

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time – Nintendo 3DS

If you haven't played the Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time already, you've either stumbled onto the wrong website, or you've been in a coma for the past 13 years. Welcome back. Regardless of what your previous history with the game may be, I'm going to assume that you've at least heard a lot about it. If you're looking for a traditional review, this is not it. At 13 years old, I feel a traditional review is more than a decade too late. Instead, this will serve as a buying guide to help you decide between your two readily available purchasing options. You can either choose to buy the original unchanged N64 version off Nintendo's Wii virtual console service for \$10, or you can splurge and buy the updated 3DS version for \$40. Both games are essentially the same and yet only one of them provides you with an extra "D", the Master Quest dungeons, and the ability to play on the toilet. Now you may be thinking, how could I possibly make such a decision when \$30 dollars hangs in the balance? Don't worry. I've created six essential questions that will guide you through the purchasing process.

First. Do you already own a 3DS? If your head's nodding up and down, let me save you some time. Stop what you're doing, proceed to your preferred video game retailer, and buy the damn game. You can do the math. You've already dug yourself into a \$250 hole, and unless you bought the system for its Netflix support, you did so with the hope that someday you'd be able to buy video games. Now is your chance. Regardless of how you may feel about "remakes", Ocarina of Time is the best thing going. Believe it or not, you're actually wasting money by not buying it.

Still with me? Good. I'll assume you either don't own a 3DS or you're still curious about what's changed over the past 13 years. The truth is not a whole lot, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. Even over a decade later, Ocarina of Time 3D remains a great game. Everything is as you remember it, but with just enough upgrades to keep it from feeling stale.

So, what *has* changed you ask?

Well, how do you feel about stuff being in 3D? In my opinion the most significant upgrades are graphical, and as the title implies, the game is now in 3D. Although I'm usually pretty skeptical about the third dimension, the added depth is more immersive than I had initially expected. Stepping onto Hyrule field for the first time is pretty cool. Not quite as cool as it was when I was 14 years old, but cool nonetheless. While fixed perspective games like Street Fighter IV 3D or Ghost Recon: Shadow Warrior effectively make use of the 3D technology, it rarely affects gameplay. This is not the case in Ocarina of Time. Although I wouldn't consider it a game changer, it's nice to be able to accurately judge distances when lining up a target with your bow or hookshot. An added gyroscope feature also enhances the aiming mechanics, but is not without it's own set of problems.

The 3D isn't perfect. Although it's biggest pitfall is hardware related and, for the most part, isn't specific to the software. As with any 3DS game, tilting the system too far in

any direction can cause the image to separate. This is frustrating to say the least and will completely take you out of the game. No one wants to go from being knee deep in octoroks to sitting mostly naked in their living room...or whatever your preferred method of play might be. This is especially annoying during the gyroscope sections that I mentioned earlier. While on their own, both the gyroscope and 3D work surprisingly well; they also seem to be at odds with one another. If you've ever played Face Raiders then you know what I mean. You can now use the gyroscope to aim by tilting your 3DS, but this almost always ends up breaking the 3D effect. Unfortunately it seems like it's an either or type of thing as opposed to both features being able to work in conjunction with one another. Because of this, I typically kept the 3D slider at half-mast or ended turning it off completely during some of the more demanding archery sections (aka Horse Archery). The good news is that both features are completely optional and can be used at your own discretion, and as a result, neither are particularly grating.

Do you care about graphics? Although nostalgia might have you believe that they appear relatively unchanged, there's actually been a fairly significant overhaul. Don't just take my word for it, Google a screen shot comparison for yourself. Everything just looks cleaner. This is especially noticeable in the character models, which all look fantastic. I was really impressed by the smoothness of Link's skin. The dungeons are huge and all the textures look great. While I can't claim that the 3DS has reached it's graphical potential in Ocarina of Time, this is easily one of the best looking games on the system.

Would enhanced controls interest you? While ultimately the game feels more or less as you remember it, there are certainly some major improvements worth mentioning.

Aside from the previously mentioned Gyroscope controls, the addition of the second screen/touch screen is probably the most striking (touching?). Not only can you now navigate menus and maps far easier than ever before, but you are also given the luxury of an extra pair of touch screen item slots. Much like the face buttons, you can conveniently map these to any item of your choosing. Yes, you can equip the iron boots and, yes, the water temple is significantly less frustrating. If you've never played the original, then you probably have no idea what I'm talking about. Trust me on this one; it's a big deal. Other touch screen enhancements include a dedicated Ocarina button and the ability to bring up any of your songs should you ever forget them. Overall, it's just a much cleaner interface that helps streamline the game in several convenient ways without making anything feel noticeably different.

Another control tweak worth mentioning is the transition from Z targeting to L targeting. While you can still hold onto the shoulder button to lock onto your enemies, this is no longer your only option. Should you choose to make use of it, you can also set your targeting button to toggle mode. One click locks on, a second click lets go. It's a nice feature considering the decrease in button size between the N64 and the 3DS.

How do you feel about the original? This is an important question, because at its core, this is essentially the same game that came out 13 years ago. You're still gallivanting through time on an epic quest to save Zelda, kill Gannondorf, and collect badass items.

The real selling point of the Zelda franchise has always been the land of Hyrule. Each location, character, and sound is completely unique and fully realized. There are multiple towns to visit and each is chockfull of their own tasks and side-quests. Hidden areas and items are plentiful, the music is some of the best ever to appear in a videogame, and the dungeons are still top notch. The only potential downside is that you've played it all before.

Indeed, the dungeons are unchanged. For me this wasn't a problem, because a decade after beating them for the first time, I realized that I've completely forgotten how to do so. Although by today's standards they're a pretty typical "light the torch, push the block" type of affair, they're still some of the best puzzles in the business. If for whatever reason you have played the game recently, Nintendo has also thrown in the remixed Master Quest dungeons. Unfortunately you won't be able to play them until after you've completed the initial quest. It's a nice feature, but its lack of availability from the start feels like a poor decision.

Another addition specifically for the 3DS release is an integrated hint system that involves rainbow colored Sheikah Stones which can help you if you get stuck or if you need to find a hidden object. I honestly didn't use it, but if hints are your thing by all means, hint away.

So is it really worth the extra \$30? If you have a 3DS, the blunt answer is absolutely. Even at 13 years old, Ocarina of Time is the best game available on the system. If you're thinking about buying a 3DS just to play it, hold off. The game is as good as you remember it, but for a ten spot shy of \$300? That's a bit steep. Wait a couple of months and pick it up as soon as the 3DS isn't so damn expensive.

To sum things up, unless you are somehow religiously apposed to replaying videogames, I highly recommend picking up a copy of Ocarina of Time 3D. While I won't argue that Ocarina of Time is the greatest games ever made (it is), I will tell you that Ocarina of Time 3D is the best version of the game currently available. The portability and extra features make it well worth the price of admission. Go ahead, spend the money and buy it on the 3DS. After all, you can play it on the toilet.