

The making of *Super Mario Bros.*

It ain't no game!

by Tyme

Millions of people worldwide have played, and even mastered, the popular Nintendo® adventure game, *Super Mario Bros.*™ For four months last summer in a small town called Castle Hayne, 200 people lived the ultimate adventure. Not with eye-hand coordination, but with filmmaking savvy, they faced and conquered the ultimate challenge: the making of *Super Mario Bros.*, the movie.

Intrigued by the notion of a genre departure, Jake Eberts and Roland Joffe acquired the movie rights to the successful Nintendo adventure game *Super Mario Bros.*, having outbid many high-powered competitors in the process. With script in hand, Lightmotive Fat Man Productions enveloped itself in development. During the early stage, the producers planned to take over a large portion of the burgeoning Carolco Studios complex in Wilmington, North Carolina. When their story concept changed, as did their creative players roster, the location requirements changed as well. It was at this point that Co-Producer Fred Caruso, along with Production Designer David L. Snyder, and Co-Director Rocky Morton, began the search for the ideal location.

"We decided to go to wherever there was a big space," Caruso explains. They looked at steel foundries in Pittsburgh, abandoned woolen mills in Massachusetts, and industrial sites in Houston, Atlanta, Charleston, and Salt Lake City. "We narrowed it down to four places. The bottom line was this had everything that we needed plus a working [film] crew that was readily available to us," Caruso says.

At home on 908 acres, near the Cape Fear River, the 268,000 square foot facility is quite impressive, even in its abandoned state. For Snyder, perhaps best known for his art direction on *Blade Runner*, it was love at first site. "My first response was to get finished scouting and then get on to designing sets. And even though we were going on to Atlanta and Houston, we had pretty much made up our mind, because this was ideal."

Could the Castle Hayne cement plant be the ideal location? The granite sign that welcomes guest to the site implies that it is. It still bears the name of its former owners, *Ideal Cement Company*. Although the plant is now owned by Carolinas Cement Company, the location most often is referred to by locals and filmmaking alumni as *Ideal Cement*.

Before a final decision would be made, the scouting group explored the interior potential of the

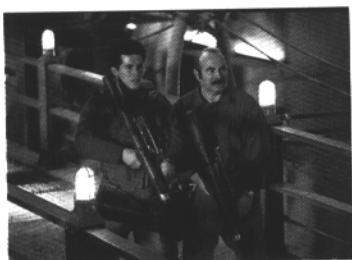


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