

Pannenkoek2012 and SM64 - Watch for Rolling Rocks - 0.5x A Presses (Commentated)

11/15/2020

Jack Helfrich

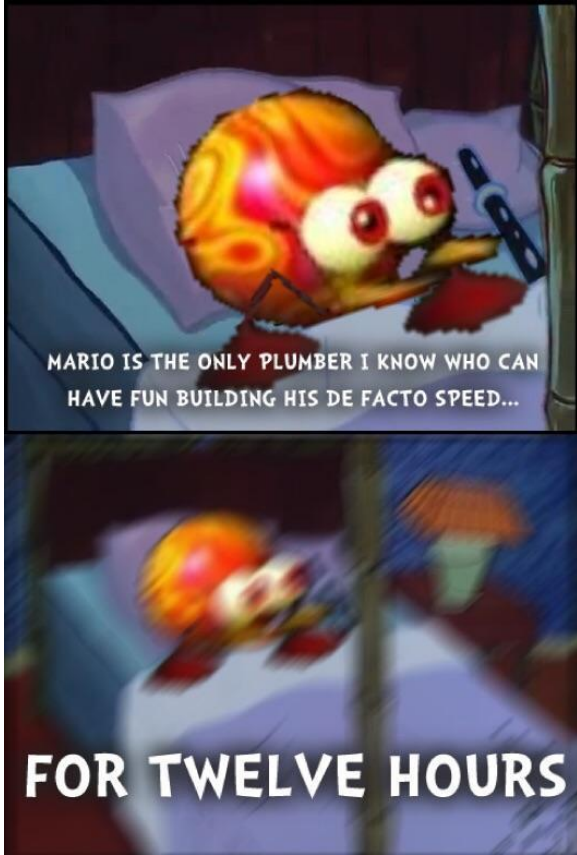
[SM64 - Watch for Rolling Rocks - 0.5x A Presses \(Commentated\)](#) [video] was created by YouTuber [Pannenkoek](#) on January 12, 2016. It currently has 3.8 million views—far more than any of the other videos on pannenkoek2012’s channel. Watch for Rolling Rocks is a level in *Super Mario 64* which takes place in the aptly named Hazy Maze Cave. It fits in with the other *Mario 64* levels in its uncanniness: textures are strangely pixelated, hills which should look smooth have jagged edges, and the scuttlebugs are made up of unsettling, perfect spherical bodies and twig legs.



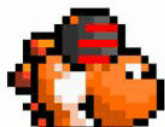





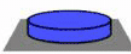

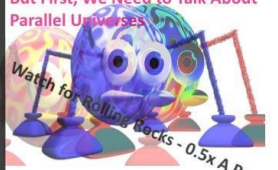
Since the dawn of video games players have tried to push games to their limits. Speedrunning has become very popular in recent years. But *SM64 - Watch for Rolling Rocks - 0.5x A Presses (Commentated)* is not about beating Mario 64 as fast as possible. It is about beating Mario 64 with as little jumps (or A presses) as possible.

The video is hilarious: Pannenkoek’s dry sarcasm, the peaceful *Mario 64* music which cuts in every time he begins to explain something, and of course the sheer depth and complexity of his Watch for Rolling Rocks 0.5 A press run. Pannenkoek literally discovers parallel universes just so he can clip Mario into them to build up speed so that he doesn’t have to jump.

Not just the difficulty of the run is impressive—the video itself is immaculate. It is simultaneously way too complex yet extremely comprehensible. Most people don’t care about beating *Mario 64* in as few A Presses as possible, but Pannenkoek explains it so eloquently that it becomes engaging. It is clear that so much care was put into the video’s production: he uses graphs, tables, and multiple camera angles to make sure his points are portrayed with absolute clarity. He speaks with direct precision, perfectly walking the line between patronizing and vague.

