

Hello, Broth Siblings and Supperstars, and welcome to the third episode of the Supper Mario Broth Supper Show podcast. In this episode, I will discuss the copious amounts of cross-referencing between the Mario series and the Zelda series.

Before I start with listing the individual references, let me briefly talk about the history of the Mario and Zelda franchises, which are linked inextricably not just by being the two franchises that nearly universally are most closely associated with Nintendo, but also through their mutual creator, Shigeru Miyamoto.

While the first game considered part of the greater Mario body of work is the Donkey Kong arcade, released in 1981, it took Mario a few more years to solidify into the series we know him and his world as today. I realize that almost all of the things I am about to say in this introductory segment are common knowledge among people who are interested in the history of Nintendo or video games in general, which is why I will keep it brief so as to not bore you with information that you may likely have heard, seen, or read hundreds of times before.

In the original Donkey Kong arcade, Mario was not named Mario; instead he went by Jumpman, although Miyamoto also wished for him to be called Mr. Video at some point, however this was shut down by the company. The game was originally intended to be a Popeye game, with Mario being Popeye, Donkey Kong being Bluto, and Pauline being Olive Oyl; after failing to get the rights for the Popeye IP, Miyamoto changed Bluto and Olive Oyl to stock characters inspired by old movies - Donkey Kong being a homage to King Kong and Pauline a reference to damsels from silent era films that are usually remembered as having been tied to train tracks by mustache-twirling villains. (The original name for Pauline was "Lady", the localized name Pauline was chosen in reference to a 1914 film serial called "The Perils of Pauline", where the titular Pauline got into similar predicaments.) Mario himself was intended to be an everyman, a working class figure that was as relatable as possible. Over time, Miyamoto's view of Mario expanded into that of an actor; while the plumber that rescues princesses is the main role he plays, he can be anything the game demands, including unexpected and unexplained professions like a physician, or simply any odd job in the world, such as a worker in a bottle factory (seen in the Game & Watch version of Mario Bros.) or a wrecking crew member, such as in the Wrecking Crew series.

The 1983 Mario Bros. arcade introduced the concept of Mario as a plumber (or more precisely a sewer worker, as a plumber in the strictest sense of the word deals only with plumbing inside structures, as opposed to sewer workers that specialize in underground water facilities). It also marked the debut of Luigi, Mario's brother, and the Shellcreeper turtle enemies, which two years later became Koopas, the main antagonist species Mario battles in his games to this day. In 1985, with the release of Super Mario Bros. on the NES (or rather the Famicom, as it was not released for the actual Western NES for over a year; for the sake of simplicity, I will refer to the Famicom as the NES and the Super Famicom as the SNES from now on unless there is an important distinction to be made between the versions), Mario, whose adventures previously were constrained to our real world, was finally given his own trademark universe, the Mushroom Kingdom, where his adventures have continued since.

Miyamoto said that the idea for Super Mario Bros. came to him when he looked at a pipe somewhere in the street and wondered where it could lead. Could it lead to a wonderful new world? Here is where the connection to Zelda becomes apparent. The Legend of Zelda was also inspired by something that happened to Miyamoto personally: as a child, he liked to go

out into nature and explore the forests and caves around the town he lived in, which is immediately apparent in the great amount of forests and caves in the first Zelda game. It is interesting to imagine what could have happened if Miyamoto grew up in the center of Tokyo or another place where it would have not been possible for him to explore nature; in addition, caves are not terribly common all around the world. I myself, as much as I liked to do the same thing as a child, have not had the chance to explore caves because the area where I lived simply did not have any. Perhaps the relative variety of the wilderness where Miyamoto lived is directly responsible for the existence of the Zelda series as it is today.

Unlike the Mario series, where the first 4 years of its existence were essentially a buildup to reach the true beginning of the franchise in terms of both gameplay (a platformer where a large world is traversed) and setting, the very first Zelda game was also the one that laid the foundations for both the exploration and dungeon diving aspects of the gameplay that the rest of the series would keep to, and the one that introduced the series' most important and most used locale: the kingdom of Hyrule.

I think the contrast between the Mario series and the Zelda series is something that bears pondering. Although both of them are considered among the best, overall, series of video games in the history of the medium, with both sales and scores to prove it, the approach that Nintendo has to them is completely different. Mario is allowed to branch out, meander, dabble in every genre imaginable, put the cast into all manners of situations, and even fundamentally alter the basic ideas of the mainline games - not much connects Super Mario Bros. to Super Mario Odyssey in terms of the core gameplay loop outside of the fact that Mario can jump on enemies to defeat them.

The Zelda series, on the other hand, is much more confined and focused, telling a story that Nintendo insists all ties together (although the ever-expanding branching timeline makes it clear that the story is still only thought of after the gameplay). There are always dungeons, there are always many items for Link to use, and Link always uses a sword as his main weapon (discounting Link's Crossbow Training for the GameCube, that is). There are also much fewer spin-offs, with the Tingle games being the major exception - and even the games in the main series are more similar to each other in the cornerstones of the experience as the Mario games are between each other - at least to me.

I am by no means qualified to make any sort of deeper statements on the Zelda series, as I have never analyzed it as deeply as I have the Mario series; and you would be absolutely correct to call me biased in the favor of Mario as that is the fictional work that I care most about compared to anything else. Still, I assure you that I love the Zelda series as much as I could possibly love anything that is not the Mario series, and have played, beaten, and completed a majority of them. I also regularly delve into any resources on the development of the Zelda series that I come across, so while my expertise in the Zelda domain may be much lower than in the Mario domain, I hope that you will find that if anything, I should be informed enough on the overlap of these two properties to make a podcast listing the references.

The podcast consists of two parts. The first, and much longer, part concerns itself with the references to Mario that are present in the Zelda series games. The second part lists the opposite, references to Zelda games within Mario games, which are much fewer in number. Within each section, the games will be listed in chronological order. With all that, let us begin.

For our first game, the original The Legend of Zelda on the NES, we will start with something that is not directly a reference, though many may believe it to be. The font used in the game - famously for the text spoken by the NPCs such as "It is dangerous to go alone. Take this" - is identical to the font used in Super Mario Bros., even more famously used in the scenes after each castle level where Toad tells Mario "Thank you Mario! But our Princess is in another castle!" While in popular culture and among those who are less familiar with NES games, these two games are the ones associated most strongly with that font, NES enthusiasts will know that this font is used in a very large number of games going all the way back to the first wave of Nintendo's own games on the Famicom, like Ice Climber, Balloon Trip and so on. In fact, the font predates the NES entirely as it was already used as early as in the Donkey Kong arcade in 1981. Still, this is a connection that ties in the visual identity of the first Zelda game and first Super Mario game; besides using sprites without outlines, that is.

