

= EarthBound =

EarthBound , known as Mother 2 in Japan , is a 1994 Japanese role @-@ playing video game co @-@ developed by Ape Inc. and HAL Laboratory and published by Nintendo for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System video game console . As Ness and his party of four , the player travels the world to collect melodies en route to defeating the evil alien force Giygas . It is the second game of the Mother series , and the only one to be released in the English language until its predecessor was released under the name EarthBound Beginnings in 2015 as part of Wii U 's Virtual Console . EarthBound was released in Japan on August 27 , 1994 , and in North America on June 5 , 1995 .

The game had a lengthy development period which spanned five years . Its making involved a number of Japanese luminaries , including writer Shigesato Itoi , musician / songwriter Keiichi Suzuki , sound designer Hirokazu Tanaka , and future Nintendo president Satoru Iwata . Themed around an idiosyncratic portrayal of Americana and Western culture , it subverted popular role @-@ playing game traditions by featuring a real world setting while parodying numerous staples of the genre . Itoi , who directed the game , wanted it to reach non @-@ gamers with its intentionally goofy tone . It was heavily marketed upon release via a promotional campaign which sardonically proclaimed " this game stinks " .

Initial reviewers had little praise for EarthBound in the United States , where it sold half as many copies as in Japan . Critics attribute this to a combination of the game 's simple graphics , the satirical marketing campaign , and a lack of market interest in the genre . In the ensuing years , a dedicated fan community spawned which advocated for the series . Starting in 1999 , Ness became a featured character in each of the Super Smash Bros. series of video games which furthered public knowledge of EarthBound . Upon retrospection , the game received wide critical acclaim , and was deemed by many to be a timeless classic . A Japan @-@ only sequel , Mother 3 , was released for the Game Boy Advance in 2006 . In 2013 , EarthBound was reissued and given a worldwide release for the Wii U Virtual Console following many years of fan lobbying , marking its debut in many territories including Europe .

= = Gameplay = =

EarthBound features many traditional role @-@ playing game elements : the player controls a party of characters who travel through the game 's two @-@ dimensional world composed of villages , cities , caves , and dungeons . Along the way , the player fights battles against enemies and the party receives experience points for victories . If enough experience points are acquired , a character 's level will increase . This pseudo @-@ randomly increases the character 's attributes , such as offense , defense , and the maximum hit points (HP) and psychic points (PP) of each character . Rather than using an overworld map screen like most console RPGs of its era , the world is entirely seamless , with no differentiation between towns and the outside world . Another non @-@ traditional element is the perspective used for the world . The game uses oblique projection , while most 2D RPGs use a " top down " view on a grid or an isometric perspective .

Unlike its predecessor , EarthBound does not use random encounters . When physical contact occurs between a character and an enemy , the screen dissolves into battle mode . In combat , characters and enemies possess a certain amount of HP . Blows to an enemy reduce the amount of HP . Once an enemy 's HP reach zero , that enemy is defeated . If a specific type of enemy is defeated , there is a chance that the character will receive an item after the battle . In battle , the player is allowed to choose specific actions for their characters . These actions can include attacking , healing , spying (reveals enemy weakness / strengths) , mirroring (emulate a specific enemy) , and running away . Characters can also use special PSI attacks that require PP . Once each character is assigned a command , the characters and enemies perform their actions in a set order , determined by character speed . Whenever a character receives damage , the HP box gradually " rolls " down , similar to an odometer . This allows players an opportunity to heal the character or win the battle before the counter hits zero , after which the character is knocked unconscious . If all characters are rendered unconscious , the game transitions to an endgame screen , asking if the

player wants to continue . An affirmative response brings Ness , conscious , back to the last telephone he saved from , with half the money on his person at the time of his defeat , and with other party members showing as still unconscious . Because battles are not random , tactical advantages can be gained . If the player physically contacts an enemy from behind (indicated by a translucent green swirl which fills the screen) , the player is given a first @-@ strike priority . However , this also applies to enemies , who can also engage the party from behind (in this case , the swirl is red) . Neutral priority is indicated by a gray swirl . Additionally , as Ness and his friends become stronger , battles with weaker enemies are eventually won automatically , forging the battle sequence , and weaker monsters will begin to flee from Ness and his friends rather than chase them .

