



Evolution of Pokémon over the years

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Pokémon has come a long, long way. What started out as a small troubled production of an innovative, bold idea that had no guarantee of success is now a worldwide brand and a household name so strong your mom calls any monster-looking thing Pikachu.

Just as video games alone, Pokémon has made a meteoric rise to fame despite being restricted to Nintendo's handheld systems. Now, while a great many people complain about Nintendo locking one of their most valuable IPs behind their own systems, it's really working out for them as a business system. You're buying them anyway, and especially now with the advent of the Switch, it only gets better from here.

But how has the game franchise itself evolved as time went along? Well, it always starts at the originals: the Red/Blue (Green for the JP players) versions on the Game Boy. At the time, the whole monster collection game was a very new idea, and many feared it wouldn't work. Satoshi Tajiri, the main creator, was worried it wouldn't work and that Nintendo

would reject the idea. As it would work out, the games were a huge success, and despite many bugs, the ambitious project worked out.

What made it a rousing success wasn't just the concept however, it also took advantage of the new Link Cable Nintendo developed for multiplayer on the Game Boy. Putting version exclusive Pokémon in each game meant players would be inclined to trade and play with each other, and being handheld, it just meant playing on the go would help you bond better with others, something The Pokémon Company has said for years when asked about why they never release a main title on a console.

The franchise has come a long way since the first 151 Pokémon, spanning 16 main titles across 5 platforms. And that's not even counting the various spin-off games. The GSC era, or Generation II as fans call it, saw two regions in one game that had more content than a lot of AAA titles today, and that was still a 16 bit game. With the shift to the Game Boy Advance, it was now in full colour and took more advantage of technology as it beefed up mechanics in the game that

weren't previously possible due to system limitations. By far the biggest change that game in graphics were the full 3D overworld on the 3DS platform. It was a sign that the franchise would finally be coming closer to the fans' anticipation of a more immersive world.

Now while being a 3D game was already commonplace and nothing special, it was a huge step up in the franchise considering how intensely immersive the experience had become. An open world Pokémon game would sell like hot cakes. And once the Switch came out, and along with it the extreme success of The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild, it was only a matter of time till a Pokémon title got announced, which finally did at E3 2017. While so far nothing has been revealed for the title, in the wake of BoTW everyone is clamouring for it to be open world.

Considering the kind of interactive in-world features that were added thanks to the Switch to 3D in SunMoon (such as the controlled flying from town to town), it'd be nice if the Switch gets to showcase all that in a broader scope. A more interactive encounter and battle system would be great too, like if you could see how you

run into wild Pokémon and maybe tactically control them in real time combat, or a better improved version of the current turn based system that exists. The Switch also entails more breadth in the game, meaning perhaps multiple regions, a feature not seen since Generation II that could make a comeback and might also mean a longer story. As the recent games have shown, the main plot is improving too, leaving room for deeper and meaningful stories than the usual "save the world from evil team while fighting gyms" formula.

The future of the franchise is bright, and considering the cultural footprint it has left, there's no stopping Pokémon from growing and being popular as it is. The Switch only promises better things for a new game, and it's safe to say whatever product comes our way will make big waves among fans and big money for Nintendo.

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