

# HYPER

## FEATURING

### SPLATOON 2

MARVEL VS CAPCOM: INFINITE  
 HYPERBRAWL TOURNAMENT  
 ULTRA STREET FIGHTER II:  
 THE FINAL CHALLENGERS  
 STAR TREK BRIDGE CREW  
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 WINDJAMMERS  
 BRAWLHALLA  
 INJUSTICE 2  
 FINAL WAR  
 CORIOLIS  
 TEKKEN 7  
 ARMS  
 & MORE

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Nintendo's hybrid console  
 has serious multiplayer chops

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Everything you need to know  
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 compact lounge room PC

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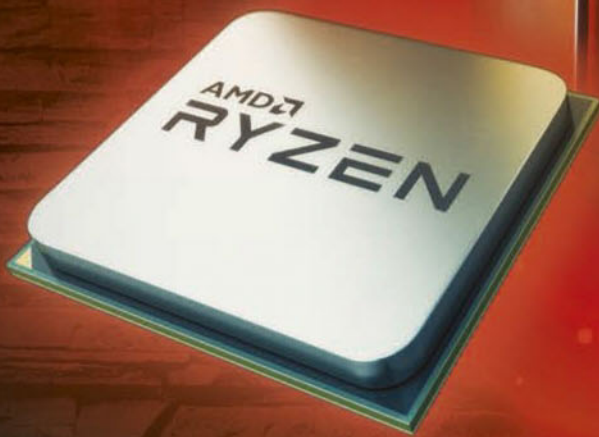


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Playing games online can be a lot of fun, but there is nothing better than sitting down with a couple of friends and playing something in the same room. That's why we've dedicated this issue of Hyper to local multiplayer. There's a camaraderie in playing in the same room that makes the shared experience all the more enjoyable. The fact that you can trash talk your mates without being an anonymous douchebag on the Internet is an added bonus!

**DANIEL WILKS**  
*Master Heckler*

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# HYPER

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# PREVIEWS





# Mario Kart 8 Deluxe

Everyone's favourite Mario Kart is their first Mario Kart. But at least everyone can agree that Mario Kart 8 for the Wii U was the best Mario Kart in years. Unfortunately, no one played it because no one bought a Wii U. To redress this Nintendo is packaging together Mario Kart 8, its two substantial DLC packs, and a clutch of new features into this Deluxe edition for the Switch. Notably the Battle Mode, sadly undernourished in MK8, is getting some more meat on its bones with a team-based mode called Renegade Roundup, uh, rounding out a selection of five different modes. There's also the return of the feather item, last seen in Super Mario Kart, which lets players jump into the air to avoid shells or clear barriers. Mario Kart 8 Deluxe supports up to four players in local multiplayer via TV mode and up to eight via wireless connectivity.

DEVELOPER	Nintendo
PLATFORM	Switch
RELEASE DATE	April 2017



Splatoon makes its Mario Kart debut in the Switch version



# Micro Machines World Series

HYPHER has of course had numerous "Golden Ages" throughout its radiant 24-year history, but perhaps the most brilliant of all spanned the first half of 2005 when Cam, Wilks, Staines, Malky and The Ghost of David Wildgoose, among others, would gather round the HYPHER couch day after day to play Mashed. Rivalries were forged in the heat of point-based, top-down racing, friendships skated across the thin ice of The Greatest Video Game Race Track Of All Time, Polar Wharf, and magazine publishing deadlines were forgotten in favour of revenge. Mashed was really just a superb update to 16-bit era classic Micro Machines, and so we're hopeful that Micro Machines World Series will in turn be a superb update of Mashed. The poker table track certainly looks promising and we're intrigued by the prospect of new team-based battle modes. We'll be dragging the old HYPHER couch out next month to see if we can recreate the Golden Age.

DEVELOPER	Deep Silver/Codemasters
PLATFORM	PS4, XB1, PC
RELEASE DATE	April 2017



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## Sausage Sports Club

Wacky physics hope to propel Sausage Sports Club out of the realm of mere novelty into the world of actual game that you'd wanna play for more than 10 minutes. Players pick a sausage-shaped animal and compete in various mini-games, from obstacle course soccer to wacking each other into spike pits. Everything's spongy, bouncy and really quite silly.

DEVELOPER	Chris Wade
PLATFORM	PC
RELEASE DATE	2017



## Windjammers

Originally a Neo Geo and arcade game that replaces air hockey's puck with a frisbee you can catch and throw, Windjammers became something of a cult classic, especially with its reissue on Wii Virtual Console. DotEmu has pledged to properly respect the original and deliver an updated but faithful port that should look and play like 1994.

DEVELOPER	DotEmu/Sony
PLATFORM	PS4
RELEASE DATE	2017



## Gunsport

"There is no more war. There are no more gods. There is only the game. For the passion and the fame - it's two guns against the world." Which is quite the way to introduce what is essentially a volleyball game, albeit one with guns and a firm emphasis on co-operative play. Players have to co-ordinate their plays, timing their gun shots perfectly to knock the ball into the goal.

DEVELOPER	Necrosoft Games
PLATFORM	PC, PS4, XB1
RELEASE DATE	2017



## Hyperbrawl Tournament

Taking its cue from early '90s future sports brawler Speedball, Hyperbrawl Tournament is a 2-on-2 mix of soccer and beating the crap out of each other. Points are only scored for actually getting the ball in the back of the net, but there's no real restrictions on how you achieve that. They even give you a bunch of weapons to prove the point.