Currency is indirectly received from Ness ' father , who can also save the game 's progress . Each time the party wins a battle , Ness ' father deposits money in an account that can be withdrawn at ATMs . In towns , players can visit various stores where weapons , armor , and items can be bought . Weapons and armor can be equipped to increase character strength and defense , respectively . In addition , items can be used for a number of purposes , such as healing . Towns also contain several other useful facilities such as hospitals where players can be healed for a fee .

= = Plot = =

The game took place a few years later after the events of Mother . The player starts as a young boy named Ness as he investigates a nearby meteorite crash with his neighbor , Pokey . He finds that an alien force , Giygas , has enveloped and consumed the world in hatred and consequently turned animals , humans , and objects into malicious creatures . A bee from the future instructs Ness to collect melodies in a Sound Stone to preemptively stop the force . While visiting these eight Sanctuaries , Ness meets three other kids named Paula , Jeff , and Poo ? " a psychic girl , an eccentric inventor , and a ponytailed martial artist " , respectively ? who join his party . Along the way , Ness visits the cultists of Happy Happy Village , where he saves Paula , and the zombie @-@ infested Threed , where the two of them fall prey to a trap . After Paula telepathically instructs Jeff in a Winters boarding school to rescue them , they continue to the city of Fourside and the seaside resort Summers . Meanwhile , Poo , the prince of Dalaam , partakes in a violent meditation called " Mu Training " before joining the party as well . The party continues to travel to the Scaraba desert , the Deep Darkness swamp and a forgotten underworld where dinosaurs live and as the Sound Stone is eventually filled , Ness visits Magicant alone , a surreal location in his mind where he fights his personal dark side . Upon returning to Eagleland , he and his party travel back in time to fight a young Giygas , a battle known for its " feeling of isolation , ... incomprehensible attacks , ... buzzing static " and reliance on prayer .

= = Development = =

The first Mother was released for the NES in 1989 . Its sequel , Mother 2 , or EarthBound , was developed over five years by Ape (later Creatures) and HAL , and published through Nintendo . The game was written and designed by Japanese author , musician , and advertiser Shigesato Itoi , and produced by Satoru Iwata , who became Nintendo 's president and CEO . Mother 2 was made with a development team different from that of the original game , and most of its members were unmarried and willing to work all night on the project . Mother 2 's development took much longer than planned and came under repeated threat of cancellation . Itoi has said that the project 's dire straits were resolved when Iwata joined the team . Ape 's programming team had more members than HAL on the project . The HAL team (led by lead programmer Iwata) worked on the game programming , while the Ape team (led by lead programmer Kouji Malta) worked on specific data , such as the text and maps . They spent biweekly retreats together at the HAL office in view of Mount Fuji .

The game continues Mother 's story in that Giygas reappears as the antagonist (and thus did not die at the end of Mother) and the player has the option of choosing whether to continue the

protagonist 's story by choosing whether to name their player @-@ character the same as the original . He considered interstellar and interplanetary space travel instead of the confines of a single planet in the new game . After four months , Itoi scrapped the idea as cliché . Itoi sought to make a game that would appeal to populations that were playing games less , such as girls .

The Mother series titles are built on what Itoi considered " reckless wildness " , where he would offer ideas that encouraged his staff to contribute new ways of portraying scenes in the video game medium . He saw the titles foremost as games and not " big scenario scripts " . Itoi has said that he wanted the player feel emotions such as " distraught " when playing the game . The game 's writing was intentionally " quirky and goofy " in character , and written in the Japanese kana script so as to give dialogue a conversational feel . Itoi thought of the default player @-@ character names when he did not like his team 's suggestions . Many of the characters were based on real life personalities . For instance , the desert miners were modeled on specific executives from a Japanese construction company . The final battle dialogue with Giygas was based on Itoi 's recollections of a traumatic scene from the Shinto film The Military Policeman and the Dismembered Beauty that he had accidentally seen in his childhood . Itoi referred to the battle background animations as a " video drug " . The same specialist made nearly 200 of these animations , working solely on backgrounds for two years .

