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Coming out at a time when the 3D gaming industry is in its infancy, Super Mario 64, which is the first 3D platformer of the famous Super Mario series and is also considered one of the most important games of all times, has an epochal influence in defining what a 3D platform experience should be. One of the key elements that Super Mario 64 has made great example of is a rich-in-content and highly interactive open world.

The ultimate goal of the game Super Mario 64 is to rescue Princess Peach from the Bowser through exploring the Princess Peach’s castle and completing challenges to push the story further. Despite its supreme historical position and massive positive reviews, my first impression on Super Mario 64 was not pleasing. Used to Xbox one controllers, I was not comfortable with the Nintendo 64 controller which only had one stick to control Mario’s movement, and which mean I could not position my camera freely. However, the position of the fixed camera really didn’t downgrade the gameplay, and I didn’t think that a problem after about half an hour. I got accustomed to it quickly and started to explore the game world.

The world was filled with enemies that attacked Mario, and also there were also good and lovely characters who often offered help and guide during the game, like the pink “peace-loving” Bom-omb Buddies. I talked to these helpful characters and got information such as a clue to solve a puzzle, or a friendly introduction of themselves. It was not required, though, to talk to all the characters in order to push the story forward, and I missed some characters and it was alright, and that made the game chill and free as I played. Sometimes, the conversations would lead me to an event like racing with a turtle, these events as I believed to be the first example of side quests that nearly all games today have. The game was filled with mini games as well, and they were triggered by many different ways, some by conversations, some by pressing a button, and some by jumping in a magic picture. For example, I accidently entered a room by jumping in a funnel of a house, then I met a penguin and I could race with him on an ice track; On the first map in the game, I also had a race, but it was a turtle. I had a conversation with him, who though that I could not run faster than him and wanted to have a competition with me, and I could get a mystery reward if I won the race, but sadly no. Besides the mini games and interactions with characters, the game even had different seasons. In certain maps, the ground was covered in white, and it was snowing heavily, like the map where I found the penguin. Throughout my experience of playing the game, I was impressed of how this game kept me exploring with growing interest with such “terrible graphics.” It was a landmark of 3D gaming that had so many merits that were yet to be learnt.

Even today’s open-world games like Mafia III and Assassin’s Creed Syndicate are just not good enough to make an open-world that is alive and interesting, and they still have large space to optimize and a lot to learn from those classics. Yet, it also means that the more detailed in graphics and expanded in space today’s open-world games are, the more marvelous the Super Mario 64, which was launched 22 years ago in 480p resolution but just didn’t kill the fun after playing it over again, is.