

YOSHI

GENRE(S): Puzzle

AVAILABLE ON: GB, NES

DEVELOPED BY: Game Freak

PUBLISHED BY: Nintendo

RELEASED: December 14, 1991

Following his debut in *Super Mario World*, the friendly dinosaur Yoshi was bound for great things – eventually. First he kinda became a tool for Nintendo to produce experimental, outsourced Mario-themed games without actually selling them as Mario games. Nintendo began collaborating with Game Freak, a small development studio gathering funds for a pet project of theirs that was to become the mega-franchise *Pokémon* in a few years. Mid-card Nintendo titles with characters popular enough to sell by their names alone were just the kind of games they needed to make to reach that level of success. Enter a game called *Yoshi*, the namesake character's very first "solo" outing. In European territories, this game is called *Mario & Yoshi*, which is much closer to reality, but we'll just call it *Yoshi*. What we have here is a very simplified, frustratingly compact variation of *Tetris*, designed to appeal to kids.

While the game is called *Yoshi*, you actually control Mario, while Yoshi remains a stoic background character. Your goal depends on the game type – just like in *Tetris*, Type A or Type B – but the basic idea is the same. Blocks shaped in the form of classic Mario enemies are falling down a tube, and your job is to line up two identical avatars vertically to make them disappear, and try to keep the very narrow play area as empty as possible. Occasionally, half of a Yoshi egg appears instead of an enemy. If you manage to line up two different halves of these eggs, regardless of how many blocks are stacked between them, they combine, consuming every block between them, and birth a new Yoshi.

Type A is an infinite challenge where you go for the highest score, including new Yoshis, before the screen clutter eventually gets the best of you. Type B is a level-based game; every time you manage to empty the

screen, you pass the level and move on to a much harder one where the screen is already half full, at a very early phase. After just a couple of levels, the game becomes frustratingly hard, as simple as the gameplay itself is. I don't believe the game was made with the prolonged upholstery of interest in mind.

Yoshi is not a thoroughly bad game by any means, but it has an extremely short span, regardless of your age and taste in games. It's not from the most inspired end of the hundreds of *Tetris* variations in existence, and definitely not the most inspired or substantial start to Yoshi's journey outside *Super Mario World*. If you're still stubbornly interested in giving the game a decent go, at least turn to the Game Boy version.

5.5