There is the curious case of the whistle sound. The sound made by the Recorded item, a magical whistle that transports Link to different dungeon entrances via a magical tornado, is identical to the sound made by the Warp Whistle in Super Mario Bros. 3, which also summons a magical tornado that grants Mario access to the Warp Zone, a hidden map with shortcuts to all other worlds in the game. Usually, it would be easy to tell which game is referencing which; simply look at the release dates. However, with these two, it is not that simple; while The Legend of Zelda was released in 1986 and Super Mario Bros. 3 in 1988, making it seem like Mario is clearly referencing Zelda, the truth is that Super Mario Bros. 3 has been in development since 1985, being started on directly after the release of Super Mario Bros. The original plan for Super Mario Bros. 3 was to become the second Super Mario Bros. game; only after finding out that the massive scope of the game delayed development by years did the team decide to create a less ambitious sequel as a way to bridge the waiting period. That sequel was the Japanese Super Mario Bros. 2, known internationally as The Lost Levels for Japan, and Super Mario Bros. 2, an edit of the earlier Yume Kōjō: Doki Doki Panic, in the West.

What this means is that it could be the case that the whistle was originally designed - and the sound composed by Koji Kondo, who worked on both games - for Super Mario Bros. 3 and then used in Zelda before the Mario game could come out as a type of foreshadowing. Another way to determine what game the whistle was originally for would be to see which of the series keeps referencing it; surely the one the whistle originally belongs in would incorporate it more than the one where it was only a cross-reference. Looking into the further uses of the whistle reveals that both series actually keep acting as though it was their own item, and referencing the song. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time remixes the Whistle song for its title screen theme, and Paper Mario: Color Splash actually marks the return of the Whistle as an item, (now called Recorder to match the Legend of Zelda name), where it also plays the song. Note that the item has appeared twice in the Mario series and only once in the Zelda series, but the song appears twice in both, and the item was only ever integral to the story in Zelda, so the total weight of the instances is roughly identical, making it almost impossible to say which franchise the item truly belongs to.

It could be said that the Whistle is an item that pierces the boundaries between the two universes and belongs in both of them; perhaps it is the main connecting point between the two. Theory-minded people may even try to connect this to Link's eventual appearance in Mario Kart 8; perhaps he simply played the Whistle to be transported to the Mario universe, although this is all just facetious speculation.

In terms of actual, deliberate references, The Legend of Zelda offers almost nothing except a curious excerpt from the Japanese manual for the game. It describes Manhandla, the boss of Level 3 of the first quest of the game, as a giant, four-headed Piranha Plant. The wording specifically says "Pakkun Flower", the Japanese name for Piranha Plants. Manhandla itself is the prototype of the Deku Baba enemies, which are extremely common in the Zelda series and act very similar to Piranha Plants, being large circular snapping heads on thin stalks. Perhaps it was planned by the original team, which was centered around Miyamoto, to more closely connect the two universes, but the idea was abandoned when the Zelda series became popular.

The second game in the series, Zelda 2: Adventure of Link, has no distinct Mario references in it, although it is also the only one that is a sidescrolling platformer in its action segments, and the one game in the series that is closest in gameplay to Super Mario Bros. (although still rather far due to the fixed height of Link's jump and his use of a sword). Whether this is remarkable enough to qualify as being ironic is up to you.

The third game, The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past, truly ramps up the amount of Mario references. In a few of the houses in Kakariko Village, a painting of Mario can be seen on the northern wall. The painting depicts Mario's head, and due to the low resolution, the M emblem on his hat appears as the letter H. Still, this is unmistakably Mario, and pulling on the paintings causes a small amount of Rupees to pop out. This is the first time Mario himself appears in the Zelda series, but it is not the last.

The Turtle Rock dungeon, the last of the Dark World dungeons where Link rescues the maidens and one close to the end of the game, contains Chain Chomps as enemies, acting exactly the way they are expected to from 2D Mario platformers. Unlike the Mario series design for them with round eyes and black pupils, these have angry eyes with red pupils. They also only have teeth on their top jaw and not the bottom.

This game also has a reference to Super Mario Bros. 3, although with it being released in 1991, there is far less doubt as to which game is referencing which than with the Whistle. The file select theme and the Fairy Fountain themes - which after this entry became near ubiquitous for file select and Fairy Fountain themes in the series - are a remix of the Water Land map from Super Mario Bros. 3. Particularly, it is the exact same chord progression; the actual notes played by the high-pitched instruments are different. This is easily forgotten but deserves consideration whenever you play a Zelda game: every time you start it up, there is an echo of a reference to the Super Mario Bros. 3 Water Land theme in the file select music. A Mario game influenced nearly every future Zelda game to the point that you are - and this truly must be understood - obligated to listen to a Mario remix for at least a few seconds every time you play a Zelda game, as you must go through the file select menu to start playing.

A brief excursion away from the Zelda main series into the Philips CD-i spin-offs. Those three games, Zelda: the Wand of Gamelon, Link: the Faces of Evil, and Zelda's Adventure, are widely regarded as being far below in quality to the main series, and they have never been acknowledged by Nintendo again after their release. One of them, Zelda: the Wand of Gamelon, has a section where flaming wheels fall from the top of the screen and roll down slight inclines in a room that consists of a winding upward path with ladders. Although there are many differences, it is likely that this room was intended to evoke the feeling of the

Donkey Kong arcade, where barrels would fall down and roll towards Mario in similarly constructed terrain.

The fourth game in the series, *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening*, has the most Mario references out of any game in the Zelda franchise, which is fitting considering the nature of the game's story, which I will not spoil here due to a remake coming to the Nintendo Switch in 2019 that puts this game from "so old that spoilers no longer matter" territory into "new players may be eager to play it but are waiting for the new release so spoilers matter again" territory. Still, I believe that the majority of the people listening to this will know what I am talking about.

First off, one of the first characters Link encounters is Tarin, a man that highly resembles Mario due to being overweight, having a mustache, and liking mushrooms. Tarin is the father of Marin, a girl important to the story, who later become referenced by series regulars Talon and Malon, also father and daughter. Talon and Malon reference the Mario series when they appear extensively, though this will be detailed when we get to the games in question.

In addition to liking mushrooms, Tarin even transforms into a raccoon by eating an enchanted mushroom, clearly alluding to the Raccoon Mario transformation from, once again, *Super Mario Bros. 3* - although Mario turns into Raccoon Mario using a leaf and not a mushroom. There is also a minor character late in the game who is encountered on a mountain and keeps Cuccos, the Zelda universe equivalent of chickens, who has a long face and a mustache that makes him resemble Luigi. Even this character is picked up later in the series and becomes Ingo and the Gorman Brothers, respectively, although they resemble Luigi slightly less than Talon ends up resembling Mario.

The game contains a trading sequence of many items that, unlike similar sequences in many other games, including other Zelda games, is actually mandatory to beat the game, as it culminates in an item used to be able to access the location of the final boss. The sequence starts by obtaining a Yoshi Doll in a crane game; not only does it look like a Yoshi, it is actually called a Yoshi Doll by the game. When the doll is obtained, the text box states "You got a Yoshi Doll! Recently, he seems to be showing up in many games!" By 1994, the time of the game's release, Yoshi in fact had been appearing in 8 different games, on average two new ones per year, although he had not yet received the game that would start the Yoshi subfranchise, *Yoshi's Island*.