The idea for the rolling HP meter began with pachinko balls that would drop balls off the screen upon being hit . This did not work as well for characters with high health . Instead , around 1990 , they chose an odometer @-@ style hit points counter . The bicycle was one of the harder elements to implement ? it used controls similar to a tank before it was tweaked . Iwata felt that the Ape programmers were particularly willing to tackle such challenges . The programmers also found difficulty implementing the in @-@ game delivery service , where the delivery person had to navigate around obstacles to reach the player . They thought it would be funny to have the delivery person run through obstacles in a hurry on his way off @-@ screen . The unusual maps laid out with diagonal streets in oblique projection required extra attention from the artists . Itoi specifically chose against having an overworld map , and didn 't want to artificially distinguish between towns and other areas . Instead , he worked to make each town unique . His own favorite town was Threed , though it was Summers before then .

Mother 2 was designed to fit within an eight megabit limit , but was expanded in size and scope twice : first to 12 megabits and second to 24 megabits . The game was originally scheduled for release in January 1993 on a 12 megabit cartridge . It was finished around May 1994 and the Japanese release was set for August 27 , 1994 . With the extra few months , the team played the game and added small , personal touches . Itoi told Weekly Famitsu that Shigeru Miyamoto liked the game and that it was the first role @-@ playing game that Miyamoto had completed . Mother 2 would release in North America about a year later .

= = = North American release = = =

As was traditional for Nintendo , Mother 2 was developed in Japan and localized in the United States , a process in which the game is translated into English for Western audiences . As the only game in the Mother series to be released in North America at the time , its title " Mother 2 " was changed to " EarthBound " to avoid confusion about what it was a sequel to .

Nintendo of America 's Dan Owsen began the English localization project and converted about ten percent of the script before moving to another project . Marcus Lindblom filled Owsen 's position around January 1995 . Lindblom credits Owsen with coining some of the game 's " most iconic phrases " , such as " say fuzzy pickles " . Lindblom himself was given liberties to make the script " as weird as [he] wanted " , as Nintendo wanted the script to be more American than a direct translation would be . He worked alone and with great latitude due to no divisional hierarchies . Lindblom was aided by Japanese writer Masayuki Miura , who translated the Japanese script and contextualized its tone , which Lindblom positively described as " a glass half full " .

Lindblom was challenged by the task of culturally translating " an outsider 's view of the U.S. " for an American audience . He also sought to stay true to the original text , though he never met or

spoke with Itoi . In addition to reworking the original puns and humor , Lindblom added private jokes and American cultural allusions to Bugs Bunny , comedian Benny Hill , and This Is Spinal Tap . Apart from the dialogue , he wrote the rest of the game 's text , including combat prompts and item names . As one of several Easter eggs , he named a non @-@ player character for his daughter , Nico , who was born during development . While Lindblom took the day off for her birth , he proceeded to work 14 @-@ hour days without weekends for the next month . The game also includes protection against piracy that , when triggered , increases enemy counts to make the game less enjoyable . Additionally , right before players reach the end of the pirated copy 's story , their game resets and deletes its saved file in an act that IGN declared " arguably the most devious and notorious example of ' creative ' copy protection " .

Under directives from Nintendo , Lindblom worked with the Japanese artists and programmers to remove references to intellectual property , religion , and alcohol from the American release , such as a truck 's Coca @-@ Cola logo , the red crosses on hospitals , and crosses on tombstones . Alcohol became coffee , Ness was no longer nude in the Magicant area as seen in the image , and the Happy Happyist blue cultists were made to look less like Ku Klux Klansmen . The team was not concerned with music licensing issues and considered itself somewhat protected under the guise of parody . Lindblom recalled that the music did not need many changes . The graphical fixes were not finished until March 1995 , and the game was not fully playable until May . EarthBound was released on June 5 , 1995 in North America .