DEVELOPER	Milky Tea
PLATFORM	PC
RELEASE DATE	June 2017

Shoulder pads were all the rage in the early '90s





## Arms

Like launch title 1-2 Switch, Arms feels like Nintendo stretching to design a game that maybe just falls short of being possible only on its new hardware, but definitely makes very specific use of some of its more unusual features. It's a 1-on-1 fighting game that takes advantage of the fact the Switch's Joy-Con controllers can be separated and held independently. The idea being that each Joy-Con becomes, in essence, an extension of your arms; swing your fist and your ridiculously costumed avatar will do likewise, only they have arms like coiled springs and can launch their fists halfway across the colourful arena to smack their opponents from 20 feet away. Arms definitely looks fun and possesses a Splatoon-esque exuberance, but there have to be question marks hanging over its longevity. Much will depend on the available modes and just how high (or low) its skill ceiling is.

DEVELOPER	Nintendo
PLATFORM	Switch
RELEASE DATE	May 2017



Things took a violent turn when they discovered the price of popcorn

## Injustice 2

There's something refreshing, almost bold, about a sequel that eschews the title colon subtitle formula. Injustice 2 is simply Injustice 2. Gone is the clumsy subtitle, Gods Among Us, that pulled all the punch from the original. This is Injustice - only now there's 2 of it. Built on the foundations of NetherRealm Studios' expertise with the recent Mortal Kombat renaissance, Injustice was an incredibly solid bout of DC-themed biff, presented with the kind of spectacle that suited its superhero roster. Injustice 2 might seem like a conservative sequel - in addition to promising the standard new superheroes and supervillains to fight as, NetherRealm seem really keen to tell us all about the "epic" new storyline - yet the ability to customise not only the look of your character but their gear and fighting style could be a game-changer. Notably, after the calamitous PC release of Mortal Kombat X, no PC version of Injustice 2 appears forthcoming.

DEVELOPER	NetherRealm
PLATFORM	PS4, XB1
RELEASE DATE	May 2017



# Defense Grid

Funded through a successful Kickstarter campaign and based on the hugely popular PC tower defence game of the same name. While the single player experience of the videogame may not seem like a particularly easy fit for a boardgame, Forged by Geeks has made some clever design decisions that look to be able to transpose the frantic action of a tower defence videogame to a slower, more tactically minded multiplayer tabletop experience.

The boardgame revolves around a modular board that allows players to construct a large variety of maps with between one and three lanes for the enemies to move down. Alongside the lanes the board has spaces to place tower miniatures. The flow of the game should be much like that of the videogame series (albeit turn-based), with players spending resources to place towers, enemies trying to approach and destroy the player base and the towers hopefully destroying the enemies, rewarding the player with more resources with which they can upgrade towers.

That sounds all pretty straightforward, but the game promises to be as mechanically deep as the videogame that inspired it. Some enemy units are armoured, meaning that there is a straight reduction to the damage done by towers. Others are shielded. This is represented by a number of markers on the miniature. Each of these markers represents an attack that the enemy can simply ignore. To counter this, players can upgrade their towers through a variety of

upgrades or special abilities ranging from simple range or damage boosts through to changing the type of projectile or damage the tower does, or giving it special abilities, such as building a Tesla tower capable of doing double damage to shields. These upgrades are done via a deck building mechanic. The basic set will contain around 250 cards. These represent the resources in the game in that they can either be discarded to gain a resource point, or played to get the effect of the card.

There are three different kinds of cards in the deck. Red cards are attack cards. This is how towers are activated. Gold cards are special cards that have effects such as giving a bonus to another player, moving a tower to another location and the like. Blue cards are for support and typically buff one kind of tower by giving it a special ability, special ammunition or some kind of defence. Rather than having a specific turn sequence, cards can be played at any time, so players can use support cards on other player's attack cards.

The game is played across seven rounds, each made up of a setup phase and a wave of enemies. As the game progresses, enemy waves become more difficult. Up to four players work together to generate resources, build towers and work on a strategy. Once setup is done the first wave moves. After the enemy moves it's back to players to draw back up to a hand of four cards, activate towers, play support and special cards and hopefully wipe out the wave. Sounds pretty rad. ☘



Looks more like a Defense Hex Grid to us



DEVELOPER | Forged by Geeks  
 PLATFORM | Boardgame  
 RELEASE DATE | May 2017



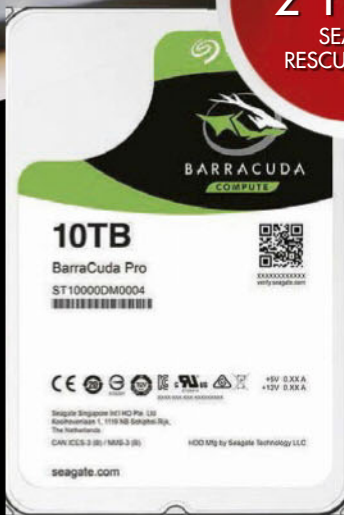




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## TABLETOP

# Coriolis: The Third Horizon

*Arabian Nights among the stars*

Fria Ligan/Free League may not be a particularly well-known name in tabletop roleplaying circles – at least not in comparison to giants like Wizards of the Coast or Paizo Publishing – but when it comes to quality games, the Swedish designer and publisher is hard to beat. The latest pen and paper RPG from Free League, Coriolis, is described as “Arabian Nights in space”, and while the high concept pitch does give an idea what the game is about, that description barely scratches the surface.