At one point in the game, Wart, the final boss of *Super Mario Bros. 2*, appears in a cave - however, he is not an enemy but a friendly character that teaches Link a song. That song has the power to awaken the sleeping - tying in with the dream theme of *Super Mario Bros. 2* - and to resurrect the dead. Wart is not referred to by that name, however; instead, he is called Mamu, his original Japanese name. Now, you may think, "but *Super Mario Bros. 2* came out in the West first; in fact, that was the entire point of the game being created in the first place"; which is correct, but Wart was not made up for the *Super Mario Bros. 2* version of the game. He was already the final boss of *Yume Kōjō: Doki Doki Panic*, under the name Mamu, which is also how he is called in *Link's Awakening*. His sprite here is very similar to the *Super Mario Bros. 2* sprite, but the official artwork depicts him as a realistic frog without his trademark squint instead. The medallion worn around his neck also does not have the four-pointed star it has in the Mario design. Mamu is accompanied by two generic frogs that do not correspond to anything from either *Super Mario Bros. 2* or *Doki Doki Panic*.

Now, this is an appropriate time to state that Link's Awakening contains numerous references to other, non-Mario Nintendo franchises as well, which obviously fall outside the scope of this podcast. One of them is a character called Mr. Write, who is identical in design to the character Dr. Wright from SimCity on the SNES. The name is spelled differently as a reference to the fact that Mr. Write spends his time writing letters. He believes he is communicating with a human woman named Christine, who later in the game is revealed to be an anthropomorphic goat instead. Christine perpetuates the lie about her appearance by sending Mr. Write a photo she says is of her, which actually depicts Princess Peach. Peach's design in the photo is almost identical to her usual Mario series design with the exception of having red eyes and only red gems in her crown; although this may be simply a limitation of the Game Boy Color (in the original Game Boy version of the game, the photo, obviously in black and white, is indistinguishable from regular Peach).

A Chain Chomp returns from A Link to the Past; this time, not as an enemy but as a unique friendly character called Bow Wow and a smaller version found inside a dog house, called Yip Yip. These Chain Chomps actually have appropriate circular eyes, although in some sprites, they still only have teeth in the top row. Bow Wow's official art also shows him with odd, less pointy teeth. Bow Wow is prominent in the game as he is abducted by some Moblin enemies, whereupon Link must rescue him. After reaching him, Link will hold the end of Bow Wow's chain on the overworld, while Bow Wow will jump around him in a semi-random manner and eat enemies that he touches. The flowers around the entrance to the second dungeon can only be removed by having Bow Wow eat them; after this, Link will return Bow Wow to his owner. One of the two smaller Chain Chomps is also important, figuring in the trading sequence. It wants a bow, which it wears on its head when received, and offers Link a can of dog food in return. This is remarkable for two reasons. First, this is actually chronologically the first time a Chain Chomp is seen wearing a bow; which in the Mario series is seen only 10 years later in Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time and then afterwards in Paper Mario: Color Splash; second, this is at least somewhat a confirmation that Chain Chomps eat dog food, which they are never seen doing in the Mario series.

The egg on the mountain in the middle of the island (only in artwork is it actually in the middle; in-game, it is the northernmost point of the island instead) resembles a Yoshi egg, being covered in spots; although I admit this is a stretch due to the egg being covered in slightly more spots than the typical Yoshi egg design and spotted eggs being a feature of real life zoology as well. Still, the fact that Yoshi is in the game could mean that the Yoshi egg design was at least an influence on the giant egg.

However, all of this is completely minor compared to the true bulk of Mario references in the game, which come in the form of enemy encounters. The game contains numerous side-scrolling areas - which originate in the first Legend of Zelda - but with a twist: an item called the Roc's Feather allows Link to jump, bringing the experience closer to Adventure of Link or even Super Mario Bros. due to Link's 16x16 pixel size evoking Small Mario's size in all early Mario side scrollers. The side-scrolling areas heavily lean on the resemblance to Super Mario Bros. by actually containing enemies from that series. Most commonly seen are Goombas, which instead of frowning like they usually do in the Mario franchise are smiling instead. If Link defeats a Goomba with his sword like he would most enemies, nothing special happens; however, if Link stomps the Goomba by jumping on it, as one would in Mario games, the Goomba always drops a heart. This is an ironic foreshadowing; up to that point, stomping Goombas has never given Mario anything but points; certainly nothing that would cause him

to gain hit points. However, Super Mario 64, released two years after Link's Awakening, made Goombas drop coins upon defeat, which in that game actually restore Mario's health the same way hearts do in the Zelda series; so, in a way, these Goombas are a Super Mario 64 reference two years in advance.

There are also Piranha Plants, which come out of pipes. Said pipes never appear anywhere else in the game and exist only to hold Piranha Plants. Underwater side-scrolling areas also contain Cheep-Cheep and Bloopers, acting the same way they do in Super Mario Bros. 2; although similar enemies, also called Sparks, were introduced in A Link to the Past, these actually flash in a way identical to the Mario enemy, and have faces - although these are more expressive evil laughing faces with a mouth rather than the simple eyes of the Mario design. They also behave exactly the same; quickly following the perimeters of ground tiles and solid objects. Finally, another enemy exclusive to the 2D segments are Thwomps and Thwimps. Thwomps come in two variations; one being similar the Mario design, but alternating between blue when calm and red when agitated, and one being different, grey and having only one big eye instead of two small eyes. The one-eyed Thwomps also have a flat surface on top, allowing Link to stand on them; again something that up to that point never happened in the Mario series but became commonplace with the smooth-top Thwomp designs in Super Mario 64. The Thwimps do not behave as they do in Super Mario World; instead they are simply smaller Thwomps in their functionality. They, too, only have one eye.

More Mario enemies appear in the traditional top-down areas. Near the beginning of the game, Link encounters Sea Urchins that need to be pushed aside with his shield. Their large eyes make them resemble the Urchin enemies from Super Mario World's underwater levels, although these are 16x16 pixels and not 32x32 pixels like the Mario enemies. There are also enemies highly resembling Bob-ombs, called Bombites. Bombites act rather differently from Bob-ombs, however. While Mario series Bob-ombs prior to Super Mario 64 walk around until stomped, whereupon they light their fuse and lie motionlessly until they explode, Bombites walk around slowly until attacked, and then speed up considerably once their fuse is lit. They also grow teeth during this, something that has never been the case in the Mario series. Again, it is rather interesting how many different enemies are similar in this game in their behavior to Super Mario 64, although I am certain all of these are just entertaining coincidences.

In the second dungeon, there is a single room in which Boo Buddies, which look just like Boo Buddies, also known as Boos, from Super Mario Bros. 3, are encountered. The room is dark, and the Boo Buddies are almost invulnerable to attack in the darkness. When Link lights the room using his Magic Powder, the Boo Buddies can be attacked; however, they attempt to flee from Link in this state. This is again quite different from the usual Mario series behavior of Boos where the deciding factor is the way Mario is facing, however, 13 years later, the idea that Boos would be afraid of light finally made its way into the Mario series in Super Mario Galaxy. It is possible to defeat the Boos even in the darkness by using arrows; however, the Bow in this game is not an item Link obtains mandatorily during the course of the game but rather an optional and very expensive purchase that is unlikely to be in the player's inventory by that point in the game, so most players would not be able to try this out.

