game given their "good design sensibility" and respect for the *Metroid* series.<sup>[21]</sup>

Sakamoto had expressed interest in making a new 2D *Metroid* game, which had not been done since *Metroid: Zero Mission* (2004), for a few years before the game's development started in 2015.<sup>[22]</sup> After hearing that MercurySteam, responsible for the following their involvement with *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow – Mirror of Fate* (2013), were interested in taking on the challenge of remaking a *Metroid* game, he visited their studio to organise a collaboration. MercurySteam specifically pitched Nintendo a remake of *Metroid Fusion* (2002), but Sakamoto instead wanted to recreate *Metroid II*. Although Sakamoto had never worked on the original Game Boy game, he believed it to be an important entry in the *Metroid* series, particularly regarding its plot point of Samus encountering the last Metroid, and so he was enthusiastic about remaking it. The Nintendo 3DS was Sakamoto's platform of choice to employ the 3D visuals and a dual screen setup offered by the portable system.<sup>[21]</sup>

Sakamoto noted that the potential for 2D games in the *Metroid* franchise had opened up for Nintendo following the announcement of the game.<sup>[6][5]</sup> He expressed that he was keen to evolve some of the traditions in 2D *Metroid* games.<sup>[5]</sup> As a remake, he wanted to preserve some of the originality and wanted to avoid changing things without good reason. Their approach was to add to aspects which improved upon the game's core concept of hunting the Metroids.<sup>[2]</sup> Sakamoto hope to start from the original game's "simple and straightforward progression" and "spice up and excite the experience", offering new gameplay features and areas to explore such as the Aeion abilities.<sup>[22]</sup> These ideas led to some control enhancements, such as the



Yoshio Sakamoto of Nintendo EPD served as the game's lead producer

addition of free aiming for more precise firing.<sup>[5]</sup> The idea of a melee counterattack came from MercurySteam, who had implemented a similar parry mechanic in their *Castlevania* game.<sup>[17]</sup> Sakamoto felt that the inclusion of the melee counterattack offered players an alternative combat style, in contrast to previous games where players had to rely on dodging charge attacks from enemies and then defeating them from afar.<sup>[5]</sup>

The team moved from the pixel art of 2D *Metroid* games to 3D models to incorporate varied animations and use different camera angles to enhance the cutscenes.<sup>[17]</sup> The music was composed by Daisuke Matsuoka and directed by Kenji Yamamoto,<sup>[19]</sup> who had co-composed the music for the 1994 game *Super Metroid*.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Release

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The project was revealed on 13 June 2017 during Nintendo's Treehouse livestream at the Electronic Entertainment Expo 2017.<sup>[3]</sup> It was released for the Nintendo 3DS handheld game console on 15 September 2017.<sup>[1]</sup> A special edition version of the game includes a reversible cover and a soundtrack CD called *Samus Archives*, featuring 25 tracks from numerous *Metroid* games including *Samus Returns*.<sup>[6]</sup> A European Legacy Edition version also includes a soundtrack CD, alongside a 40-page art book, a Morph Ball keyring, an S-marked pin badge, a download code for *Metroid II*, and a steelbook designed in the likeness of a Game Boy cartridge.<sup>[23]</sup> Two Amiibo figurines were released alongside the game;<sup>[3]</sup> one figurine is of Samus kneeling in the pose shown on the cover art of *Metroid II*, while the other is of a Metroid creature that has escaped containment.<sup>[24]</sup> A special "Samus Edition" of the New Nintendo 3DS XL console was also released alongside the game.<sup>[25]</sup>

## Reception

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*Metroid: Samus Returns* received "generally favorable reviews", according to review aggregator Metacritic.<sup>[26]</sup> Andrew Webster at *The Verge* viewed *Samus Returns* as a return to the series' roots.<sup>[36]</sup> Peter Brown of GameSpot believed that it represented a look at the potential future for 2D *Metroid* games.<sup>[30]</sup> Russ Frushtick of *Polygon* thought that the game's visuals were "remarkable",<sup>[33]</sup> while Webster thought that the game's 3D visuals made it easier and more playable than *Metroid II*. Webster also praised its use of the handheld's glasses-free 3D effect, stating that it added a "wonderful" sense of depth.<sup>[36]</sup> The game's soundtrack by Daisuke Matsuoka also received praise,<sup>[35]</sup> with Chris Carter of *Destructoid* calling