Set in the Third Horizon, a remote area of space comprised of around 30 systems and cut off from the rest of space by sheer distance thanks to the destruction of the ancient and mysterious warp gates that lead to the Third Horizon in the first place. In the back story, two massive generation arkships left Earth to one day explore the Third Horizon. During the journey, one of the arkships disappeared into the darkness between the stars but eventually the other, the Zenith, finally made it to its destination, only to discover that the system had already been colonised by other human explorers generations earlier.

While the arkships took the slow route through space, Earth discovered a series of portals built by an unknown ancient race that allowed for all but instantaneous travel throughout space. While the Zenith still took the slow road, the Third Horizon was explored and settled. The First Horizon – Earth and its surrounding colonies – decided that the Second and Third Horizons had too much independence and tried to rein them in, leading to what became

known as the Portal Wars. Rather than bowing to Earth, the Third Horizon destroyed their portal, cutting themselves off from the rest of the human race. At least until the Zenith arrived. There is political tension between the First Come, as the descendants of the first settlers call themselves, and the Zenithians, those that came on the Zenith, now converted by the crew and passengers into the trade port and space station, Coriolis.

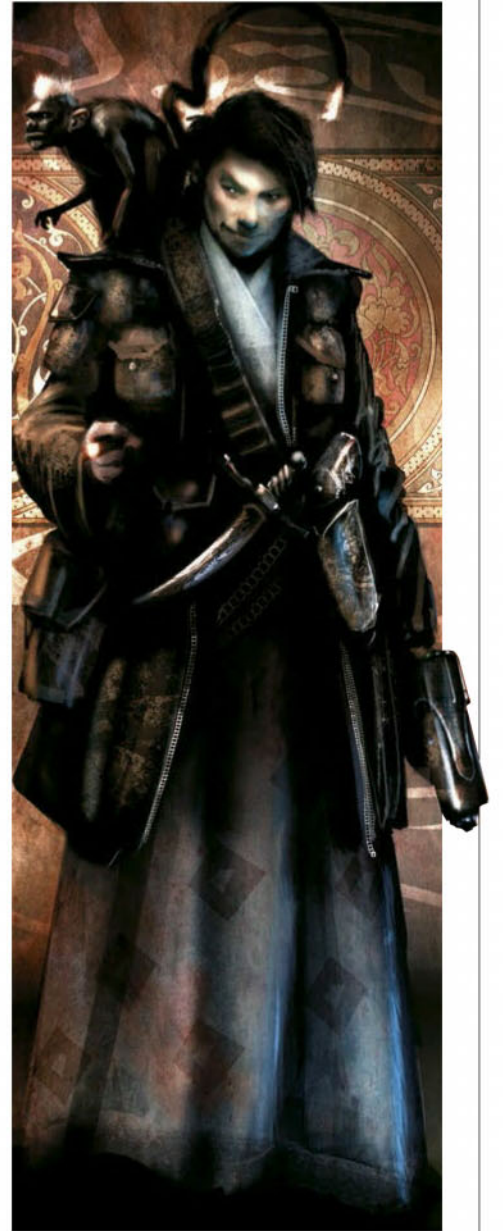
It is into this world that players find themselves thrust, and a fascinating universe and system it is too. Character creation in the game is designed as a group activity, as players must not only determine their own character, but create the spaceship that they all crew, choose a faction to support as well as a patron and nemesis. Aside from Middle Eastern culture, the development of Coriolis was influenced by the TV show Firefly and Alastair Reynolds’ Revelation Space novels. The influence of Firefly is clearly visible in the character creation phase of the game. The ship is as much of a character as the players. It is their home for the most part, their livelihood and lifeline. The type of ship the players crew defines in part who they are. Mercenaries, explorers, couriers, religious pilgrims and vagabonds will all need different kinds of ships, different crews and will embark on different missions.

There are five basic concepts for groups in the rulebook, each with three sub-options to add flavour.

“**THE INFLUENCE OF FIREFLY IS CLEARLY VISIBLE... THE SHIP IS AS MUCH OF A CHARACTER AS THE PLAYERS**”





