

= EarthBound fandom =

The 1994 video game EarthBound is known for its cult following and fan community . Multiple video game journalists have written about the dedication of the game 's fans in producing fan art and lobbying Nintendo for further releases in the series . The company has been largely unresponsive to their efforts . Prominent fansites include Starmen.net and EarthBound Central . The former was started in 1999 and became the definitive community website . Their members organized petitions and campaigns to bring English @-@ localized games from the Mother series to North America . One such effort included a full @-@ color , 270 @-@ page EarthBound Anthology as a demonstration of consumer demand for further releases . After nearly a decade , EarthBound was rereleased for the Wii U Virtual Console in 2013 , whereupon it became a bestseller .

The fandom also spun @-@ out other enterprises . When Nintendo did not release a localized version of Mother 3 , fans organized their own fan translation . The video game merchandising business Fangamer grew out of the Starmen.net community , and sells video game @-@ related items online . A full @-@ length documentary on Starmen.net and the fan community , EarthBound , USA , is in production . And while the series creator has stated that he is finished with the series , a fan @-@ created sequel , Mother 4 , is also in development .

= = Fan base = =

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 . Wired described the amount of EarthBound " fan art , videos , and tributes on fan sites like EarthBound Central or Starmen.net " as mountainous . 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 . The Verge cited the two @-@ year fan translation of Mother 3 as proof of the fanbase 's dedication , and Nintendo president Satoru Iwata credited the community response on their online Miiverse social platform as leading to EarthBound 's eventual rerelease on their Virtual Console platform .

EarthBound was hard to find before the rerelease . In 2013 , prices for the game 's cartridge alone were more than twice its retail cost at its 1995 release . IGN wrote that the game became a " cult classic " for its unique RPG and psychedelic elements alongside its reflection on American culture , and Eurogamer credited EarthBound 's " cute and funny modern @-@ world styling of the Japanese RPG " . Kotaku hypothesized that fan favorite aspects of the game would include its " feeling of innocence , ... sense of whimsical adventure " , " humor " , " charm " , " wonder " , and " beautiful 2D maps " . Marcus Lindblom , the game 's English localizer , cited its " cuteness , colors , and hallucinatory bits " as fan favorites . 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 .

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 . Aaron Linde of Shacknews felt that Nintendo 's " historic passive @-@ aggression towards EarthBound fans [seemed] somehow anachronistic " in response to the outcries from the game 's fan community . He added that while the company is known for providing " the most personal experiences in gaming 's history " , Nintendo lacks the " bedside manner " required of contemporary game companies , and that he could not think of a " more deserving fan base " than EarthBound 's .

Marcus Lindblom , who localized the Japanese Mother 2 into the English EarthBound , followed the fan community from afar and , in mid @-@ 2012 , introduced himself at the Penny Arcade Expo Fangamer booth . When the game 's Wii U re @-@ release was announced , the press became interested in Lindblom 's experience . Lindblom had planned a book about the game 's development

, release , and fandom as a Kickstarter project 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 . For instance , Lindblom struck down a popular (" infamous ") " abortion theory " that the game 's final sequence is a metaphor for an abortion , with Giygas as the fetus .

= = Starmen.net = =

Reid Young started an EarthBound fansite in 1997 while in middle school . It was one of the first EarthBound fansites on the Internet . By 1999 and with co @-@ founder Clyde " Tomato " Mandelin , the site grew into Starmen.net , named for the game 's " most iconic villain , the Starman . " 1UP.com described the site as " the definitive fan community for EarthBound on the web " and Shacknews called it the fan community 's " one @-@ stop " resource for a decade . Though EarthBound was more obscure at the time , the site quickly grew in popularity and featured " constant updates " and a burgeoning community by 1999 . 1UP.com said the viewership growth was " almost inexplicable " when accounting for the game 's unpopularity , but credited Super NES emulation , which let " thousands " of people experience the game who might not have otherwise . Young credited the site 's growth to the fan content generated by the community . 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 . 1UP.com described their intent as reasonable given the company 's " frequent dismissal " of the series alongside the community 's " monumental efforts to increase American EarthBound awareness " . Young felt that their " underdog status " kept Starmen.net vigilant . He also said that he views the community as " a big group of friends having fun together " and sometimes thinks that it is just happenstance that EarthBound was what brought them together , as opposed to another franchise like Pokémon . As the site started in 1999 , the community started a petition to have Nintendo release Mother for the Game Boy Color , and collected 1850 physical signatures to this end and bound it in a book for Nintendo . The final word from Nintendo was that the package was received . Other petitions include the 2000 10 @, @ 000 @-@ person petition for a North American Mother 3 release on the Nintendo 64 , the 2003 31 @, @ 000 @-@ person petition for a North American Mother 1 + 2 Game Boy Advance release , and letter and phone campaigns . A source internal to Nintendo later told them that the 2003 campaign was almost successful , but fell out of consideration as the phone campaign ended after a week . The community resolved to never let up again .

