

Mother 3's world is called Nowhere Land - obviously a Beatles reference from the musically-minded Mother creator, Shigesato Itoi, who is an avowed fan of the Fab Four.



A horrible case of Mud Monster ethnic cleansing



I never thought I'd see a cow, a blimp and a dog in the same screen



Mother 3 [IMPORT REVIEW]

JONATHAN IKEDA dons a cowboy hat and ascends to RPG heaven

Chances are, you've never played a game in this series before. Mother is legendary inside Japan, where it stands alongside Fire Emblem as one of Nintendo's finest proper RPG properties, and - thanks to a release of Mother 2 (as Earthbound) on the SNES in America - it also has legendary status in the US. In all other territories, though, it remains an exotic yet largely unnoticed import-only treat.

OLD FAITHFUL

The first Mother was a major hit on the original 8-bit Famicom; Mother 2 did even greater business on the Super Famicom; and Mother 3 was supposed to be the flagship title for Nintendo's 64DD. The 64DD wasn't as big as its name suggested, development of the game was cancelled for a few years, and only now - more than a decade since Shigesato Itoi and his team first began work on the project - is Mother 3 realised. On, of all formats, the faithful GBA.

The history of Mother is a significant part of its appeal. Over the course of the Mother trilogy, Itoi and his people have sculpted their

own distinctively bizarre world. It's another Earth, but it's populated with characters who actually have character. Compared with other RPG series, where more often than not minor characters seem to have been scripted without due attention, resulting in generic dialogue, Mother (and Mother 3 is no exception) presents a world of inhabitants who each seem to have been developed with equal care and charm.

There are no "boring bits" in Mother 3, because the quality of the writing is such that even simple interaction with townsfolk/merchants/pigmen will engross you. It's like a good book: when it comes time to turn another page in Mother 3, you'll feel a rush. Thankfully, Mother 3, like its predecessors, also has the gameplay to match its content.

As you'd expect from an RPG, exploration is the name of the game - there's plenty of on-foot touring to be done. It's never a drag, though, because save points are expertly distributed to ensure that you'll never be too far from respite. Just find a frog statue and you can save away.

Another welcome feature of Mother

3 is its battles. Not only are battles not random (you can see enemies before they approach, avoiding them if you so wish), thank Itoi-san, but they are fun. How about that? The trick is, if you tap the A button in time to a battle's theme tune (and there are countless great numbers - a different tune for every different enemy) you can increase the power of your attacks by up to four times. Rhythm-action + funky enemies = the best RPG battle system going.

And in another move away from the first two games, which were both single-track epics, Mother 3 is divided into eight chapters, each of which lasts around five hours. The gameworld is constant, but the characters and quests vary in each chapter. There are threads which tie all the chapters together, however, which effectively means that Mother 3 is like a playable David Mitchell novel. In other words, it's utterly fantastic. If the quality remains this high, I'd quite happily wait another ten years for Mother 4. <<<

AVAILABLE ON:

PSP / DS / GBA

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: RPG

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Shigesato Itoi/HAL/Brownie Brown • **PUBLISHER:** Nintendo

PRICE: ¥4,800

RATING: TBC

AVAILABLE: Now (Japan)

HYPER VERDICT:

➤ **PLUS:** 40 hours worth of well-written role-playing, hundreds of top tunes, quirky characters, interesting battle system.

➤ **MINUS:** Only available in Japanese.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85	95	90
OVERALL		

92

Worth the wait. English-speakers will have to wait a while longer yet...