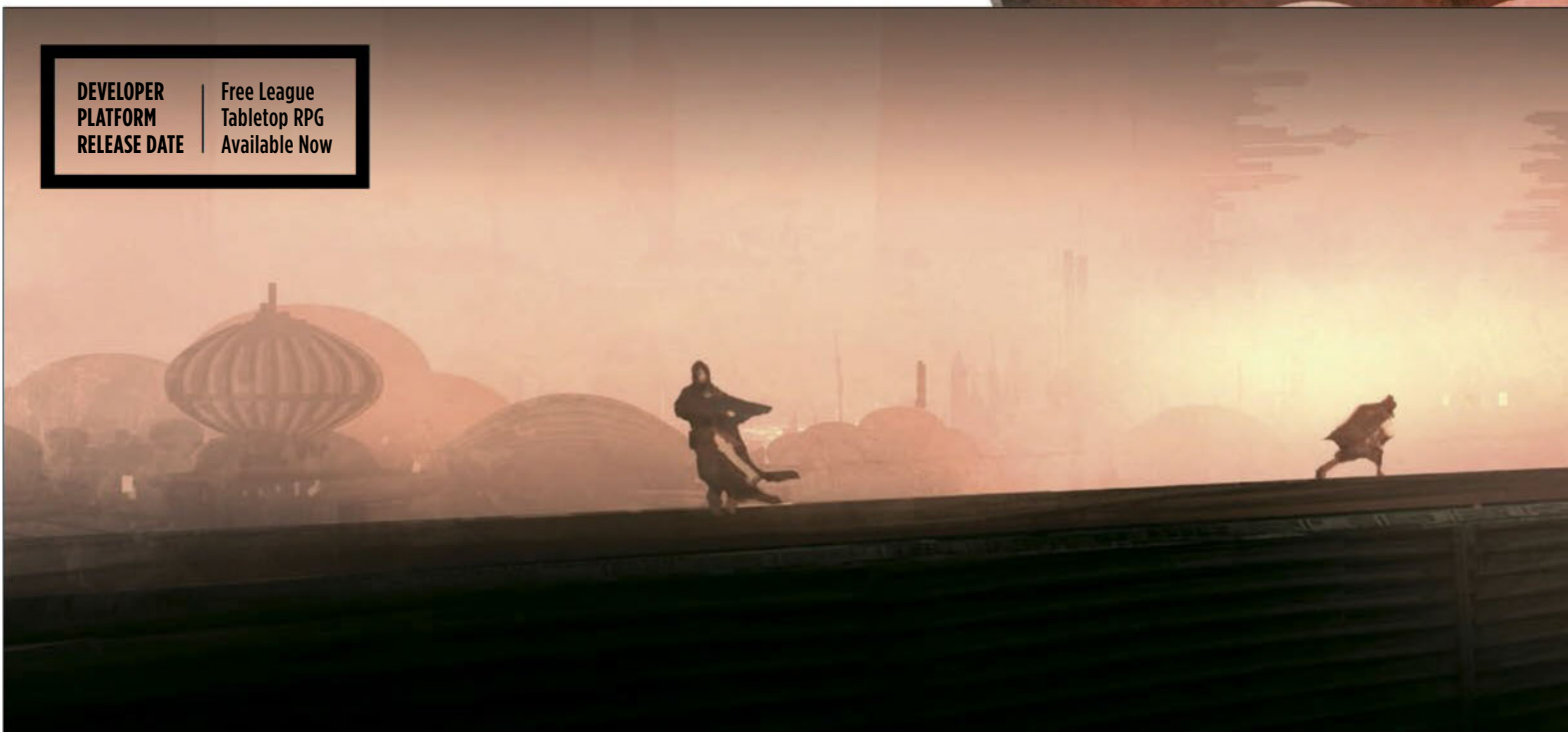


The standard RPG  
adventuring party is  
reimagined as the  
crew of a spaceship

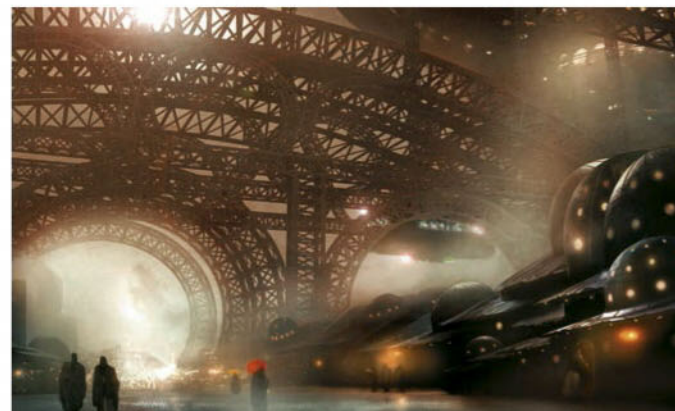




DEVELOPER	Free League
PLATFORM	Tabletop RPG
RELEASE DATE	Available Now



Holding an evil bird in sinister fashion is a three point action



Once one of these is decided upon, players then decide on a background and social class. These influence much of the character, and in a nice touch, the higher the character's social class the smaller pool they have for skills, the justification obviously being that richer characters can afford to hire specialists rather than having to learn skills themselves.

Anyone familiar with previous Free League games like *Mutant: Year Zero* and *Genelab Alpha* will be familiar with the core systems of the game. Players add statistics, skill and any modifiers (each usually ranging between one and five) and then roll a number of d6 equal to the combined number. A single six counts as a success, and each subsequent six adds extra degrees of success for added effects. That's it on a basic level but there is an interesting twist on this general formula that has the potential to add a lot of flavour to the game. Combat follows the basic core system. Each round of combat players have three action points to spend on actions. Some actions are free and thus cost no points, but most actions cost between one and three. One AP actions are fast, instinctive things, like drawing a weapon, parrying in close combat, taking a quick

shot from the hip and the like. Two point actions are considered to be normal actions. These include making a regular attack, reloading or fighting in melee combat. Slow, three point actions include taking an aimed shot, using a mystical or biological power or administering first aid. Slow versions of normal actions may confer a bonus to the dice pool rolled. As AP are a limited resource, players must always be conscious of the situation they are in. If fighting in melee they may always want to keep an AP in reserve to parry an incoming attack, or even only resort to quick thrusts so they have a chance of fighting off multiple attackers.

Combat is also a remarkably deadly affair in *Coriolis*. Players only have a limited pool of hitpoints, no matter how tough they are. Weapons do a set amount of damage on a hit, with bonus damage from additional successes. Armour works to negate this damage by giving the player a pool of armour dice to roll, with each six reducing damage by one.

