



# GAME BOY JAP REVIEW

"Pray loudly to your nearest available God"



△ Something very meaningful and significant is happening here, we're sure. We like to think that the chubby one's just confessed a deep love for James Blunt. Only the dog is unsurprised.



△ A house full of bearded crossdressers. This, we gather, is supposed to be hilarious.



△ Spas are everywhere, and have instant healing qualities. That's 'spa-ctacular!' Sigh.



△ You'll be wiping away tears at Flint's many misfortunes. Not at this bit, though. This is just him standing near a cow and a mouse.




△ It's like *The Little Mermaid* gone wrong, isn't it? Especially when you shatter that lobster's pincers with a well-timed punch. Have it!

# MOTHER 3

## We've waited a decade for this Mother's Day...

**INFO BURST**

**PUBLISHER** NINTENDO  
**DEVELOPER** BROWNIE BROWN / HAL  
**RELEASE DATE** NOW (JAP)  
**PLAYERS** 1  
**SAVE** ON CART  
**SINGLE-CART LINK** NO  
**COST** ¥4,800 (£23)




And with that, we come full circle. We featured our first preview of *Mother 3* in **NGC** issue 1. That's *April 1997*, you understand. Before a Labour Government, before Harry Potter, before Pokémania. Back then the game was a supersized 3D adventuring mouth-waterer for the N64; in finished form, it's a pocket-friendly top-downish RPG. The question is, can *any* game be worth a nine year wait?

It's a meaty treat: a 20-hour, eight-chapter journey where each segment stars a different character – one of whom, Flint the cowboy, you may remember from distant N64 screenshots. But, in the dimensional gear-shift down from three to two, *Mother 3* has

become *Mother 2.5*. It looks, plays and *feels* like its SNES forebear (aka *Earthbound*). That's good in a way: the *Mother* series' pretty pastels and cute-but-twisted character design always made them a work of art. But bland takey-turny battles and flashiness-free play really make the game feel like it's been dug up in a time capsule someone buried in 1995. Think *Sword of Mana Lite*. With a fighting pet dog.

The story's a killer. There's a mouth-gaping upset early on and one particularly harrowing cutscene – you'll be amazed at how a few ostensibly cuddly pixels can make your heart lurch. But because Japanese looks all Greek to us (and probably you), much of the plot – and *Mother's* quirky humour – is lost in a fug of kanji. Some of the



**TALK TALK**  
*Importers: aside from the impenetrable plot, Mother 3 won't befuddle you much. Each chapter has a self-contained map with your next target area (usually scribbled on, and there are few 'puzzles' per se – so if you're stuck, it's generally nothing that can't be fixed by getting sociable with the townsfolk.*

jokes are universal, like walking in on the usually empty spa waters for the 15th time and finding that some random punter has got there before you for once. But all the effort Shigesatu Itoi's put into his "funny, strange and heartrending" plot is wasted on Englishers like us.

So what's here if you're determined to plough through? Combat's barely more complex than *Pokémon's* – only PSI attacks help take it beyond a simple exchange of punches. But there's one genius touch: racking together combos by timing your moves to the background music. It's intensely rewarding, and together with some sparkling music that pays its dues to *Earthbound's* aural brilliance, an early birthday party for your ears.

Otherwise: hmm. There are

Warm and nurturing or an old slapper in spandex?



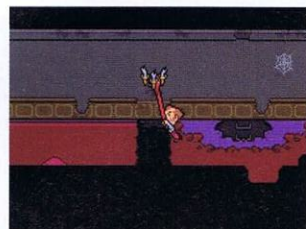
△ These porksome fellas scarpers every time you get anywhere near them. The swine.



△ The Monster Encyclopedia lets you rerun fights. With this chap, you won't want to.



△ Yes, we really did name this character 'hguv9[male symbol]'. We were tired.



△ Leaping over gaps on the end of a snake is as puzzly as M3 gets.



△ Every Japanese RPG has a desert level. This one's got a monkey, too.



△ If you know Japanese, that text might be a massive spoiler. Sorry.

**SLOW PUNCH**

Mother 3's combat reminds us of the original Final Fantasy – that's a 20 year-old game, folks. Enemies often converge on one point, so you're dealing with two or three at a time – but neither they, nor their moves, nor your moves are animated. It's a short slog of text messages and the odd flashing light or 'SMAAAASH!' message – and then it's over. Honestly: we have to say we've seen better.

no random battles in *Mother 3*, no hour-long forest maze treks – that's all good. And it's a real charmer. From snake-monsters that look surprised to be facing you in battle, to beautiful environments like jungles, blazing forests, pig cities and austere museums,

Up against *Golden Sun's* screen-battering battles, *Pokémon's* library of cuddly loons, *Minish Cap's* masterful dungeons and *Mario & Luigi's* bubbling vat of idea syrup... this seems lacking.

Still, perhaps if we had a Japanese-friendly brain, Itoi's plot



△ Ghosts getting tipsy on wine and tinkling the ivories? Hardly Luigi's Mansion. But tread too close and they'll spook you bad.

## “ SNAKE MONSTERS THAT ACTUALLY LOOK SURPRISED TO BE FACING YOU IN BATTLE ”

there's a delight around every turn. But – and maybe it's just us getting old and grumpy – it all feels depressingly basic. Walk forward, fight monster, gobble apple to restore health, repeat to fade.

and puns would enthrall us. So this is the score based on *Mother 3* as a game that talks in tongues. Pray loudly to your nearest available god for an English version.

MARK GREEN

- +
- Sparkling visuals, and no orcs or elves.
- Some sweet ideas.
- *Mother* magic.
- 
- Shallow stuff compared to other GBA RPGs.
- Takes a while to really get into its stride.

### IF YOU LIKE THIS...

**Sword Of Mana**  
Nintendo  
Unreviewed  
SNES gem turned buffed-up GBA blockbuster. Epicness.



### 8 VISUALS

A masterclass of quirkily atmospheric line and colour.

### 9 SOUNDS

Liquid love for the ears – and an actual gameplay feature.

### 6 MASTERY

The Game Boy Color wouldn't have struggled with this.

### 7 LIFESPAN

20 hours straight – and once you're done, you're done.

### VERDICT

Comfortingly familiar for *Earthbound* veterans; a bit old-fashioned for 21st century RPGers. Wait for an English version.

