

YOSHI'S SAFARI

GENRE(S): Rail shooter

AVAILABLE ON: SNES

DEVELOPED BY: Tose

PUBLISHED BY: Nintendo

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I am willing to bet there exists an official list ranking the foulest ideas Nintendo ever realized, and while I am also willing to bet Virtual Boy's on the top of that list, the Super Scope isn't far behind. Among the grand total of 12 games ever released with Super Scope compatibility, was yet another Mario game put on Yoshi's tab: a light gun rail shooter going by the name of *Yoshi's Safari*, which has since been named the best Super Scope game there ever was. That might be true – but then again, that's not much of an achievement. As the only shooting game in the whole Mario franchise, it's pretty much an unavoidable curiosity for the serious Mario completionist.

For once, Bowser has left Princess Toadstool well enough alone, and instead invaded Mushroom Kingdom's neighboring realm of Jewelry Land, relieved them of their 12 precious gemstones, and kidnapped two members of their royal family. The Princess gifts Mario with a bazooka and sends him and Yoshi on a quest to make Jewelry Land whole again.

What makes *Yoshi's Safari* so hard to approach is that it absolutely requires the Super Scope to merely start, although it would probably be manageable with the SNES Mouse – doesn't sound very comfortable, but it's just a thought. After all, *T2 – The Arcade Game*, as bad as it is, gave the player the option to use a standard controller or that mouse. In this day and age, we have emulators giving us the opportunity to simulate the Super Scope by using a standard mouse, but in that day and age, the bulky, painful and consumer-unfriendly Super Scope was the only way to go. Not only was the Super Scope itself an overpriced torture device, *Yoshi's Safari* was a relatively long game with no save feature, and it required

fast and precise aiming. It's one of the three games I've played using a real Super Scope, and just 45 minutes of continuous gameplay were quite enough to flare up my neck and shoulder for weeks to come, and I was, what, ten years of age?

Once again, this is a "Yoshi game" with Mario as the protagonist, but something different on the cover to keep his name safe. Driving the nail further is the very common mistake of actually unleashing friendly fire on Yoshi, kind of like to remind you that you're actually controlling someone else although Yoshi's the one on the screen.

There are rail shooters I liked as a kid, and some of them, I still do, but we're talking about more advanced games on more advanced systems, or arcade cabinets. Here we have one that looks good to a Mario fan – doesn't sound that good, though – where the only gameplay-related challenge lies in knowing where to shoot, and when. On top of that, we have the device itself, which is uncomfortable to use regardless of your age and size, and eats through a total of six batteries at a ridiculous rate that is twice the game's length.

Enough about the Super Scope, let's talk about Mario's bazooka at the virtual end of it – the power meter is pathetic. You can't use rapid fire for more than a couple of seconds before overheating the thing. The power meter is upgraded by Fire Flowers, but there's no power-up in the whole game that would actually make your shots more powerful.

There are seven short stages with a Koopaling waiting at the end of each, plus the occasional miniboss fight. These are at the same time the best and worst *Yoshi's Safari* has to offer. One third of the battle you'll be wondering where and when to shoot, and once you find that sweet spot, a second third will go into keeping a decent lock on, and the last one will go to simply surviving. After those seven stages, five more "ultra-hard" ones will unlock, with Bowser waiting for you at the very end.

Yoshi's Safari might provide some light entertainment to the most dedicated fan, but even the familiar characters and decently authentic atmosphere don't make the game any less of a bore than any other rail of the fourth generation.

5.5