Though Nintendo spent about \$ 2 million on marketing , the American release was ultimately viewed as unsuccessful within Nintendo . The game 's atypical marketing campaign was derived from the game 's unusual humor . As part of Nintendo 's larger " Play It Loud " campaign , EarthBound 's " this game stinks " campaign included foul @-@ smelling scratch and sniff advertisements . 1UP.com called the scratch and sniff advertising campaign " infamously ill @-@ conceived " , and Digital Trends described the campaign as " bizarre " and " based around fart jokes " . GamePro reported that they received more reader complaints about the game 's scratch and sniff ad than about any other 1995 advertisement . The campaign was also expensive . It emphasized magazine advertisements and had the extra cost of the strategy guide included with each game . Aaron Linde of Shacknews wrote that the price of the packaged game curtailed sales . Between the poor sales and the phasing out of the Super NES , the game did not receive a European release .

Lindblom and his team were devastated by the release 's poor critical response and sales . He recalled that the game was hurt by reception of its graphics as " simplistic " at a time when critics placed high importance on graphics quality . Lindblom felt that the game 's changes to the RPG formula (e.g. , the rolling HP meter and fleeing enemies) were ignored in the following years , though he thought the game had aged well at the time of its Virtual Console re @-@ release in 2013 .

= = = Music = = =

Mother composers Keiichi Suzuki and Hirokazu Tanaka returned to make the EarthBound soundtrack , along with newcomers Hiroshi Kanazu and Toshiyuki Ueno . In comparison with Mother , Itoi said that EarthBound had more " jazzy " pieces . Suzuki told Weekly Famitsu that the Super NES afforded the team more creative freedom with its eight @-@ channel ADPCM based SPC700 , as opposed to the old Nintendo Entertainment System 's restriction of five channels of basic waveforms . This entailed higher sound quality and music that sounds closer to his regular compositions . Itoi believes that EarthBound may be the first video game to use vibrato , or " string @-@ bending " , in its music . The soundtrack was released by Sony Records on November 2 , 1994 .

In Suzuki 's songwriting process , he would first compose on a synthesizer before working with programmers to get it in the game . His personal pieces play when the player is walking about the map , out of battle . Suzuki 's favorite piece is the music that plays while the player is on a bicycle , which he composed in advance of this job but found appropriate to include . He wrote over 100 pieces , but much of it was not included in the game . The team wrote enough music as to fill eight

megabits of the 24 megabit cartridge ? about two compact discs .

According to Tanaka , the Beach Boys were repeatedly referenced between him and Suzuki , and that he would often listen to co @-@ founder Brian Wilson 's 1988 eponymous album while on the way to Suzuki 's home . Suzuki has stated that the percussive arranging in the game 's soundtrack was based on the Beach Boys ' albums Smile (unreleased) and Smiley Smile (1967) , which both contained American themes shared with Van Dyke Parks ' Song Cycle (1968) . To Suzuki , Smile evoked the bright and dark aspects of America , while Song Cycle displayed a hazy sound mixed with American humor and hints of Ray Bradbury , a style which he considered essential to the soundtrack of Mother . Tanaka recalls Randy Newman being the first quintessentially American composer he could think of , and that his albums Little Criminals (1977) and Land of Dreams (1988) were influential . While Suzuki corroborated with his own affinity for Harry Nilsson 's Nilsson Sings Newman (1970) , he also cited John Lennon as a strong influence due to the common theme of love in his music , which was also a prominent theme in the game , and that his album John Lennon / Plastic Ono Band (1970) helped him to avoid excessive instrumentation over the SNES 's technical constraints .