Although combat does feature in the game, the majority of rules and published material (including the sample adventure and a novella for Kickstarter backers) are focused on exploration and political intrigue. The *Third Horizon* is a place caught







#### ART ATTACK

As the art attests, *Coriolis: The Third Horizon* is a beautiful book. The art is stunning and entirely evocative of the setting. *Free League* seems to be at the forefront of beautiful game books – their next game, *Tales from the Loop* is based on the art of well-known Swedish artist Simon Stalenhag, and offers players a chance to play in a 1980s that never was. In 1954 the Swedish government ordered the construction of the world's largest particle accelerator. It becomes known to the locals as *The Loop*, and it is a source of mystery and wonder, as strange beasts, machines and esoterica start to appear. Players take the role of the type of kids that were the protagonists of *Stranger Things*, *The Goonies*, *ET*, *Super 8* and the like, with character archetypes like *Bookworm*, *Popular Kid*, *Weirdo* and *Troublemaker* trying to navigate the world of homework, nagging parents, peer pressure and otherworldly phenomenon that could potentially be deadly.



between two major factions – the Zenithians and the First Come – but beneath that larger friction there are numerous criminal organisations, cults and corporations all looking to stake their claim on the system. Outside the human sphere, there are the mysteries of the ancient monuments and artefacts that dot the system; the other, perhaps intelligent life in the galaxy; the power of the icons and what their worship really means; and the constant threat of the dark between the stars. There is more to do in space other than just shoot things.

One of the key aspects of *Coriolis* is spirituality, both when it comes to the worship of the Icons – personal saints/deities that influence certain aspects of life – and the fear of efrete, djinn and other malevolent spirits that live in

the dark between the stars and seek to corrupt and control humanity. When creating a character, each player also chooses an Icon related to that character to worship. This belief can have a concrete impact on game mechanics. If a dice roll is failed, characters can call upon their Icons for aid. Doing so gives players an automatic chance at a reroll, but invoking divinity comes at a price. Any time that Icons are invoked,

the GM (Game Master) receives a Darkness Point. These points can be spent at any time to ruin the player's day, turning success into failure, upping the stakes of any situation, throwing obstacles in their path and even invoking the ire of the spirits that live in the dark between the stars. This trade-off between light and dark informs much of the basic storytelling of *Coriolis*. It's a winner. «





FIGHTING



# Brawlhalla

As the name might hint, Brawlhalla delivers a Nordic spin on the old jump around platforms while beating up your mates genre popularised by the Smash Bros. series. Currently in Steam Early Access, it'll be interesting to see how the promised free-to-play model carries over when the game makes its way onto PS4 and Xbox One.

**DEVELOPER** Blue Mammoth Games  
**PLATFORM** PC, PS4, Xbox One  
**RELEASE DATE** 2017



# Tekken 7

Although it's been out in arcades for a couple of years, Tekken 7 finally gets a home release come June. New to the series are the Rage Art, Rage Drive and Power Crush systems which expand your fighter's tactical suite with some interesting risk/reward choices. Akuma from Street Fighter is one of a handful of characters making their debut.

**DEVELOPER** Namco Bandai  
**PLATFORM** PS4, XB1, PC  
**RELEASE DATE** June 2017

# Marvel vs Capcom: Infinite

If you've ever wanted to discover what would happen if Mega Man punched Iron Man, well then gosh does Capcom have the game for you. This is the sixth edition of the highly-respected and under-appreciated fighting series notable for its heavy use of a tagging system that allows players to switch between combatants mid-combo.



**DEVELOPER** Capcom  
**PLATFORM** Switch  
**RELEASE DATE** May 2017

# Ultra Street Fighter II: The Final Challengers

One of the odder Switch games coming this year, this is part authentic port of Capcom's iconic 2D fighting game, part touched-up/smoothed-out/oh-yuck-this-is-gross remaster, and part first-person motion control mini-game gimmick. One thing we can say for sure is that it's unlikely you'll be able to buy the original Street Fighter II on Switch Virtual Console any time soon.



Ryu cunningly ducked right under Iron Man's attack

**DEVELOPER** Capcom  
**PLATFORM** PS4, XB1, PC  
**RELEASE DATE** Late 2017





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# Yooka Laylee

Releasing just a few weeks after we send this magazine to print, Yooka-Laylee rewinds nearly 20 years to a younger, simpler time where games consoles each had their own character mascots and running around collecting things was all any bright-eyed and bushy-tailed gamer wanted to do. Developer Playtonic Games knows a bit about it, too; many of their team cut their teeth at Rare and worked on multiple iterations of the Banjo-Kazooie games. Yooka-Laylee was successfully crowdfunded with a vow to make a new Banjo-Kazooie except we can't call it Banjo-Kazooie because we don't own the rights to that name. But yeah, Yooka is Banjo and Laylee is Kazooie and they inhabit an open world chock full of platforms, puzzles, very British puns and endless shinies to collect. There are multiplayer games and you can even co-op your way through the campaign with a mode designed for less accomplished players to assist the main player.

DEVELOPER	Playtonic Games
PLATFORM	PS4, XB1, PC, Switch
RELEASE DATE	April



After Breath of the Wild we could not be more excited for this



# Super Mario Odyssey

Okay, so, maybe we're cheating a little bit here. You got us. We don't actually know for sure that Super Mario Odyssey will include a local or same-screen multiplayer mode. But hang on, hear us out. Every single recent Super Mario platformer has some sort of local multiplayer option, yeah? Go on, name one that doesn't. (We're pretty sure Super Mario Sunshine was the last to offer no multiplayer at all.) Whether it's full-on four-player same-screen multiplayer as in Super Mario 3D World or hey-player-two-can-shoot-stars-at-the-enemies as in Super Mario Galaxy, there's gonna be at least an option in Super Mario Odyssey. And, hey, even if there isn't, we feel justified including it here because Super Mario Odyssey looks amazing. It's set in New Donk City, for crying out loud. And there are real people walking around. And Mario is weirdly half their size. And his hat is sentient now.