### Reception

the melodies "hauntingly beautiful".<sup>[27]</sup>

Chris Scullion at *Nintendo Life* wrote that the "Scan Pulse" ability was a useful feature and made the game "far more entertaining" as a result,<sup>[32]</sup> although Brown felt that it removed some of the thrill of discovery.<sup>[30]</sup> Webster called the game's combat "fast and fluid",<sup>[36]</sup> while Brown wrote that it was more aggressive and satisfying than expected.<sup>[30]</sup> Conversely, Martin Robinson of *Eurogamer* criticised the effect of the counterattack system, writing that it led "to a staccato rhythm to the action as you're constantly stopped in your tracks for such one-note encounters".<sup>[37]</sup> IGN's Samuel Claiborn complained about the controls, stating the Samus's complicated weapon options have players "working the 3DS shoulder buttons, slider, and face buttons in a downright painful way".<sup>[31]</sup>

During its first week in the United Kingdom, *Samus Returns* was ranked eighth in an all-format chart.<sup>[38]</sup> It was the third best-selling game in Japan in its debut week, with 30,855 copies sold.<sup>[39]</sup> An additional 6,206 copies were sold the following week.<sup>[40]</sup> It was also the eighth best-selling game in the United States during September 2017.<sup>[41]</sup>

Accolades

*Metroid: Samus Returns* won the "Best Mobile Game" award at the Gamescom 2017 Awards.<sup>[42]</sup> It also won the Best Handheld Game category at The Game Awards 2017,<sup>[43]</sup> and was nominated for "Best Spanish Game" at the Titanium Awards.<sup>[44]</sup> At the 2017 Golden Joystick Awards, Nintendo EPD won Studio of the Year, while the game received a nomination for Nintendo Game of the Year.<sup>[45]</sup> *Samus Returns* won *Destructoid*'s award for Best Portable Game of 2017.<sup>[46]</sup> It also won IGN's Best 3DS Game as part of their Best of 2017 Awards.<sup>[47]</sup> The 2017 Game Critics Awards awarded *Samus Returns* for Best Handheld Game.<sup>[48]</sup> GameSpot listed it as one of five best Nintendo 3DS games in 2017.<sup>[49]</sup> *Game Informer* gave it the award each for "Best Mobile/Handheld Exclusive" in their "Best of 2017 Awards", and for "Best Handheld" in their 2017 Action Game of the Year Awards.<sup>[50][51]</sup> In their Reader's Choice Best of 2017 Awards, the game came up at second place for "Best Mobile/Handheld Exclusive".<sup>[52]</sup> *Polygon* ranked the game 30th on their list of the 50 best games of 2017.<sup>[53]</sup> It also won the Tappan Zee Bridge Award for Best Remake at the New York Game Awards 2018,<sup>[54]</sup> and won "Handheld Game of the Year" at the 21st Annual D.I.C.E. Awards.<sup>[55][56]</sup> The game won the award for "Control Design, 2D or Limited 3D" at the 17th Annual National Academy of Video Game Trade

Aggregate score	
Aggregator	Score
Metacritic	85/100 <sup>[26]</sup>
Review scores	
Publication	Score
<i>Destructoid</i>	8/10 <sup>[27]</sup>
<i>Famitsu</i>	32/40 <sup>[28]</sup>
<i>Game Informer</i>	9.75/10 <sup>[29]</sup>
<i>GameSpot</i>	9/10 <sup>[30]</sup>
<i>IGN</i>	8.5/10 <sup>[31]</sup>
<i>Nintendo Life</i>	10/10 <sup>[32]</sup>
<i>Nintendo World Report</i>	9.5/10 <sup>[34]</sup>
<i>Polygon</i>	9/10 <sup>[33]</sup>
<i>USgamer</i>	★★★★★ <sup>[35]</sup>

Reviewers Awards, whereas its other nomination was for "Original Light Mix Score, Franchise".<sup>[57]</sup><sup>[58]</sup>

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## External links

- Official website (<http://metroidsamusreturns.nintendo.com/>)

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