In time , the fan community 's requests shifted from specific demands to no demand at all , wanting only their interest to be recognized by Nintendo . The Starmen.net community launched several campaigns to bring attention to the series . In their 2007 " The EB Siege " project to have Mother 3 receive an official North American localization , community members sent letters and made phone calls to Nintendo . They ultimately created a full @-@ color , 270 @-@ page art book , The EarthBound Anthology , to send to Nintendo and press outlets as demonstration of their interest . They also hoped the volume would mobilize established industry professionals to take up their cause in advance of the 2007 Electronic Entertainment Expo . Shacknews wrote that the " folk history " was more of a proposal than a collection of fan art ? " the greatest gaming love letter ever created " . Wired 's Chris Kohler used the Anthology 's occasion to explain how Nintendo 's upper management has heard the fan community . The Anthology additionally received mention in Nintendo Power . Upon " little " response from Nintendo , they decided to localize the game themselves . Starmen.net co @-@ founder Tomato led the project , and the complete fan translation was finished in October 2008 . They then printed a " professional quality strategy guide " through Fangamer , a site that spun off from Starmen.net.

Other oblique strategies included an attempt to license Mother 3 for North America from Nintendo through a small video game development studio , but Nintendo replied that the property was theirs and would never be developed externally . In 2008 , the site hosted a YouTube contest for videos that raised the visibility for the series in a final effort to get the game on the Wii Virtual Console , but

Young found community spirit to be atrophied . A week later , the game appeared on the ESRB website , which signaled success after many years of work . It was finally rereleased for the Wii U Virtual Console in 2013 via a Nintendo Direct announcement . The game was a " top @-@ seller " on the platform , and Kotaku users and first @-@ time EarthBound players had an " overwhelmingly positive " response to the game .

= = = Mother 3 fan translation = = =

After a decade of development hell , the Japanese video game Mother 3 was released in April 2006 . When fan interest in an English localization went unanswered by Nintendo , Starmen.net announced their own fan translation in November 2006 . The project was led by the fansite 's Clyde " Tomato " Mandelin , a professional game translator whose previous work includes games such as Kingdom Hearts II and anime such as Dragon Ball .

The dozen fans who worked on the project had been vetted by Mandelin and had prior localization experience . Thousands of hours were put into the project between hacking the game data and translating the 1 @,@ 000 pages of scripted dialogue . They built their own tools for the work . The final version was released in October 2008 and issued as a patch to be used with an emulator , a process of murky legality . The patch was downloaded over 100 @,@ 000 times in its first week . A fan @-@ made , full @-@ color , 200 @-@ page , professional @-@ quality player 's guide was released alongside the fan translation . 1UP.com wrote that " no other game in the history of time garnered such a rabid demand for translation " , and The Verge cited the effort as proof of the fan base 's dedication .

= = = Fangamer = = =

Fangamer is a video game merchandising business spun out from Starmen.net. The online store sells items including hats , pins , and T @-@ shirts branded with video game @-@ related designs from games such as EarthBound , Chrono Trigger , and Metal Gear Solid . 1UP.com described their fare as " much less tacky than your typical mall @-@ bought video game apparel " . The site began in part due to Young 's experience with targeted fan communities . In October 2008 , he was attempting to get the site officially licensed . Later that month , they released the Mother 3 Handbook , a full @-@ color , 200 @-@ page player 's guide akin to a professional strategy guide . Wired reported its quality to be " on par with ... Prima and BradyGames " .

= = = EarthBound , USA = = =

In April 2014 , brothers Jeff and Robbie Benson announced the production of their documentary " about how EarthBound fans have fought to popularize the Mother series in North America since the 1990s " , EarthBound , USA . The Bensons had been conducting interviews with EarthBound fans and Starmen.net members for a year prior to the announcement . They had previously begun a feature @-@ length film about the events of EarthBound . Starmen.net " inspired " the documentary , which seeks to explain how the site 's members convened via online message board and the consequent " re @-@ emergence of a cult classic " and birth of Fangamer . The filmmakers had been planning to wait longer before making the announcement , but were preempted in part by interest following a tweet from series creator Shigesato Itoi , which mentioned their interview . The film is planned for release in 2016 with a Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign later in 2014 .

= = Mother 4 fangame = =

After Mother 3 , Shigesato Itoi declared that he was done with the series . In response to Nintendo 's seeming indifference to another Mother sequel , fans began to develop their own entry , Mother 4 , in October 2010 . As of August 2013 , the Mother 4 development team had not received a cease and desist letter from Nintendo . In a preview of the game , Jason Schreier of Kotaku said Mother 4

looked " stunning " , as " everything you could possibly want out of a new Mother game " , from the music to the environment design . The fan @-@ made game was planned for release in 2014 but has been delayed twice . No future release date has been set . Mother 4 will be playable as a standalone game , without need for an emulator .

The game takes place in a parody of contemporary America , as a boy named Travis leaves his town of Belring to join three others in a fight against the " mysterious " Modern Men . The game is expected to associate with the stories of the previous series games , and be similar in length . Its music and visuals are similar in style to the rest of the series . Mother 4 features a new soundtrack . Its creators are currently working on a voluntary basis without compensation .