

Turn out the lights—this party's over

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Along with the *Final Fantasy* series, *Mario Party* has been one of a select few video games that have been released in several versions. In doing so it has remained a Nintendo-fan favorite. Since 1999 *Mario Party* has captured the fancy of many gamers because of its *Monopoly*-based theme and multiplayer features. Recently, *Mario Party 7* hit the market, filling fans with the hope of fun-filled adventure that previous incarnations incorporated.

The main objective of *Mario Party* is to collect the most stars and coins while traveling around the board to defeat obstacles along the way. After all of the players have finished their turn, they are then challenged in mini-games for a chance to collect additional coins to later exchange for stars. Once all the turns have been played, the scores are tallied at the end of the game and only one character or team is awarded the “Super Star” title.

Although all releases of the *Mario Party* series follow this template, each game has a different theme. At the beginning of *Mario Party 7*, Toadsworth invites Mario and other familiar Nintendo characters to vacation on a cruise. Bowser, the evil villain of the original *Mario Brothers*, discovers that he has been excluded from this event and is determined to retaliate by adding twists and turns throughout the course of the game.

The six boards that are available for game play have different objectives and obstacles, as the player tries to overcome Bowser and earn stardom. These include: Grand Canal, Pagoda Peak, Pyramid Park, Neon Heights, Windmillville and Bowser's Enchanted Inferno. Each board has a different set of rules to accumulate stars and to defeat opposing players.

Although the game can be fun and competitive, Nintendo should have turned out the lights on *Mario Party* about three versions ago. The mini games are disappointingly repetitive, and the special features aren't as thought-out as the original version—and while previous installments at least included additional elements of game play, *Mario Party 7* lacks in the creativity department. The graphics are also unsatisfactory, and the sound effects aren't as realistic as the original game.

Sadly, this reviewer has come to the conclusion that the party has died—the game is no longer the bash it used to be.