There are two types of beetle enemies, called Hardhat Beetles and Spiked Beetles, that bear resemblance to Buzzy Beetles and Spinies from the Mario series, although this is more

debatable than the other entries in this list. Notably, the Spiked Beetles are called "Tozego" in Japanese, a pun on "Togezo", the Japanese name for Spinies. Still, the designs are different enough; the Hardhat Beetles have wide circular eyes instead of the Buzzy Beetles' small beady eyes and the Spiked Beetles have eyes glowing in a dark space in their carapace, more similar to Bony Beetles from Super Mario World than Spinies.

In the desert area in the south-east corner of the overworld, Pokeys can be found, which are also called Pokeys here. The design most closely resembles the original Super Mario Bros. 2 design, being green instead of the later more widespread yellow coloring. Pokeys have four segments and lose one segment every time Link strikes it with a sword, similar to how eating Pokeys with Yoshi functions in Super Mario World.

Finally, there is the Mask-Mimic enemy, which looks identical to a Shy Guy from the Mario series, and is in fact called "Hey-Ho", the Japanese name for Shy Guy, in the Japanese version. Unlike Shy Guys, who are characterized in the Mario series by their Goomba-like AI that makes them merely walk around without any greater purpose, Mask-Mimics have an interesting gimmick to their behavior where they stay completely still as long as Link is not moving, and move in the direction opposite to the one Link is moving otherwise. Thus, Link can indirectly exert precise control over the position of the Mask-Mimics. They cannot be damaged from the front, meaning that there is a minor puzzle involved into maneuvering them to be behind Link and making Link perform a Spin Attack to hit them while they are facing away from him.

This concludes all the Mario references in Link's Awakening, and it is not even touching upon the references to other franchises, and general pop culture, that are contained within that game. Next up, the Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, widely considered to be one of the best, if not the best video games in the history of the medium.

After completing the first dungeon and exiting Kokiri Forest, Link must meet with Princess Zelda. A long series of events including a stealth mission through Hyrule Castle culminates in Link arriving in the octagonal inner courtyard of the castle. In that courtyard, there are three windows - the central one being the one Zelda is looking through, which is integral to the story, the one on the left having only a wall of the other side, which provokes a guard to throw a bomb at Link if he shoots it with a slingshot, and the one on the right, which contains the Mario references. Through that window, a wall containing five paintings can be seen. Despite being extremely low-resolution, the paintings are recognizable as the official art of Wing Mario from Super Mario 64, heads of Bowser, Luigi and Peach from Mario Kart 64, and a cropped version of Yoshi's sprite from Yoshi's Story. Shooting that window with the slingshot causes 20 Rupees to fall out.

Here is a very amusing implication of this: the ending of the game takes place in the same courtyard, with the final scene overlaid with the words "The End" being framed in such a way that the window with the Mario paintings is visible. From the specific camera angle, Bowser's portrait is seen through the window. Thus, the three characters seen in the ending to Ocarina of Time, a moment that is extremely important both to the series itself and to the memories of many who have played it growing up, are Link, Zelda, and Bowser.

A reference that is so subtle that it could be argued to not be intentional appears in Dodongo's Cavern, the second dungeon. On the second floor, there is a slate that uses the exact same



texture that is used on the fountain in Peach's back courtyard in Super Mario 64 - the one famous for various theories surrounding what exactly may be written on it, with the most common theories being either "L is Real 2041" or "Eternal Star". It is unknown if this texture was used simply because it was "lying around" in the files of the development team and it would fit a plaque of stone, or if the team knew about the theories surrounding the fountain in Super Mario 64 and gave it a subtle nod. At any rate, the plaque can be interacted with, and Link can read it by pressing A. It reads "Giant dead Dodongo... when it sees red, a new way to go will be open." It is amusing to imagine that since this is the exact same texture as the fountain, then by that logic, Peach has a plaque talking about dead Dodongos in her courtyard, likely baffling visitors.

The reuse of textures does not stop there. The doors in the Forest Temple are very similar, though not identical, to the doors on the unenterable buildings in the underwater town part of Wet-Dry World in Super Mario 64. While the doors seem to have been re-rendered for Ocarina of Time in a higher resolution, the arrangement of the planks makes it clear that the same assets were used for the texture generation.

The Boss Key design - although the Boss Key premiered in A Link to the Past - resembles Bowser's keys from Super Mario 64 in this game specifically, although Boss Keys have always been horned and had two notches just like Bowser's keys, so this may actually simply be coincidence. The design is very easy to create simply by combining the most common cartoony key shape with the easiest way to show that the key is related to monsters, which is to add horns to the head.

As I mentioned before, Tarin and Marin from Link's Awakening are referenced in the designs of Talon and Malon, the family who runs Lon Lon Ranch. While Talon's mustache looks less like Mario's this time, his clothes are distinctly inspired by Mario, as he is wearing blue overalls, a red shirt, and brown boots. What is even more interesting is that both he and Malon are wearing identical medallions depicting Bowser's head. The head is not even stylized, as it is simply identical to Bowser's design in the Mario series. It is unknown why characters who have - not just in this game, but unequivocally throughout the entire series - been depicted as good and honest people would wear medallions depicting a major antagonist from the Mario series, especially due to the fact that even if Bowser himself does not exist in that world, he does resemble monsters native to the Zelda universe enough to look threatening even without his context. Unfortunately, despite the medallions appearing not just here, but also in Oracle of Seasons, they are never alluded to in text or otherwise explained.

While this is certainly not as clearly a reference as everything else here, it must still be noted that Malon's hair, especially the back part, is shaped very similarly to Peach's hair, and together with the fact that her hair is red and her dress is white, she resembles the way Peach appeared in her original Super Mario Bros. sprite. This can of course all be a coincidence as well, as Malon is primarily based on Marin and Marin's design not being based on Peach.

There is also Ingo, a man who works for Talon and who slightly resembles Luigi the way the Cucco handler from Link's Awakening does. Here, Ingo has white overalls with a green shirt, which is the same color scheme as Luigi had in Super Mario Bros.

There are also the Composer Brothers, a pair of ghosts encountered in the Kakariko

graveyard. They both have mustaches, and the older one, Sharp, has a rounder face and a red color scheme, while the younger one, Flat, has a long face and a green color scheme, evoking Mario and Luigi. Again, this may be simply a coincidence.

In the next game in the main series, *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask*, the most notable Mario reference is the presence of a Mario mask on the back of the Happy Mask Salesman's backpack. The mask depicts Mario with a sad expression, like many of the other masks in the game. Unfortunately, it cannot be worn. There is also the implication, made through the fact that in the game, Link actively captures spirits of dying people in masks by playing a certain song, that Mario's mask was created by the Happy Mask Salesman from the spirit of Mario as the latter was dying; and that wearing the mask may turn the wearer into Mario.

Romani and Cremia from the Romani Ranch also wear Bowser medallions, although this is less a reference than the straight reuse of the models used for young and adult Malon from *Ocarina of Time*; due to the very short development cycle, most NPC models in *Majora's Mask* are reused from the previous game, with the story offering rationales as to why this is happening. The same goes for Mr. Barten, who reuses Talon's model but with new clothes that remove the medallion, and the Gorman Brothers, who reuse Ingo's model.