The soundtrack contains direct musical quotations of some classical and folk music ; the composers also derived a few samples culled from other sources including commercial pop and rock music . The texture of the work was partially influenced by some salsa , reggae , and dub music . Speaking about Frank Zappa 's Make a Jazz Noise Here (1991) , Tanaka felt that Zappa would have been the best at creating a live performance of Mother music , but could not detail Zappa 's specific influence on EarthBound . Additionally , he felt that the mix tape Wired Magazine Presents : Music Futurists (1999) presented a particular selection of artists which embody the ethos of EarthBound , running the gamut from space age composer Esquivel to avant @-@ garde trumpeter Ben Neill , along with innovators Sun Ra , Steve Reich , Todd Rundgren , Brian Eno , and Can . Tanaka also mentioned that he listened to the various artists compilation Stay Awake : Various Interpretations of Music from Vintage Disney Films (1988) heavily during EarthBound 's development . Miscellaneous influences on Suzuki and Tanaka for EarthBound include the music of Michael Nyman , Miklós Rózsa 's film score for The Lost Weekend (1948) , and albums by various other pop / rock musicians .

= = Reception = =

The game originally received little critical praise from the American press , and sold poorly in the United States : around 140 @,@ 000 copies , as compared to twice as many in Japan . Kotaku described EarthBound 's 1995 American release as " a dud " and blamed the low sales on " a bizarre marketing campaign " and graphics " cartoonish " beyond the average taste of players . The game was released when RPGs were not popular in the United States , and visual taste in RPGs was closer to Chrono Trigger and Final Fantasy VI . The game was especially expensive due to the included strategy guide . While the game piggybacked on Itoi 's celebrity in Japan , it became a " curio " for European audiences .

Multiple reviewers described the game as " original " or " unique " and praised its script 's range of emotions and humor . IGN 's Scott Thompson said the game teetered between solemn and audacious in its dialogue and gameplay , and noted its deviance from RPG tropes in aspects such as choice of attacks in battle . He found the game both " bizarre and memorable " . Official Nintendo Magazine 's Simon Parkin thought the game 's script was its best asset , as " one of the medium 's strongest and idiosyncratic storylines " that fluctuated " between humorous and poignant " . GameZone 's David Sanchez thought its script was " clever " and " sharp " , as it displayed a wide range of emotions that made him want to talk to all non @-@ player characters . GamesTM wrote that the game designers spoke with their players through the non @-@ playable characters , and noted how Itoi 's interests shaped the script , its allusions to popular culture , and its " strangely existential narrative framework " .

Critics praised its " real world " setting , which was seen as an uncommon choice . IGN 's Thompson noted its 1990s homage as " a love letter to 20th @-@ century Americana " , with a

payphone as a save point , ATMs to transfer money , yo @-@ yos as weapons , skateboarders and hippies as enemies , and references to classic rock bands . Official Nintendo Magazine 's Parkin noted the theme 's distance from the " knights and dragons " common to the Japanese role @-@ playing game genre . Reviewers noted the game 's steep difficulty . IGN 's Thompson wrote that the beginning was the hardest , and that aspects such as limited inventory , experience grinds , and monetary penalties upon death were unfriendly for players new to Japanese RPGs . He also cited the quick respawn time for foes and ultimate need to not avoid battles given the difficulty of bosses .

Reviewers described the game 's ambiance as cheery and full of charm . David Sanchez of GameZone thought the game 's self @-@ awareness added to its charm , where the player learned through the game 's poking lighthearted fun . He added that the music was an " absolute delight " and complimented its range from space sounds to themes to " bizarre " battle tracks that varied with the enemy type . GamesTM wrote that the game 's reputation comes from the " consistent ... visual language " in its Charles M. Schulz @-@ esque character and world design . Kotaku 's Jason Schreier found the ending unsatisfying and unrelieving , despite finding the ending credits with its character curtain call and photo album of " fuzzy pickles " moments all " wonderful " .

Of the original reviewers , Nicholas Dean Des Barres of DieHard GameFan wrote that EarthBound was not as impressive as Final Fantasy III , although just as fun . He praised the game 's humor and wrote that the game completely defied his first impressions . Des Barres wrote that " past the graphics " , which were purposefully 8 @-@ bit for nostalgia , the game is not an " entry level " or a " child 's " RPG , but " highly intelligent " and " captivating " . The Brazilian Super GamePower explained that those expecting a Dungeons and Dragons @-@ style RPG will be disappointed by the childish visuals , which were unlike other 16 @-@ bit games . They wrote that the American humor was too mature and that the gameplay was too immature , as if for beginners . GamePro gave the game a mixed review , commenting that " The lack of a convincing story line and the dull NES @-@ clone graphics ... will make serious RPG fans a little cautious about approaching EarthBound . " They said the " saving graces are the fairly good music " and " hilarious adult humor " but added that " the humor is too mature for little kids , and the gameplay is too immature for older gamers . "

