

# Back in the Game

## Students return to gaming classics in spite of modern technology

Branden Labarowski | Staff Writer

As technology improves, cutting-edge videogames are whisking players away to photorealistic worlds of combat and fantasy. Although most gamers have embraced the improvements time has brought to gaming, some MHS students retain a fondness for the long-past days of inch-wide pixels and blocky graphics.

One such student is senior John Mostowy, who said he reserves a special place in his heart for Pokémon due to the series' nostalgic value. Mostowy said he does not feel alone as a high school student who finds nostalgia in Pokémon.

"When [people] are in high school, they want to return to the past after so many years," Mostowy said.

Mostowy said that, because of the franchise's mass media presence during the 1990s, Pokémon stands as a common element of his generation's past.

"Everyone either collected the cards or played the games or... held a Pikachu stuffed animal in their arms," Mostowy said.

ECA and Theater teacher Allen Young said he

remisces fondly on Nintendo's Mario because he was introduced to the series in a particularly unusual fashion during college.

"I had this crazy girlfriend, and we were walking up town at OU, and I mentioned that they had a Nintendo Entertainment System in the window and [that] I wouldn't mind having one," Young said. "Three weeks later she shows up at my door [with] a big box with a bow on it, and she's like, 'I went out and sold blood plasma every time I could to buy this for you. I bought this for you with my blood.'"

Memories, however, are not the only draw to classic video gaming. Young said that the "mano-a-mano" experience found in older games is another aspect that makes them appealing.

"It's you against the machine," Young said. "It's either you against the cards [in] Solitaire or you against the Goombas in Mario."

Collectability is another factor that adds appeal to classic gaming. Senior Elias Magana is so dedicated to his series of choice, Legend of Zelda, that he has amassed a collection of every Zelda game complete with boxes and manuals. For Magana, hunting for exotic games adds a new layer of uniqueness to the gaming experience.

"I like the rarity of finding a Japanese version of a game," Magana said.

As a collector, Magana continues to buy Zelda games and is currently playing through the series' latest installment, Skyward Sword. Similarly, Mostowy has tried the latest Pokémon game, but he believes it to be inferior to the games he grew up with. According to Mostowy, modern games are often plagued by marketing gimmicks that detract from the unbridled creativity of the original.

"Sure, things are going to look cooler with brighter colors and everything, but... newer games [are] always marketed towards making money, so [the developers say], 'Let's add this weird aspect,'" Mostowy said.

According to Young, however, not all game series

have mangled their roots over the years. Young cited Mario as a series that has remained true to its original concept even as technology has changed.

"[Mario] is a classic example of... with the advent of more and more powerful hardware, really adapting that core gameplay experience to go in different directions but maintaining that core," Young said.

According to Magana, Zelda has stuck to its roots over the years as well. Its goal-driven gameplay, he said, makes it stand out among duller game series.

Other gamers, however, embrace newcomers to the videogame market. Although senior Gardenier Ware enjoys both modern and classic games, he said that the classics are not without their faults.

"A lot of [classic games] were bad... but the ones that were good were good in the right places," Ware said. "Even though [they were] monotonous, you could do it a thousand times."

Young said that this idea of "monotony" is something that videogames have abandoned over the years. Although Young recalls spending 17 hours to score 1 million points on Missile Command, he said this kind of experience is being lost as games become easier.

"I remember [when] games were so simple you would play them for hours... and it was the same repetitive thing," Young said. "It was really hard. And now games kind of hand-hold you."

Young, however, said that contemporary games may be returning to the play styles of the past as they attempt to widen their audience.

"[Game developers] want to expand the audience [for videogames]... and for them to do that, they really have to simplify [them] and make it so that anybody can come and pick [them] up just like you could with an old Atari," Young said.

Regardless of what's in store for the videogame industry, the fact remains that older games will still be played. For students such as Mostowy, the games of yesteryear will always remain a portal to a simpler time.

"[Pokémon] has been such a big part of my childhood," Mostowy said. "You can't let your past go."