Finally, and this is admittedly a great stretch but one I simply cannot go without mentioning: at the end of the game, Link travels inside the moon, where he finds a surreal, serene landscape consisting of a tree on a hill. The tree and hill look nearly identical in shape to the tree and hill seen in cutscenes in the NES version of *Dr. Mario*. The fact that this is taking place inside the moon ties together with the final cutscene of *Dr. Mario*, where it is revealed that the Viruses are actually aliens, and they are beamed aboard their mothership from the tree. Of course, it can easily be argued that to draw parallels here is to overthink the simple fact that if you put a wide-canopied tree on a semicircular hill, it will necessarily look very similar to both the *Dr. Mario* and *Majora's Mask* scenes and thus this is a complete coincidence, which I agree with, but this is still, however unintentional, an interesting commonality.

The next two games, *The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages* and *Oracle of Seasons*, share the same engine and are thus considered sometimes to be extensions of a single game, so I will consider them together.

As these games mark the return of the sidescrolling areas from *Link's Awakening*, some of the Mario enemies encountered in them return, including Cheep-Cheeps, Thwomps and Thwimps. However, in addition to this, there is also a boss fought in the second dungeon of *Oracle of Ages* where the battle is entirely confined to a side-scrolling area, called Head Thwomp. Head Thwomp is a Thwomp-like enemy with four differently-colored sides, each having a different facial expression, and a flower on its head. In addition to being able to stomp the ground, Head Thwomp also throws bombs and fireballs that resemble the downward sprite of Podoboo/Lava Bubble enemies from the Mario series. Neither of these abilities have been displayed by Thwomps in the Mario series currently. There are also Pokeys, acting similarly to their appearance in *Link's Awakening*.

Also in *Oracle of Ages*, there is a segment towards the end of the game in the final dungeon where a bat-like monster called a Vire abducts Zelda and places her in a sidescrolling area that resembles the first stage of the *Donkey Kong* arcade; with its own fireballs acting like *Donkey Kong's* barrels.

Oracle of Seasons, however, brings back Talon, Malon and Ingo (although not as a unit; Ingo is located in a different location and does not work for Talon this time). Talon is redesigned for this game to be as Mario-like as possible without being a straight-up clone of Mario; in addition to still having the red shirt and blue overalls, he now wears gloves, his mustache is again very Mario-like (although having eight points instead of Mario's six), and he wears a blue hat with Mario's M emblem on it. The emblem is completely identical to that on Mario's cap and even includes the oval around it; however, it is sewn on sideways. He and Malon still wear the Bowser medallions, as well. Ingo's mustache is now redesigned to be identical to Luigi's - even more so than Talon's resembles Mario's - and he wears a green suit, although with a pink shirt so it does not correspond to any of the outfits Luigi has worn over the years.

The next game, a compilation of a remake of A Link to the Past for the GBA and a new adventure specifically for multiplayer called Four Swords, has a few Mario references. Bob-ombs appear again and have extra behavior added to them since their Link's Awakening appearance; where striking them once makes them enter a state where they can be carried and thrown, similar to Bob-ombs in Mario platformers; however, hitting them one more time activates the previous behavior of running around and exploding. Chain Chomps also appear as a usable item, behaving like Bow Wow from Link's Awakening, but also being able to steal Rupees from other Links. In Mario Party 5, released one year later, Chain Chomps are shown to be able to steal items in the Mario series as well.

The next original entry in the main series, The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, contains much fewer Mario references than previous games, despite ironically, due to its cartoonish nature, seemingly being more suited for including references from a cartoonish series. In fact, there are no overt Mario references in the game at all and it is in fact Mario that ends up referencing The Wind Waker five years later in Super Mario Galaxy, although more on this in the Mario section.

The Armos Knights in the game have mustaches that due to being pointy and zigzag-shaped, resemble Wario's significantly; they also have a red nose just like Wario, although due to neither the noses nor the mustaches being a perfect copy of Wario's this may have been a coincidence. Interestingly, is it what the normal player would not see of the game that has an actual Mario connection: by digging around in the code, beta test rooms can be explored. One of them has checkered textures on the walls and floors that are also present in Super Mario Sunshine's beta test rooms; although due to the games being in development at the same time it is hard to say which game they were originally designed for.

Two years later, a game called The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures came out for the Nintendo GameCube, using the same basic idea as Four Swords earlier, although being even more cumbersome to play due to requiring not just three additional players, but GBA systems and special cables for the optimal experience. Chain Chomps, Cheep-Cheeps and Thwomps appear again with their behaviors and appearances barely changed from Link's Awakening.

In the same year, another original adventure, The Legend of Zelda: Minish Cap, was released for the GBA. In this game, Link can shrink in size to enter small areas, although interestingly, the design space that Mario explores when he is put in the same situations in Super Mario Land 2 in the Macro Zone, and again in Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story, is not explored. Instead of adventuring in areas made out of enlarged versions of human homes and entering

the insides of living creatures, Link mostly enters structures that would be too small for him to enter at normal size, and the insides of robotic enemies.

Bob-ombs appear here again, with the same ability to both be neutralized and used as a weapon or to be sent moving quickly and exploding that was introduced in Four Swords. Due to the figurine gallery in-game providing names for all enemies, we can see they are called Bob-ombs here, and not Bombites as they were in Link's Awakening. There is also a new enemy imported from the Mario series: a Lakitu. Towards the final part of the game, Link explores an area in the sky, where Lakitus can be found blocking narrow passages until they are defeated. They attack by throwing lightning bolts, which regular Lakitus never do in the Mario series, but specialized Lakitus like the Thunder Lakitu subspecies from Yoshi's Island, the Lakithunder boss from New Super Mario Bros. and the King Lakitu boss from Super Mario Galaxy 2 do. The Minish Cap lakitus also wear pointy sunglasses instead of regular see-through goggles that they wear in the Mario series, again somewhat resembling Lakithunder, even though this game preceded New Super Mario Bros. by two years.

There are also minor Mario references in the environment. Some events in the game will cause tall vines to grow from the ground; the Mario series vine growing sound, first heard in Super Mario Bros. will play. In addition, there are chain-link platformes with flipping squares on them in one of the dungeons; these highly resemble the climbable fences from Super Mario World.

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess is the next game in the series. Here, despite the graphics being the most realistic they have been in the series to that point, and a complete 180 in terms of art style from the Wind Waker, there are still one overt Mario reference; more than Wind Waker can say of itself. One of the minor characters that still has story significance at one point in the game is a clown called Fyer. Fyer operates a cannon that sends Link flying upward from the bottom of Lake Hylia to the top; in addition, later on he repairs a cannon that allows Link to access one of the dungeons. Due to his connection to cannons, the artists decided to reference this by putting a drawing of a Bullet Bill on his right sleeve. The Bullet Bill is elongated like a Torpedo Ted from Super Mario World, but does not have arms so it is not a direct Torpedo Ted reference. In addition, it has fire coming out of its back, which Torpedo Teds cannot have by definition as they are only encountered underwater.