Reviewing the game years after its release , IGN 's Scott Thompson wrote that EarthBound balances " dark Lovecraftian apocalypse and silly lightheartedness " , and was just as interesting nearly a decade after its original release . While he lamented a lack of " visual feedback " in battle animations , he felt the game had innovations that still feel " smart and unique " : the rolling HP meter and lack of random battles . Thompson also noted that technical issues like animation slowdown with multiple enemies on @-@ screen went unfixed in the rerelease . Official Nintendo Magazine 's Parkin found the game to provide a more potent experience than developers with more resources and thought its battle sequences were " sleek " . Nintendo World Report 's Justin Baker was surprised by the " excellent " battle system and controls , which he found to be underreported in other reviews despite their streamlined , grind @-@ reducing convenience . He wrote that some of the menu interactions were clunky . GamesTM felt that the game was " far from revolutionary " , compared to Final Fantasy VI and Chrono Trigger , and that its battle scenes were unexciting . The magazine compared the game 's " chosen one " story to a " throwaway Link 's Awakening / Goonies hybrid narrative " . Reviewers praised Nintendo for digitizing the Player 's Guide , though IGN noted that it was technically easier to view it on another tablet rather than switching the Wii U 's view mode . Multiple reviewers concluded that the game had aged well .

= = Legacy = =

Since its release , the game 's English localization has found praise . Localization reviewer Clyde Mandelin described the Japanese @-@ to @-@ English conversion as " top @-@ notch for its time " . Kotaku found the localization " funny , clever , and evocative " , and 1UP.com said it was " unusually excellent " for the time . IGN wrote that Nintendo was " dead wrong " for believing that Americans would not be interested in " such a chaotic and satirical world " . Critics consider the game one of the weirdest and most surreal role @-@ playing games . Examples include using items

such as the Pencil Eraser to remove pencil statues , experiencing in @-@ game hallucinations , meeting " a man who turned himself into a dungeon " , and battling piles of vomit , taxi cabs , and walking nooses .

EarthBound was listed in 1001 Video Games You Must Play Before You Die , where Christian Donlan wrote that the game is " name @-@ checked by the video gaming cognoscenti more often than it 's actually been played " . Similarly , Eurogamer 's Simon Parkin described it as a " sacred cow amongst gaming 's cognoscenti " . Mott called the game " utterly brilliant " and praised its overworld and battle system . Kotaku described aspects of the game 's story , such as the " Mr. Saturn coffee break " , as " poignant " . Jeremy Parish of USgamer called EarthBound " the all @-@ time champion " of self @-@ aware games that " warp ... perceptions and boundaries " and break the fourth wall , citing its frequent internal commentary about the medium and the final scenes where the player is directly addressed by the game . He thought the final scene was " perhaps the most clever and powerful moment in a clever and powerful game " . David Sanchez of GameZone wrote that EarthBound " went places no other game would " in the 1990s or even in the present day , including " trolling " the player " before trolling was cool " . Author Hiromi Kawakami told Itoi that she had played the game " about 80 times " . GamesTM said the game felt fresh because of its reliance on " personal experiences " made it " exactly the sort of title that would thrive today as an indie hit " . He called this accomplishment " remarkable " and credited Nintendo 's commitment to the " voices of creators " . IGN 's Nadia Oxford said that nearly two decades since the release , its final boss fight against Giygas continues to be " one of the most epic video game standoffs of all time " and noted its emotional impact . Kotaku wrote that the game was content to make the player " feel lonely " , and , overall , was special not for any individual aspect but for its method of using the video game medium to explore ideas impossible to explore in other media .

