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The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past is now playable on PC, thanks to a fan project

By Joshua Wolens published 25 August 2022

A fan-made clone means the SNES classic can now be played on PC from start to finish.

(Image credit: Nintendo)

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change of heart, but because dedicated teams of engineers have seen fit to give us both a fan-made PC port of Ocarina of Time and, now, a "reverse-engineered clone" of The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past.

The clone comes courtesy of Github user snesrev, and comprises a cool 70-80,000 lines of code covering every inch of the original game. If you have a (legal!) copy of the original's ROM lying around, you can play the whole thing on your PC from start to finish right now. You'll have to extract the levels and images and compile them with the clone's code yourself, though. The authors can't include them by default because that would be tremendously illegal.

Playing A Link to the Past right there on your PC is pretty neat, but we've been able to emulate these old Zeldas for years and years at this point. The really interesting part of this project is the space it opens up for weird modding efforts.

The fan-port of Ocarina of Time has been equipped with all manner of upgrades since it debuted earlier this year: there's high-res textures and widescreen support, of course, but also gyro aiming, adjustable climbing speed, and a mod that turns every interactable item into a volatile high explosive. Naturally.

The potential of a native PC port of A Link to the Past is plain to see. The game already has a very popular randomiser that's become a staple of events like Awesome Games Done Quick, but using it means futzing around with your ROM every time you want to change the randomisation. A PC port could have a randomiser built-in, making the process as simple as clicking "Start New Game" and getting a newly-generated random world every time. That's not to mention all the other mods that could be crammed in there alongside it.

It didn't take long for the community to come out with a neat and easy-to-use PC version of Ocarina after that game got decompiled. I expect the same will be true here, and it won't be long before everyone clusters around a fan-made PC port of A Link to the Past that becomes the de facto basis for future updates, upgrades, and mods. In the meantime, though, you'll have to compile the whole lot yourself. Or just watch YouTube videos of it forlornly, if you're as lazy as me.

Joshua Wolens
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One of Josh's first memories is of playing Quake 2 on the family computer when he was far too young to be doing that, and he's been irreparably game-brained ever since. Since then, his writing has been featured in Vice, Fanbyte, and the Financial Times. He'll play pretty much