From here on out, Mario references become much rarer in the series. The next two games for the Nintendo DS, Phantom Hourglass and Spirit Tracks, have no discernible Mario references in them whatsoever. However, there is one game released around this time that does have what is the most on-the-nose reference to a Mario game in the entire Zelda franchise, although it is not a main series game. It is Ripened Tingle's Balloon Trip of Love, a Japanese-only sequel to the Japan and Europe-exclusive Freshly-Picked Tingle's Rosy Rupeeland. The games follow Tingle, a man in a full-body green suit with odd mannerisms who is obsessed with money; as such they can be thought of the Zelda franchise's answer to the Wario Land spin-off series. Tingle first appeared in Majora's Mask, and quickly gained simultaneously a fandom in Japan and what can only be described as a hate-dom in the US. In America, and the West in general, Tingle regularly tops polls about who is considered the most unpleasant Nintendo character, while Japanese players seem to like that brand of humor and often request him to become a fighter in the Super Smash Bros. series.

The first game in the Tingle series concerns itself with Tingle collecting money, while the

second is about him finding love. The story is parodying the Wizard of Oz books, with Tingle being joined by a scarecrow, a lion, and a female robot that stands in for the Tin Woodsman. At one point during the game, the crew comes across a field where they can play a minigame about plucking turnips. This contains the Mario reference: the character select screen is made to resemble the original Super Mario Bros. 2 character select screen as closely as possible, using the same tileset and palette. The characters themselves also assume a blue palette if they are not selected, just like in Super Mario Bros. 2. The music playing during this segment is, in addition, composed in the same style and with the same 8-bit instruments as the Super Mario Bros. 2 character selection song.

The next mainline Zelda game, The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword for the Wii, has one minor detail that could be taken as a Mario reference but could also be unconnected. The characters in the game reward Link for doing good deeds by spontaneously magically producing so-called "Gratitude Crystals" from their bodies. These crystals are nearly identical in shape to Star Bits from the Super Mario Galaxy games; although it must be kept in mind that those themselves are a reference to a Japanese candy called konpeito which have the same shape, so the Zelda crystals could be referencing just the candy as well. Still, at some point Gratitude Crystals can be seen lying outside on the ground at night, which evokes how Star Bits first appear in Super Mario Galaxy, as flying towards the ground at night during the Star Festival.

After this, there was a prolonged period when Zelda games received remakes in 3D and in HD for the 3DS and Wii U, respectively. Ocarina of Time 3D, while mostly unchanged in terms of Mario references, removes the most prominent one - the paintings in the courtyard - and replaces them with another, newer Mario reference - a wall with wallpaper depicting the first world background from New Super Mario Bros. In front of the wall are blocks and pipes, oddly, instead of referencing a specific block arrangement - the ubiquitous one from the first level of Super Mario Bros. comes to mind - the blocks do not seem to reference anything. I have compared them to all levels from all 2D Mario platformers and none have the blocks be arranged that way. There are also a green pipe and a yellow pipe next to each other, which happens in Mario games only in levels which focus on a variety of pipes; also, both pipes are sticking out of Used Blocks instead of from the ground, something that happens very rarely in newer Mario games.

Hyrule Warriors, another spin-off game for the Wii U, contains a skin for one of Link's weapons, the Ball and Chain, where the ball is replaced with a Chain Chomp. Swinging a Chain Chomp around by the chain recalls Bowser from Super Mario RPG, who had this as one of his attack animations. Interestingly, despite doing all manners of things with Chain Chomps - including becoming one - Mario himself has never used one in this way in the Mario series by now.

Finally, the last game in the Zelda series that has definitive Mario references is Tri Force Heroes for the 3DS. It revolves around three people controlling one Link each simultaneously, in addition, the Links can wear a variety of outfits. One of the wearable outfits is the Hammerwear Outfit, which consists of boots that resemble a Hammer Bro's boots, a Hammer Bro. shell, and a Hammer Bro. helmet. It increases the power of the Magic Hammer item when worn, although that hammer is only ever swung, not thrown. Interestingly, Hammer Bros. in the Mario series have never simply swung their hammers, not even in their many different appearances in the Mario RPGs. There is also the Fire Gloves item, which lets a Link

throw fireballs from his hands. The fireballs make the Super Mario Bros. fireball sound when thrown.

This concludes the section on Mario references in Zelda games. Now it is time to look at Zelda references in Mario games. I will skip the Zelda microgames from the WarioWare series simply due to the fact that these are compilations that include the source material almost completely unchanged and are not "references" as much as they are simply excerpts.

Obviously, the first five years of the Mario franchise cannot contain any Zelda references due to Zelda not being around at the time; however, one of the first Mario games released after The Legend of Zelda on the NES already has a very minor connection, whether a deliberate nod or not, to the Zelda series. The sound that plays when Birdo is hit with an item, usually one of Birdo's own eggs, is identical to the sound that plays when a Wizzrobe fires a magic projectile in The Legend of Zelda, although of course this could simply be a sound that was reused with the understanding that it is minor and would not break immersion if it was reused from a previous project.

I have already talked at length about the Warp Whistle in the respective Zelda section, so let us look at an interesting piece of connection between the two series. In Super Mario World, one of the major areas of Dinosaur Land is called the Forest of Illusion. The Japanese name for this location is "Mayoi no Mori", or Maze Forest. The official Japanese guide for the game gives a translated version of that name as "Mazing Wood". However, Mayoi no Mori is also the Japanese name for the Lost Woods, a location that has appeared in many Zelda games since the original The Legend of Zelda. Whether this is a deliberate reference or simply a name that seems natural for a forest that causes anyone who enters it to be lost is unclear.

In the year 1995, two games with extensive Zelda references were released on the SNES. The first one was Super Mario RPG, where Link himself appears in a bed in the Rose Town inn, the same place that game's most famous original character, Geno, is originally encountered. If Mario goes to sleep at any point after the first mandatory visit to the inn, Link will be in the other bed, sleeping. Attempting to talk to Link will play the classic series-wide "discovery" jingle. This Link has his old "yellow brimmed hat" design.

The other game with a Zelda reference also coincidentally, has a direct appearance by Link. In Donkey Kong Country 2, Diddy Kong and Dixie Kong must collect "Hero Coins", also known as "DK Coins", to prove to Cranky Kong that they are video game heroes. At the end of the game, there is a special room showing how many coins other heroes have collected, with Mario, Link and Yoshi standing on pedestals. Link has the fewest coins, so if the player collects at least 20 before beating the game, Diddy Kong will take Link's place and Link will not be present, making him missable. This Link design is notable for being depicted without a sword, and for technically being the first time Link was modeled in 3D; although the game itself is 2D, every sprite is rendered from a 3D model. Link also appears later in Donkey Kong Land 2, the game's remake for the Game Boy, with the same sprite downscaled and in monochrome.

One year later, in Donkey Kong Country 3, there is another Zelda reference in the overworld shop belonging to Bazaar the Bear. He talks about how a young man came to his shop and asked him about Baron K. Roolenstein's castle and paid 500 Rupees for the information, obviously referring to Link; although it is amusing to imagine that the Rupees in question were

the real-world currency of India instead and it was not Link at all, but rather some unknown man from India.

In Yoshi's Story, the levels 2-3 and 2-4 share the same background made out of newspaper clippings. The name "Zelda" can be read on parts of that background.