Critics consider EarthBound a " classic " or " must @-@ play " among video games . The game was included top 50 games of all time lists , including that of Famitsu readers in 2006 and IGN readers in 2005 and 2006 . IGN ranks EarthBound 13th in its top 100 SNES games and 26th among all games , crediting its " distinct and unforgettable " in @-@ game world , perspective on Americanism , unconventional settings , and 1960s music . Gamasutra named the game one of its 20 " essential " Japanese role @-@ playing games . The rerelease was Justin Haywald of GameSpot 's game of the year , and Nintendo Life 's Virtual Console game of the year . GameZone said it " would be a great disservice " to merely call EarthBound " a gem " . GamesTM noted that the few British players who imported the game regarded it as " a retro classic " . IGN 's Scott Thompson too appraised the game as " the true definition of a classic " .

Several critics referred to the game as among their all @-@ time favorites . EarthBound has been cited as an official influence on video games Costume Quest , South Park : The Stick of Truth (via series creator Trey Parker) , Lisa , Kyoto Wild , Citizens of Earth , and Undertale . Additionally , EarthBound has been reported as an unofficial influence on Contact .

= = = Fandom = = =

EarthBound is known for having a cult following , which developed over time well after its release . Colin Campbell of Polygon wrote that " few gaming communities are as passionate and active " as EarthBound 's , and 1UP.com 's Bob Mackey wrote that no game was as poised to have a cult following . IGN 's Lucas M. Thomas wrote in 2006 that EarthBound 's " persistent " , " ambitious " , and " religiously dedicated collective of hardcore fans " would be among the first groups to influence Nintendo 's decision @-@ making through their purchasing power on Virtual Console . Digital Trends 's Anthony John Agnello wrote that " no video game fans have suffered as much as EarthBound fans " , and cited Nintendo 's reluctance to release Mother series games in North America . IGN described the series as neglected by Nintendo in North America for similar reasons . Nintendo president Satoru Iwata later credited the community response on their online Miiverse social platform as leading to EarthBound 's eventual rerelease on their Virtual Console platform . Physical copies of EarthBound were hard to find before the rerelease , and in 2013 , were worth twice its initial retail price .

Wired described the amount of EarthBound " fan art , videos , and tributes on fan sites like EarthBound Central or Starmen.net " as mountainous . Reid Young of Starmen.net and Fangamer credits EarthBound 's popularity to its " labor of love " nature , with a " double @-@ coat of thoughtfulness and care " across all aspects of the game by a development team that appeared to love their work . Young started the fansite that would become Starmen.net in 1997 while in middle school . It became " the definitive fan community for EarthBound on the web " and had " almost inexplicable " growth . Shacknews described the site 's collection of fan @-@ made media as " absolutely massive " . It also provided a place to aggregate information on the Mother series and to coordinate fan actions .

The EarthBound fan community at Starmen.net coalesced with the intent to have Nintendo of America acknowledge the Mother series . The community drafted several thousand @-@ person petitions for specific English @-@ language Mother series releases , but in time , their request shifted to no demand at all , wanting only their interest to be recognized by Nintendo . A 2007 campaign for a Mother 3 English localization led to the creation of a full @-@ color , 270 @-@ page art book ? The EarthBound Anthology ? sent to Nintendo and press outlets as demonstration of consumer interest . Shacknews called it more of a proposal than a collection of fan art , and " the greatest gaming love letter ever created " . Upon " little " response from Nintendo , they decided to localize the game themselves . Starmen.net co @-@ founder and professional game translator Clyde " Tomato " Mandelin led the project from its November 2006 announcement to October 2008 finish . They then printed a " professional quality strategy guide " through Fangamer , a video game merchandising site that spun off from Starmen.net. The Verge cited the effort as proof of the fan base 's dedication .

Other fan efforts include EarthBound , USA , a full @-@ length documentary on Starmen.net and the fan community , and Mother 4 , a fan @-@ produced sequel to the Mother series that went into production when Itoi definitively " declared " that he was done with the series . After following the fan community from afar , Lindblom came out to fans in mid @-@ 2012 and the press became interested in his work . He had planned a book about the game 's development , release , and fandom before a reply from Nintendo discouraged him from pursuing the idea . He plans to continue to communicate directly with the community about the game 's history .