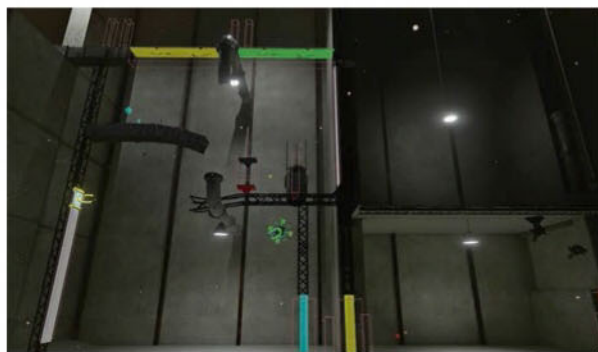
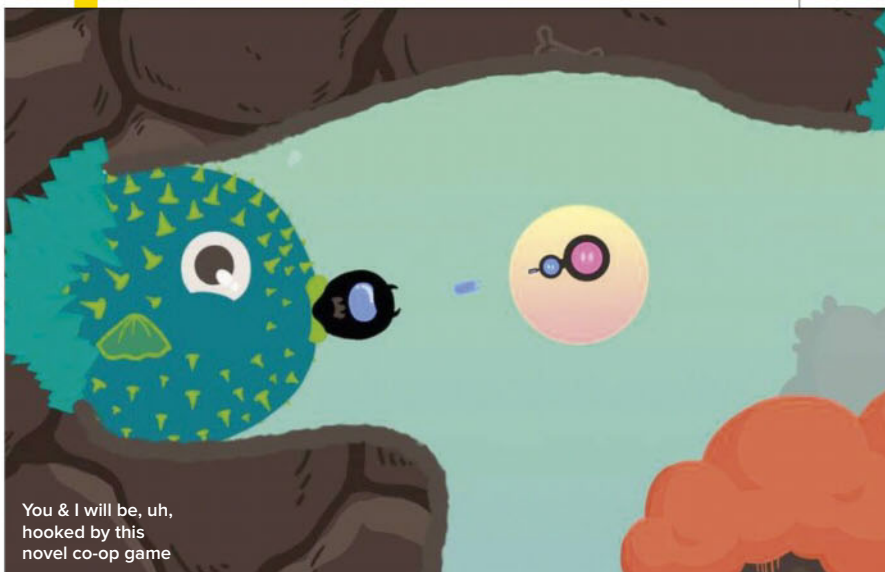
DEVELOPER	Nintendo
PLATFORM	Switch
RELEASE DATE	Late 2017



# The Incredible Journey of You & I

Most co-op games have players controlling separate characters. Here, you & I are stuck controlling the same one. On a blue background, the blue player moves the ship while the pink player shoots; when you pass over a pink background, it swaps around. One moment you'll be flying, the next shooting, then shouting at your partner no doubt.

**DEVELOPER** | Shy Kids Club  
**PLATFORM** | PC, PS4  
**RELEASE DATE** | 2017



## Chroma Shift

In stark contrast to the vibrant palettes elsewhere on this page, Chroma Shift is a platformer played mostly in black, white and grey. There are splashes of colour though, identifying objects and parts of the environment the two co-operative players can interact with, but only if they themselves are the same colour.

**DEVELOPER** | Dev Or Die Studios  
**PLATFORM** | PC, PS4, XBI  
**RELEASE DATE** | June



## Muddledash

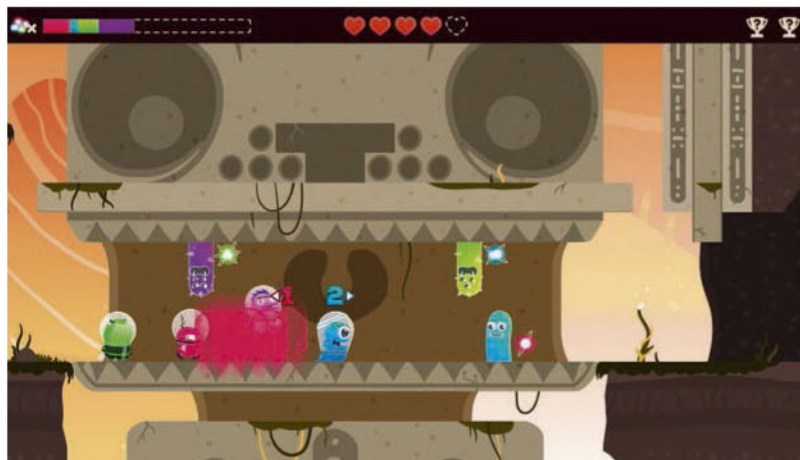
What began as an experiment in physics-driven animation has over the past year grown into a fully-fledged game and is perhaps the first ever couch-competitive octopus racing game. Think Octodad but as a frantic 2D platformer where you're racing three octo-friends through procedurally generated courses.

