Game Boy games make Nintendo Switch Online feel like the ultimate retro subscription

With the way Nintendo tends to drip-feed retro releases, it's easy to forget that it operates an excellent subscription service for fans of classic games. It's one that showed a lot of promise at launch, and since then, it has steadily grown into something that largely fulfills that promise. There are still some issues, but it's affordable and convenient — and with the recent addition of Game Boy games, it now has a very impressive library with plenty of room to grow.

In case you missed it, Nintendo both announced and launched Game Boy and Game Boy Advance games as part of its NSO subscription during its first Nintendo Direct of the year last night. Right now, there are nine original Game Boy titles available — including classics like *Metroid II: Return of Samus*, *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening*, and, obviously, *Tetris* — along with six GBA games, most notably the adorable *Zelda* spinoff *The Minish Cap* and the absolutely hilarious RPG *Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga*. These platforms join existing ones including the NES, SNES, N64, and Sega Genesis.

Of course, Nintendo *should* have an excellent retro game service. The company arguably has the most enviable history in all of gaming, but historically, it has often been reluctant to make that history accessible outside of asking fans to repurchase *Super Mario World* for every new iteration of its hardware. The NSO subscription feels like a decent compromise; Nintendo still keeps control while making a huge swath of gaming history accessible to the many people who own a

Nintendo Switch. That includes not only the big hits but also more obscure things like *Star Fox 2*.

And the addition of portable games feels ideal for the handheld. It's great to be able to play the original *Link's Awakening* on the same platform as its beautiful remake or dig into the miniature world of *The Minish Cap*. Personally, this is my first time checking out the survival game *Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare*. From what I've played so far, the emulation is solid, and the games look particularly bright, colorful, and crisp on the OLED Switch. It would've been nice to have *Metroid II* (and *Fusion*) in the lead-up to *Metroid Dread*'s launch, but alas. The real win for NSO is that you have all of these games one click away on a single device.

This is Nintendo, though, so there are naturally some hiccups (and not just if you're an N64 fan). The Game Boy titles have three different viewing options — original, Pocket, and Color — but you can't easily swap between them while playing. And now that there are six different retro platforms supported, it has become a bit unwieldy having so many different apps on the Switch homescreen. It would be much simpler to have a single app, like Netflix or Spotify, that you could then filter by platform. The service is also split into pricing tiers, making it needlessly complex. A $20 annual price gets you access to the NES, SNES, and Game Boy titles, but the GBA, Genesis, and N64 are locked behind the $50 tier (which, in fairness, does get you other things, like DLC for *Splatoon* and *Mario Kart*).

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