The Mario Golf games contain a recurring golf club called the Links Club, which contains a minor Zelda reference in not just the name, but also the course's symbol visible on the flag, which is a Triforce. In the Nintendo 64 version of Mario Golf, there are also many text-only references to Zelda on the Links Club scoreboard. The names are Darunia, Deku, Goron, Impa, Link, Malon, Navi, Saria, Sheik, Talon, and Zelda, all from Ocarina of Time (although of course it must be noted that the names of the sages Darunia, Impa and Saria, as well as others not in the list, are actually taken from town names from Adventure of Link.)

In Paper Mario, the mouse character Moustafa is cloaked initially and refers to himself as "Sheek", which is spelled not identically, but very closely to the character Sheik in Ocarina of Time, and also refers to Sheik being another character in disguise. To strengthen the reference, Goombario says "Da da da duum!" when tattling Moustafa, mimicking the Zelda series "treasure found" jingle.

Super Mario Sunshine contains a major story-relevant Zelda reference in the form of the runner Il Piantissimo, who is a human pretending to be a Pianta. The mask is covering most of his face; in-game, it is possible to see that he has a long face with a beard, but not the rest of his head. Removing the mask in a model editor shows that his face is that of the Running Man from Ocarina of Time, who also shares a model with the Postman from Majora's Mask, although his skin is darker and the beard is unique to the Mario model. It is strange that the parts of the model that are normally visible are the ones that differ from the Zelda character, while the ones that are covered up are identical; perhaps the identity of Il Piantissimo as the Running Man was not actually approved by the team and the model designer snuck it in assuming that it will not be found out.

Perhaps the Mario game with the most Zelda references is Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga. There is an entire separate podcast that could be filled with the removed content from the Starbeans Cafe in the game, but I will keep it short: the Starbeans Cafe is a location where Mario and Luigi can bring beans, collectables that come in four different varieties. They can be combined in seven different ways to produce different drinks that permanently raise Mario and Luigi's stats. Every time a new drink is created for the first time, E. Gadd, who is the proprietor of the cafe, appears in a cutscene - a different one every time - and gives the brothers a unique item. These items can be recognized by avid Nintendo players to be allusions to different Nintendo franchises; however, what the player sees is actually a censored version of the true vision the team had for the cafe.

In the original version, E.Gadd would only appear once. The other six cutscenes would have characters from various Nintendo franchises appearing and giving the brothers more overt allusions to items from their franchises. The characters would have been Wario, Fox McCloud from the StarFox series, Olimar from the Pikmin series, Samus Aran from the Metroid series, a racer from the Excitebike series, and finally, Link. What is truly tragic is that all content from that version is still in the files - all the sprites, animations, and even text is included, but due to what one can assume either licensing issues or personal objections from teams working on

those IPs, the censored versions with E. Gadd play instead. Here is the text that the cafe clerk would have said when Link appeared:

"Whoa! Link! The Hero of...what is it, now? Anyway, long-time, no see, buddy! What are you doing here? Did you get lost in a dungeon again? What? You're having trouble finding the fairy fountain? Oh... It's game over, and your bottles are all empty? Are your hearts filled now, kiddo?"

The Link design appearing here is Toon Link from the Wind Waker. The gift Link would have given the brothers would have been the Triforce, although it was renamed the Great Force in the finished version. Unlike the Triforce, the Great Force is shown to be a single yellow triangle, like a single piece of the Triforce. Interestingly, there is something called a Light Force in the Zelda series - a stand-in for the Triforce in the Minish Cap - which looks identical to the Great Force. Interestingly, in the 3DS remake of the game, the Great Force again looks like the Triforce, although Link and the other characters are still not present.

There is another Zelda reference in the Chucklehuck Woods, where the Winkle Colosseum contains a mini-game where the brothers must reflect rocks being spat out from so-called "Chuckoroks", rock monsters resembling Octoroks from the Zelda series.

Another mini-game, the Barrel game that features a skeletal Donkey Kong-like creature called Bink, has a very rarely encountered Easter Egg related to Zelda. If Mario and Luigi manage to clear four rows of barrels at once - which is very hard, as that accounts for 2/3s of the space on the board - a Stalfos sprite from the original Legend of Zelda will briefly appear from behind a barrel - or rather, a sprite heavily resembling the Stalfos and using the same palette, but redrawn from scratch.

Of all Mario Party games, the one containing a Zelda reference is Mario Party 7, where the line "Shh... it's a secret to everybody!" is displayed whenever a Cruise Secret is purchased. This is a reference to the same line from the original Legend of Zelda, where some caves contained Moblins that would reward Link with Rupees for finding them. The secret in question is supposed to be the fact that Moblins work for Ganon and should not be helping out Link.

Super Mario Galaxy has both an overt reference to Zelda in the form of the various Octo enemies, being Octoombas, Octoguy, and Octopi, which all resemble Octoroks from Zelda and attack by shooting projectiles at Mario - and a very hidden one. The skybox in the Ghostly Galaxy consists of a constantly moving trail of elongated, ghostly creatures with anguished faces, likely representing lost souls. They move from one end of the skybox, which is dark, in a spiral-like manner into the other end, which has a bright light; which may be symbolic of a passing into the afterlife. The texture used for the ghostly creatures is actually from The Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker, where it is used once in the entire game during a sequence that cannot be revisited; that being the inside of the Ghost Ship that must be found using a special chart. The ghosts can be seen through the cracks in the ceiling of the ship's hold; however, the camera points down automatically and the only way to see them is to manually look around the area. The obscurity of the texture makes it hard to recognize that it was reused, making this perhaps the hardest to tell Zelda reference in a Mario game.

For a very minor but distinct reference, there are Star Bits in the formation the shape of a



Rupee from the Zelda series found in the Rolling Gizmo Galaxy.

Super Paper Mario also contains a few overt Zelda references. The villain character Mimi insists that Mario should pay her not in coins, but in a different currency called "Rubees", which are shaped and colored like red Rupees (worth 20 Rupees) from the Zelda series. The Flipside Tokens, used in the Flipside Arcade, look like yellow Rupees (worth 10 Rupees) or perhaps gold Rupees (worth 300 Rupees) depending on interpretation. The boss of Chapter 1-4, Fracktail, makes a variety of references in his dialogue, most famously also changing his eye briefly to the Wii Shop Channel loading icon; one of his lines is "I AM ERROR", referencing the same line from Adventure of Link. If you haven't played Adventure of Link, you may think it is used the same in the game as it does in all the references to it - meaning that something went wrong, or that there is an error. However, the original meaning of it was simply that the man who said it was named Error; the name was intended to be humorous as he is referenced by another man named Bagu, who the original Japanese writers intended to be transliterated as "Bug", to have a pair of characters named Bug and Error, two types of faults in programming. However, the translators failed to catch the joke and so Bagu remained a generic fantasy name bearing no connection to Error, which made Error stand out so much that players assumed something went wrong during the naming of the character. Nintendo themselves picked this up and outside of the Super Paper Mario reference, also uses it on their official website when something goes wrong.

