

SUPER MARIO BROS.: THE LOST LEVELS

GENRE(S): Platformer

AVAILABLE ON: Famicom Disk System

DEVELOPED BY: Nintendo

PUBLISHED BY: Nintendo

RELEASED: June 3, 1986

Before the rise of video game journalism and the release of the *Super Mario All-Stars* remake compilation in 1993, most of us Westerners had no idea what this game was. We grew up playing *Super Mario Bros. 2* – sure, it was weird. Even as children we realized that the game had nothing to do with the first *Super Mario* game, but we were totally oblivious to how that game actually came to be, and why it was so damn different from the previous one. Well, as this “real” *Super Mario Bros. 2* here has proven time and again, if it wasn't for the Western “version”, Mario's conquest of the West would have ended before it even truly began. *Super Mario Bros.: The Lost Levels* is not an entertaining game.

The Lost Levels is actually the perfect title for a game that not only repeats the previous game's plot, basic design and features the exact same soundtrack, but is also built on level designs that feel “lost”, as in horrible designs trashed for good reasons during the previous game's production. I do acknowledge there are a lot of die-hard gamers out there that appreciate the game – hell, they might even prefer *The Lost Levels* over the first one – but to me, any “extra challenge” this game serves up is just gratuitous and outright ridiculous. Regular power-ups are cramped up into do-or-die spaces, making us feel like we have a generally better chance of surviving without them. Sure, the new poison mushrooms (those are fun) are easy to get – they look quite a lot like regular mushrooms, only these ones will kill you on contact. That's biology for you.

The main differences between *Super Mario Bros.* and *The Lost Levels* lie in graphical textures and more importantly, in the fact that it's a single-player game. You play as either Mario or Luigi; this time, it's not

just a simple palette swap, instead Luigi is actually quite a unique character. His movement is more floaty than Mario's and he also jumps higher. These qualities are of course very welcome, they make Luigi stand out as a character and it's good that they continued to work on these (starting with the "other game"), but here it all goes to waste. The game itself is a constant, dulling pain in the ass whichever way you go at it.

Whereas Mario games usually are fun in their high difficulty and always push the player to do better, *The Lost Levels* all but pushes the player away altogether. Not only is the game highly unpleasant to begin with, but its mandate of having to sit through a total of EIGHT consecutive playthroughs to make it to its secret levels is just a flat out ridiculous concept. There's not much more to say here except that thank goodness there exists another, a much more respectable iteration of *Super Mario Bros. 2*.

4.5