



PLEASE NINTEN, DON'T

ASIF AYON

I want to be honest about something before I begin. I'm a big fan of Nintendo. I grew up with Mario 64 and I was only eight years old when my buddies and I first finished it. We kept on tossing Bowser out of the arena hoping that, that was it. But we weren't doing it right.

Nostalgia aside, Nintendo have an amazing catalogue of games and IPs which have been cherished for the last four decades. So, how come no one talks about them? Nintendo have been around forever. Yet you almost never hear about them, or think about them unless it's time for them to release a new console.

The simple explanation is that they're always out of the big picture. Nintendo have been held back since 1996. A lot of their business practices are backdated and this has frustrated a lot of third party developers. It's a rare occurrence that a multi-platform game hits all three consoles, the last I can think of is Arkham City. There are a slew of games here and there, all pale in comparison to their Xbox or PlayStation counterparts. That being said, what was Nintendo's solution?

Nothing. They've been off in a corner, doing their own thing. They are still a profitable company. But as a brand, their reputation has been on the decline since the late 90s because of their resistance to change and growth.

To understand where Nintendo's policies stem from, we have to take a ride in Doc Brown's time machine and travel back to the 80s. In the wake of the video game crash of 1983, the one company that came out of it, smelling like a rose, was Nintendo. At the time, the industry was

over saturated with games, distributed without any form of quality control. Computers also started becoming more popular in the West, and everyone thought whether having a separate system for playing video games was worth it. But there it was, The Nintendo Entertainment System. It managed to weather the worst storm this industry has ever seen. If it wasn't for the NES, video game consoles probably wouldn't have survived. With

been tried and tested in courts, a lot of third party developers don't want to work with them anymore.

In the wake of the 5th generation of video game consoles, Nintendo revealed that they were going to bring 3D gaming to the forefront. But being the stubborn company they are, Nintendo stuck with cartridges. This forced a lot of companies to move over to Sony, and develop on the original PlayStation. The company that



games like Super Mario, The Legend of Zelda, Duck Hunt and almost full support from all third parties, Nintendo saved the industry and kept console gaming alive. But they were an aggressive monopoly. And at the time, their model worked. Nintendo forced companies to go through their approval process, known as the Nintendo Seal of Quality. But the real kicker which broke third party trust was that they couldn't make games for other consoles if they signed a deal with Nintendo. While this policy has already

hurt Nintendo the most though, was Square Enix. Before Final Fantasy VII, Square Enix had made all of the previous Final Fantasy games for Nintendo consoles, but the final straw broke when Nintendo refused to let go of the cartridge.

Nevertheless, the N64 came out and it did okay, and so did the GameCube. They were both good consoles, but almost no one remembers them because of the distrust and resentment people have had towards Nintendo.

The faithful follower who kept up to date with Nintendo will say that they're happy with the current console, which is the Wii U. The Wii U is an amazing console with stellar first party games. But when compared to the PlayStation 4 or Xbox One, the Wii U just couldn't keep up. Weaker hardware meant that no developer could make games for it with freedom and all the Wii U ended up with was a couple of 7th generation games. And yet Nintendo is gearing up for the release of their new console, the Switch. Morale's always strong around the camp for the console release. Nintendo have been making quality games and consoles for almost forty years now. Even the dreaded Wii, sold over a 100 million units. However, the Wii broke consumer trust. With the Wii, Nintendo, jumped into the casual market harder than anyone ever did. And that angered a lot of people and Nintendo's still trying to make amends.

The Nintendo Switch is due for release in March of 2017, and there's a lot of excitement surrounding the first party titles. Rumors of third party support are afloat as well. The console also supports Unreal Engine 4. So perhaps they finally realized that, they don't own the market anymore. Times are different and they can't hope to keep on doing as they please and expect developers and buyers to be on board with it. They need new IPs and they need more companies to make games for them, and they can only do so if they make developer-friendly hardware. For now, we can only wait and see whether they end up making the same mistakes again. Till then, my body's ready, I guess.