**DEVELOPER** | Slampunks  
**PLATFORM** | PC, PS4, XBI  
**RELEASE DATE** | 2017

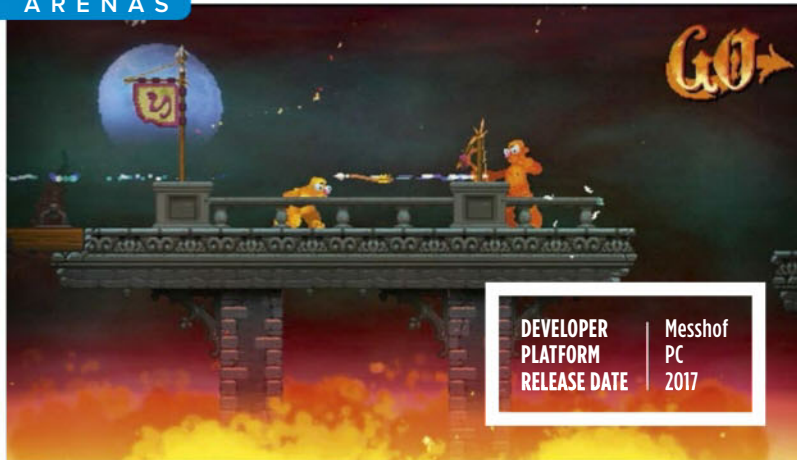
## Joggernauts

We like this novel twist on the auto-runner genre. Joggernauts sees up to four players following the leader through a 2D platform environment. You've got to constantly swap positions with the leader to negotiate the barrage of colour-coded obstacles each level holds. The developer promises you'll scream at your friends and who are we to doubt them.

**DEVELOPER** | Space Mace  
**PLATFORM** | PC  
**RELEASE DATE** | 2017







DEVELOPER	Messhof
PLATFORM	PC
RELEASE DATE	2017

## Nidhogg 2

The original Nidhogg remains one of our favourite same-screen multiplayer games of recent years. Its simplicity was key: a tug-of-war with swords where a one-stab-kill lets you advance one screen closer to victory. Get stabbed yourself and your opponent pegs you back. Nidhogg 2 looks, well... more complicated. Gone are the monochromatic characters and basic block-coloured backdrops and in comes a more detailed - if not exactly conventional - art style. The first game's single sword is now supplemented by a bow and arrow, an axe and throwing knives, which will hopefully expand rather than obscure your tactical options. Messhof's a smart developer, though, so we're not worried. We're just not quite sure what to expect at this stage.

We just can't believe it's not called Spla2n



## Splatoon 2

Nintendo has a reputation for sticking to known quantities. It's not afraid to innovate, but it's almost always in the guise of a familiar face, be it Mario, Link, Kirby or some kind of Kong. Which is why Splatoon, released in 2015 for the Wii U, was so shocking: it was a type of game Nintendo had never made before, filled with a cast of characters we'd never seen before. And it was great! On the surface, Splatoon 2 looks like the same team-based competitive shooter-cum-painter, and you know we're pretty much fine with that. There are new weapon types, new maps, new characters, etc, and the chance to participate in local multiplayer matches on-the-go, but ultimately this feels more like a second chance for a cool game to get the audience it deserves than anything genuinely new.

DEVELOPER	Nintendo
PLATFORM	Switch
RELEASE DATE	May





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TRADING CARD

# Final War: Onslaught

*Why choose between cards and dice?*

Onslaught is but the stepping off point for Australian made TCG, Final War, an interesting mix of army player versus player and player versus environment play with a unique randomising twist. The starter set comes with three folding game boards, three playable faction decks and their associated Commander cards, a Fate deck, numerous tokens and a number of d12 needed to resolve any battles. It all looks a little overwhelming at first, but in play the game is actually surprisingly straightforward.

Each player has a deck of 50 faction cards face down on their play board. From that deck players take eight cards, placing them on the board in one of the three rows and five columns. The front row is for placement of unit cards, the middle for heroes and the last for fortifications. Fortifications have defensive bonuses they confer to the column they are placed in. Likewise, hero cards can also confer bonuses to the unit card in the column. Unlike most TCGs, there are no mana or resource mechanics to speak of, so players are free to play as many cards in their hand as they can. After this initial card placing phase, players roll a d12 each to determine turn order, with the lowest roll going first.

Each turn, the player draws one card from their face down deck, plays any cards they can, then draws the top card from the Fate deck. This deck is made up of random encounter cards, some of which are beneficial to the player, others of which have negative consequences. Some cards will give the player items that they can use or introduce mercenaries that can be hired. Other cards feature wandering monsters,