SM64 - Watch for Rolling Rocks - 0.5x A Presses (Commentated) grew a cult following after its release. Memes quickly emerged. They fit the funniest moments of the video into the common archetypes of humor which memes represent. They aren't funny beyond the fact that they take the videos validity and seriousness to the next level. They treat the video as common knowledge. They certainly do not appreciate the video as Pannenkoek intended.



 <p>Mario</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -italian -versatile headwear -builds infinite speed on submerged slopes 	 <p>Scuttlebug</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -can change home position -does lunges to ascend -enjoys jamborees 	 <p>TJ "Henry" Yoshi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -depressing and naive -doesn't believe in 0.5x A-presses -probably denies climate change too 	<p>How many  presses are you on my d00d</p> 	<p>Like 1 or 2</p> 
 <p>Power Star</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -is a star -very shy -loves to spin 	 <p>Parallel Universes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -not to scale -not as glamorous as you might think -variable syncing speeds 	 <p>The A button</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -likes to be held -very patient -just wants to be useful 	<p>You are like a little babbly watch this</p> 	<p>But First, We Need to Talk About Parallel Universes</p> <p>Watch for Rolling Backs - 0.5x A Presses</p> 

hidden mario lore

Pannenkoek took a three year hiatus from his channel after *SM64 - Watch for Rolling Rocks - 0.5x A Presses (Commentated)*. He was dissatisfied with the reception of the video. He never expected or wanted it to be famous. He did not approve of the memes. Did he feel like they were laughing at him? It is possible that Pannenkoek is partially autistic? Perhaps the world's fixation on the video is quite a cruel thing.

After three years of silence Pannenkoek updated his FAQ with his [full explanation of the Watch for Rolling Rocks video](#). It is a 33 page google doc which spends the first 22 pages discussing the current state of his channel, his secondary channel which he's been primarily posting on, and his philosophy behind his creative process. For the remaining eleven pages he provides his full testimony of the Watch for Rolling Rocks video.

The Watch for Rolling Rocks video is not the story of a nerd who got bullied off his channel by memes. It is the story of a masochistic artist who bears the burden of his craft. In his testimony Pannenkoek writes about the darkness he was driven to while creating the video.

I wanted to hurt myself physically, but that's against my personal rules. So instead, I settled for psychological harm. So I went onto my Facebook account and unfriended about 80% of my friends, because I didn't feel that I deserved to be friends with them. Later, I took a bath, but when it was over, I ended up staying in the tub cold and naked for hours, since that's what I deserved. During this time, I also ended up going on a mental monologue detailing how worthless I was by going over all my past failures and shortcomings, and for each one going over my personal traits that caused those failures. Needless to say, this was a very dark period of my life.

What I heard in his voice as hilarious dry sarcasm wasn't that at all. It was forced cheerfulness.

Pannenkoek goes on to break down his mental state with the same technicality and clarity that he used to describe his Mario 64 A Press run. He defines two mindsets: The Watch for Rolling Rocks Mindset and the Stability Mindset. It is as if the The Watch for Rolling Rocks Mindset came to him at the crossroads. It helped him finish the video by the deadline he set for himself and granted him fame in his community but it came at a cost. It turned his work into punishment then it degraded him so he'd work more efficiently.

After *SM64 - Watch for Rolling Rocks - 0.5x A Presses (Commentated)* was released Pannenkoek created the Stability Mindset. The Watch for Rolling Rocks mindset left him mentally destroyed and it was the Stability Mindset's job to help him recover. It treated him with compassion and patience.

When I first watched the Watch for Rolling Rocks video my takeaway was this: no matter how niche a creative idea is, it will be successful if you take it seriously and work hard on it. Art is intention. No matter how arbitrary or stupid something may seem it will become as serious as the creator takes it. 3.8 million people do not care about beating super mario 64 in as little A presses as possible. But Pannenkoek cared so deeply for the Watch for Rolling Rocks video that it didn't matter. But *SM64 - Watch for Rolling Rocks - 0.5x A Presses (Commentated)* is not an invitation to follow your passion, it is a cautionary tale of what can happen if you care too much.