In Super Mario Galaxy 2, a recurring mission is guiding an enemy towards a Gearmo, a robot NPC, who has set up a special enclosure for that enemy. When this is completed, the Gearmo is shown holding the enemy up the same way Link is typically shown holding up a new item after obtaining it.

There are two more minor references to a famous Zelda line in Donkey Kong games. In the 3DS remake of Donkey Kong Country Returns, Cranky will sometimes say "It's dangerous to go alone, buy this!" as a reference to the Old Man's line at the beginning of The Legend of Zelda. In Donkey Kong Country Tropical Freeze, Funky Kong will say an almost identical line, "It's dangerous to go alone - take these!" instead.

Super Mario 3D Land was released in time for the Zelda series' 25th anniversary, which is cleverly reflected in Level 5-2 being a big Zelda reference. Presumably, level 2-5 was not chosen as the level would have been too difficult that early in the game. The level is nonstandard for Mario platformers since it is shown entirely from a bird's eye view similar to 2D Zelda games. There is a puzzle near the middle of the level that requires Mario to be Fire Mario and to throw fireballs at four unlit torches, which is a reference to a puzzle commonly encountered across the Zelda series. When the torches are lit, the Zelda "discovery" jingle plays.

Super Mario 3D World, the sequel to 3D Land, has an even more overt Zelda reference. The Sprixie Princesses, who must be saved in lieu of Peach in this game since Peach is a playable character, are fairy-like and captured in bottles by Bowser, similar to how Link captures fairies in bottles in the Zelda series. Level Star-1, called Rainbow Run, contains a rare instances of Mario-exclusive Zelda-related music. One of the level's bonus areas is a platform that is shaped like a giant version of the Link sprite from The Legend of Zelda, and the music that plays here is a remix of that game's overworld theme.

One easy to miss reference occurs in the Luigi's Mansion series where an Ancient Poltergeist enemy in Mission C-3 of the Old Clockworks is seen arranging bricks into a Triforce shape, complete with the item found jingle from the Zelda series playing.

Starting with the Wii U, amiibos entered Nintendo's product lineup, which forced many games to have functionality that would acknowledge characters from other franchises if they wanted to be compatible with all, or most, different amiibo. In case of Mario-related games, this applies to Yoshi's Woolly World and Super Mario Maker. In the former, different color schemes for Yoshi are unlocked with Zelda series amiibo, those being a Link Yoshi (also unlocked with a Toon Link amiibo), a Zelda Yoshi, a Ganondorf Yoshi, and a Sheik Yoshi.

In case of Super Mario Maker, not only all Zelda amiibo (that were out at the time of release) are supported, but the wide variety of Mystery Mushroom costumes adds further Zelda characters into the mix. Mario can wear costumes based on Link, Toon Link, Zelda, Sheik and Ganondorf, but also Tingle, Tetra from Wind Waker, and "Totem Link", which is a stack of the three playable Links from Tri Force Heroes. This covers the obvious references, but a much harder to spot one is the fact that if a Spike tile is placed in a Super Mario World styled level and the theme is switched to Underwater, the spike becomes a Sea Urchin from Link's Awakening. It is interesting that instead of simply drawing a small Urchin enemy, the designers remembered this small version of it from an old Zelda game and decided to import it instead.

This about covers it for major Mario releases outside of Mario Kart 8, which I will get to in a second. However, here are some minor mentions that fit nowhere else. While I said I would not include WarioWare Zelda microgames, one of them contains a completely original Zelda-themed asset that I would be amiss to leave out. The final level of the Ocarina of Time microgame in WarioWare: Smooth Moves shows Link turning into an old version of Adult Link when he pulls out the Master Sword; this version has a white beard and eyebrows that cover his eyes, and seems to be entirely newly made in the Ocarina of Time style just for this scenario.

Another reference is so odd that it may not even be apt for this podcast, but in the Nintendo Badge Arcade app for the Nintendo 3DS, a special Japan-only event distributed badges that were, of all things, crossovers between WarioWare and Majora's Mask. There is a version of the moon from Majora's Mask with Wario's face, Penny Crygor as the Happy Mask Salesman, Ashley as Deku Link, Jimmy T. as the Skull Kid, and Red as Tingle. The existence of these badges is bizarre enough, but even more bizarre is the fact that while this is technically a Mario series and Zelda series crossover, it is not encountered in either a Mario nor a Zelda game, per se.

Mario Kart 8 deserves its own section due to one of its DLC packs being centered around Zelda content. It added the Triforce Cup, which includes the Hyrule Circuit, a track based around Hyrule Castle, and Link as a selectable driver, with his own signature vehicle being the Master Cycle, a horse-shaped motorcycle. This itself was referenced in a Zelda game of its own, with the Master Cycle Zero, based on the Master Cycle, being an unlockable vehicle in the DLC for The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild, which marks this the first recursive Mario-Zelda reference.

Hyrule Circuit is a track that features a design of Hyrule Castle and Hyrule Castle Town that,

while not directly from any specific Zelda game, look slightly like Twilight Princess for the castle due to the prominent flying buttresses, and Spirit Tracks for the town, mostly due to NPC soldiers from Spirit Tracks cheering on from the sidelines. Three elements common in Mario Kart courses are replaced with Zelda equivalents; Coins are Rupees, Piranha Plants are Deku Babas (in their Skyward Sword design) and Swoops are Keese. The course's skybox is mostly generic with the exception of Death Mountain with its recognizable halo of smoke in the distance.

Inside Hyrule Castle, there is a room with a giant Master Sword (presumably a replica, as everything else is scaled normally) in the middle, and stained glass windows depicting the six medallions from Ocarina of Time around it. (This mirrors how the Master Sword in Wind Waker is also surrounded by stained glass windows, those depicting the sages from Ocarina of Time instead; the medallions are symbols of the sages). There is also a sign with the face of Beedle, the recurring shopkeeper debuting in Wind Waker, on it in the castle town.

This concludes the part where I discuss references in games that actually exist, however, there is one more thing regarding a game that unfortunately never saw the light of day. That game is Virtual Boy Mario Land, a planned sequel to Super Mario Land 2 for the Virtual Boy. While most of the gameplay would have been regular side-scrolling platforming with the same gimmick of switching between foreground and background that Virtual Boy Wario Land ended up using, the game would have also included bird's eye view segments that were shown - in whatever little footage is available of the game - to highly resemble A Link to the Past. The room Mario enters has the same architecture and general feeling of A Link to the Past dungeons, specifically Hyrule Castle. He enters the room by pipe and walks in what is presumably a cutscene towards a table with a candlestick on it, only to fall through the floor, whereupon the available footage ends.

Behind the table with the candlestick is a door, again extremely similar to the ones from A Link to the Past, presumably leading further into the dungeon. It is curious to imagine what kind of Zelda-inspired adventures Mario would have had if the game was released, which it likely would have if the Virtual Boy was not a commercial flop. After all this listing of connections between the two series, the realization that what would be the biggest event linking the two franchises never came to be is quite tragic.

Still, with amiibo not going anywhere anytime soon, and both Mario and Zelda franchises being in excellent shape after the recent immense successes of both Super Mario Odyssey and Breath of the Wild, there is plenty of time in the future for the series to cross over again in ways we cannot even anticipate.

Thank you very much for listening.