= = = Ness = = =

EarthBound 's Ness became widely known from his later appearance as an ensemble cast member in the Super Smash Bros. series , including the original Super Smash Bros. and its sequels : Melee , Brawl , and 3DS / Wii U. Ness was among the biggest surprise inclusions in the original 1999 Super Smash Bros. , which gave Mother series fans " hope for the future " of the series . IGN wrote that Ness was " one of the most powerful characters " when players perfected his odd controls and psychic powers . In Europe , which did not see an EarthBound release , Ness was better known for his role in the fighting game than for his original role in the role @-@ playing game .

He returned in the 2001 Melee with two other references to EarthBound : Mr. Saturn items , which could be tossed at enemies , and an unlockable battle arena based on the EarthBound city of Fourside . Ness was joined by Mother 3 's Lucas in Brawl . In 2012 , Official Nintendo Magazine 's Thomas East wrote that Ness was an unpopular character in the series and should be removed from future installments . Ness returned in 3DS / Wii U , the sequel to Brawl , and Lucas was added later as downloadable content . Nintendo also produced Ness and Lucas Amiibo figurines .

= = = Sequels and rerelease = = =

A sequel to EarthBound was announced for the Nintendo 64 in 1996 as Mother 3 (EarthBound 64 in North America) . It was slated for release on the 64DD , an expansion peripheral for the Nintendo 64 that used a magneto @-@ optical drive . In development hell , the game struggled to find a firm release date and in 2000 , was later cancelled altogether when the 64DD flopped .

In April 2003 , a Japanese television advertisement revealed that a combined Mother 1 + 2

cartridge and Mother 3 were in development for the Game Boy Advance . The latter abandoned the Nintendo 64 version 's 3D , but kept its plot . Mother 3 was released in Japan in 2006 , whereupon it became a bestseller . It did not receive a North American release on the basis that it would not sell . Around Mother 3 's 2006 release , Itoi stated that he had no plans to make Mother 4 , which he has reaffirmed repeatedly . IGN described the series as neglected by Nintendo in North America , as Mother 1 , Mother 1 + 2 , and Mother 3 were not released outside Japan . Despite this , Ness ' recurrence in the Super Smash Bros. series signaled favorable odds for the future of the Mother series .

At the outset of the Wii 's Virtual Console platform in 2006 , IGN rated EarthBound as having a " very high " probability of a release on the digital distribution platform , adding that " Nintendo is listening " . Though the game was rated the most desired Virtual Console release in a Nintendo Power poll , rated for release by the ESRB , and able to be published with little effort , the Wii version did not materialize . The game was commonly believed to be withheld from rerelease due to music licensing concerns , and the Starmen.net community was told that " undisclosed legal hangups " were preventing the release . English localizer Marcus Lindblom instead hypothesized that Nintendo did not realize the magnitude of the game 's popular support and did not consider it a priority project . In 2008 , Nintendo removed the game 's demo from the Masterpieces collection of the North American release of Super Smash Bros. Brawl .

At the end of 2012 , Itoi announced that the rerelease was moving forward , and a January 2013 Nintendo Direct presentation announced the Japanese rerelease for the Wii U Virtual Console as part of a celebration of anniversaries of the NES and Mother 2 . Following the Japanese March 20 , 2013 release and citing fan interest on Nintendo 's Miiverse social platform , company president Satoru Iwata announced a North American and European release of EarthBound , which was released July 18 , 2013 alongside a digitized and free online version of the game 's original Player 's Guide . The game was a " top @-@ seller " on the Wii U Virtual Console . Kotaku users and first @-@ time EarthBound players had an " overwhelmingly positive " response to the game . Simon Parkin wrote that the game 's rerelease was a " momentous occasion " as the return of " one of Nintendo 's few remaining lost classics " after 20 years . EarthBound was later released as a Virtual Console title on the New Nintendo 3DS on March 3 , 2016 in Europe , and on March 24 , 2016 in North America .