



OVERVIEW

Running with Speed is a documentary that tells the fascinatingly peculiar story of the fastest video game players in the world. They're called speedrunners — typically mathematically-minded, extremely dedicated and uniquely obsessed masters of video games, both old and new.

Speedrunning is the art of beating a video game as fast as humanly possible. Runners explore the meta, and to do it at the highest level requires absurd focus. World record times have been whittled down to the millisecond and are maintained for most games. Over the past three decades, speedrunners have been collaboratively digging for secrets, working to uncover mind-blowing shortcuts and glitches which are used to streamline their runs. A big part of the thrill for fans is witnessing these high level strategies executed in real-time, and with the onset of streaming platforms like Twitch, select runners are now finding ways to make a living from their repetitive endeavors.

Back in 2010, a small group of speedrunners gathered in one kid's mom's basement to showcase their skills in an effort to raise money for charity. To everyone's wonderment, it worked. They streamed their speedruns live for a week straight and were ecstatic when they collected \$10,532 in donations. Now, more than 10 years later, that same group, called *Games Done Quick*, organizes annual speedrunning marathons that have exploded in scope and raised more than \$34 million for causes like Doctors Without Borders and the Prevent Cancer Foundation.

Our narrator and guide through this complex, nuanced world is an internet legend and video game historian who, despite never revealing his identity, goes by the name, Summoning Salt. His speedrunning world record progression videos have broken into the mainstream and have more than 100 million views on YouTube. Also of note, Summoning Salt holds the world record for fastest completion of the Nintendo classic, *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!*, after clocking in at a breakneck 14 minutes and 55 seconds.

Running with Speed was filmed all across the United States and in Japan. We follow along with top runners, past and present, of gaming franchises that are pillars in speedrunning: *Super Mario Bros.*, *The Legend of Zelda*, and *Metroid*. World records in these retro classics are especially revered. The film culminates at the 10 year anniversary of *Games Done Quick* as our characters work together to use their speedrunning prowess to raise millions of dollars from more than 80 countries to fight cancer. It's uncanny and remarkable, all at the same time.

Chapter 1 - Masters of Mario

Jump into speedrunning and learn about the glitches and time-saves that make it all possible. Mario is more popular than Mickey Mouse. More than 600 million copies of Mario games have been sold, making it the best selling video game franchise of all time. So, it's no wonder that Mario speedrunning records are most prestigious. Meet AndrewG, a pioneer who was first to beat the original *Super Mario Bros.* in under five minutes. He was ahead of his time and held the world record from 2007 to 2014. Mitchflowerpower is the best ever at *Super Mario Bros. 3.* and shows us what it takes to make a living as a modern-day speedrunner on the internet streaming platform, Twitch. GlitchCat specializes in speedruns of *Super Mario World* Kaizo ROM hacks — these are unofficial Mario variations, reimagined to push gameplay into a new stratosphere. GrandPooBear, another Mario Kaizo player, is the most commercially successful speedrunner to date. He was recently signed by Red Bull and on the heels of his national arcade tour, you could say he is living a speedrunner's dream. This takes him to the doorstep of the biggest, most intriguing yearly event in all of speedrunning, a *Summer Games Done Quick* charity marathon.



Chapter 2 - They Use Their Powers For Good

Twenty speedrunners gathered in Mike Uyama's mother's basement for what was called *Classic Games Done Quick*, in 2010. No one imagined that years later they would be a fundraising juggernaut, packing hotels and drawing millions of online viewers — but that is exactly what has happened. Learn the origin and witness all that *Games Done Quick* has become, as they try to raise three million dollars for charity over the course of one week. Mitchflowerpower, GlitchCat and GrandPooBear put their powers on full display and the world responds. We follow up with AndrewG, who is absent from the charity event. Despite his status, AndrewG peaked before speedrunners were able to make a living from their craft. Now, facing complications with his day job and after his dad suffers a near-fatal accident, AndrewG is forced to confront the amount of time he devotes to a game that was released more than 30 years ago. Next, we meet an international group of speedrunners forging a new path. Joining forces from Australia, Spain, Canada and the U.S. — a group called, *Global Speedrun Association*, seeks to build a competitive scene and organizes the world's first head-to-head tournament. This culminates in a monumental face-off between the two best *Super Mario 64* players on the planet.



Chapter 3 - Game Not Over

Speedrunning is about much more than just Mario, and we take a step down the rabbit hole. We meet Zoast, a Zen-like 38 yr-old living in Chattanooga who holds the record for the fastest completion of *Super Metroid*, an atmospheric action-adventure game that is often cited as one of the best of all time. We travel to Japan to hear from a renowned, but mysterious, *Super Metroid* runner named, Hotarubi. Despite having changed speedrunning forever, no one in the U.S. has ever seen Hotarubi, until now. Next, we meet the unparalleled, Narcissa Wright. Wright notoriously bested the world record for *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* and in 2015 was speedrunning's biggest star. But after a second place finish at the Nintendo World Championships and fallout surrounding coming out as a transgender woman, Narcissa's life spiraled. Finally, we reach the 10 year anniversary of *Games Done Quick*. Speedrunning is as popular as it has ever been and runners continue to push boundaries — like beating *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!*, while blindfolded. Following performances from many of the gamers we've met along the way, the event concludes with a dramatic completion of *Super Metroid: Impossible* by next generation runner, Oatsngoats.

Speedrunners are a niche community of gamers that you may not have known about, but whose passion and determination might just win you over. Many people have fond memories of these classic games from their childhood, and to watch speedrunners break them down and present them in a way most never experienced is nostalgically satisfying. These are masters of the most popular games in the world, and no matter your age, their cutting-edge gameplay and relentless pursuit of perfection is something to behold.



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