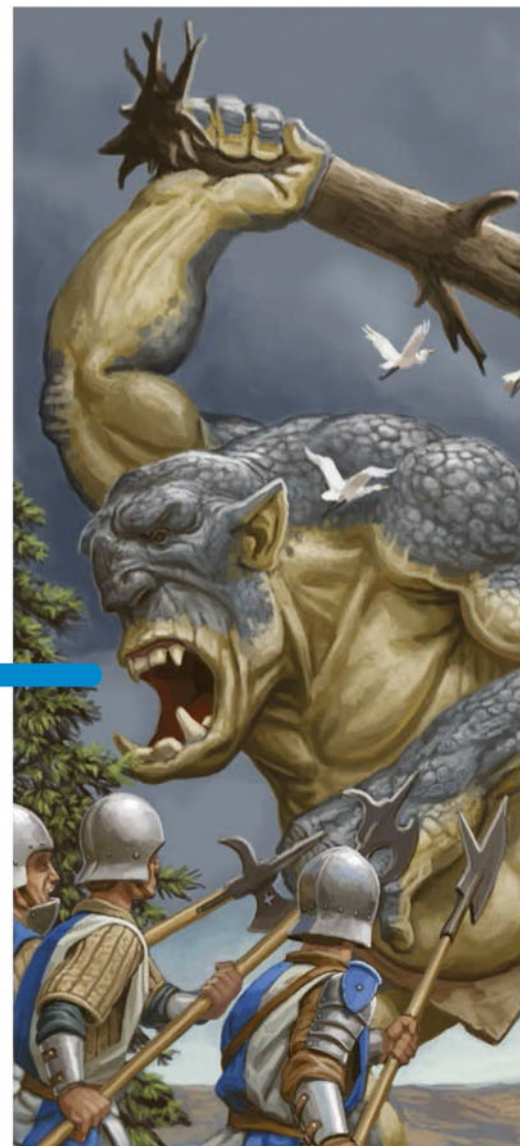
bandit bands or the like that must be fought. Players keep taking turns drawing and playing cards from their decks and then turning the top card of the Fate deck until the Final War card is drawn from the Fate deck. When that happens, no further turns are taken and the players must fight each other until there is only one survivor.

Combat is done in columns, with players initiating a fight choosing which two columns will face off. Each card has health and attack ratings and many have special abilities that can be used in battle, such as inflicting twice the amount of damage against creatures of certain alignment, attacking twice, having a chance to bring defeated enemies back to life as friendly units and the like. Players must roll under the card's attack rating to hit the enemy card. Keep fighting until your enemies are dust.

What we've played of Final War so far is extremely fun. The three factions available to play – elves, werewolves and rogues – are equally enjoyable and strategically varied, but at the moment the choice does feel a little limited. That said, by the end of 2017, Gamers Lab should have another six warlords available for play, three from the Arcane expansion (the Wizard, Witch and Necromancer), each wielding different forms of magic, and the melee based Carnage expansion (Knight, Dwarf and Orc), so there should definitely be no lack of variety when it comes to Final War battles. «

DEVELOPER  
PLATFORM  
RELEASE DATE

Gamers Lab  
Trading Card Game  
Onslaught available,  
expansion packs incoming







“  
**THE THREE  
FACTIONS AVAILABLE  
- ELVES, WEREWOLVES  
AND ROGUES - ARE  
EQUALLY ENJOYABLE  
AND STRATEGICALLY  
VARIED**



Sure looks like the Final War for these foolhardy knights







## Repulse: Galactic Rivals

Repulse promises a range of different game modes based around the same core mechanic. Each player is capable of attracting or repelling the variably-sized cubes that populate the arena. One mode might have you firing cubes at other players to knock them into deadly zones; another sees one cube as a bomb and whoever's holding it at the end blows up.

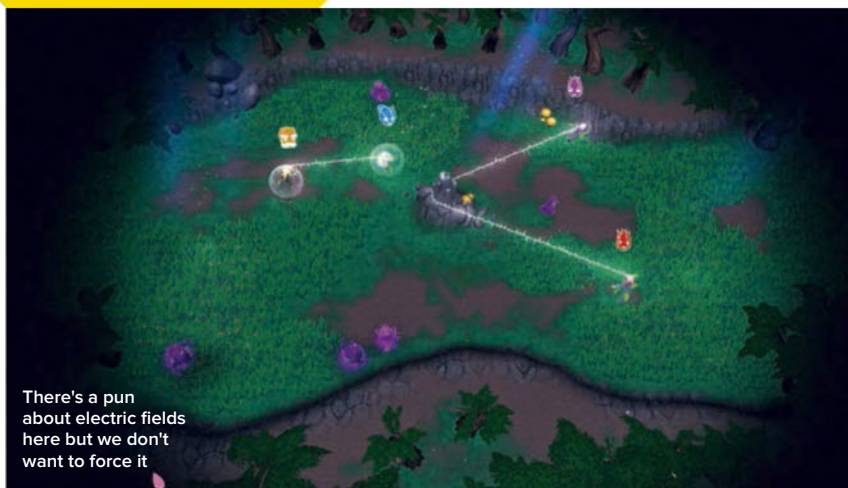
DEVELOPER	IronEqual
PLATFORM	PC
RELEASE DATE	2017



## Hyper Jam

Top-down shoot 'em ups doused in pink and blue neon and blaring My First Vaporwave soundtracks might seem a little 2013, but this one's got HYPER in the name so we're gonna let it pass. It's a competitive arena shooter for 2-4 players with a stack of over-the-top weapons and power-ups and stylish but stereotypical characters.

DEVELOPER	Bit Dragon
PLATFORM	PC
RELEASE DATE	2017



There's a pun about electric fields here but we don't want to force it

## Bramblelash

Bramblelash sees players literally lashed together by those sparkly, zig-zaggy lines you can see in the screenshot. When tethered thus those lines can take out enemies in their path so communication between players is paramount. You can also yank on the lash to pull your companion towards you, away from danger or over obstacles.

DEVELOPER	Byte Sprite Games
PLATFORM	PC, XB1
RELEASE DATE	2017



## Guns N Boxes

We can see bits of Super Crate Box (spawning random weapons from smashing crates), Nuclear Throne (or indeed any recent indie Smash TV style, top-down, pixel art, arena shooter) and Bomberman (come on, that box-filled, grid-based, single-screen playfield just screams Bomberman). If it's half as good as all that, we're in.

DEVELOPER	Light Arrow Games
PLATFORM	PC
RELEASE DATE	2017



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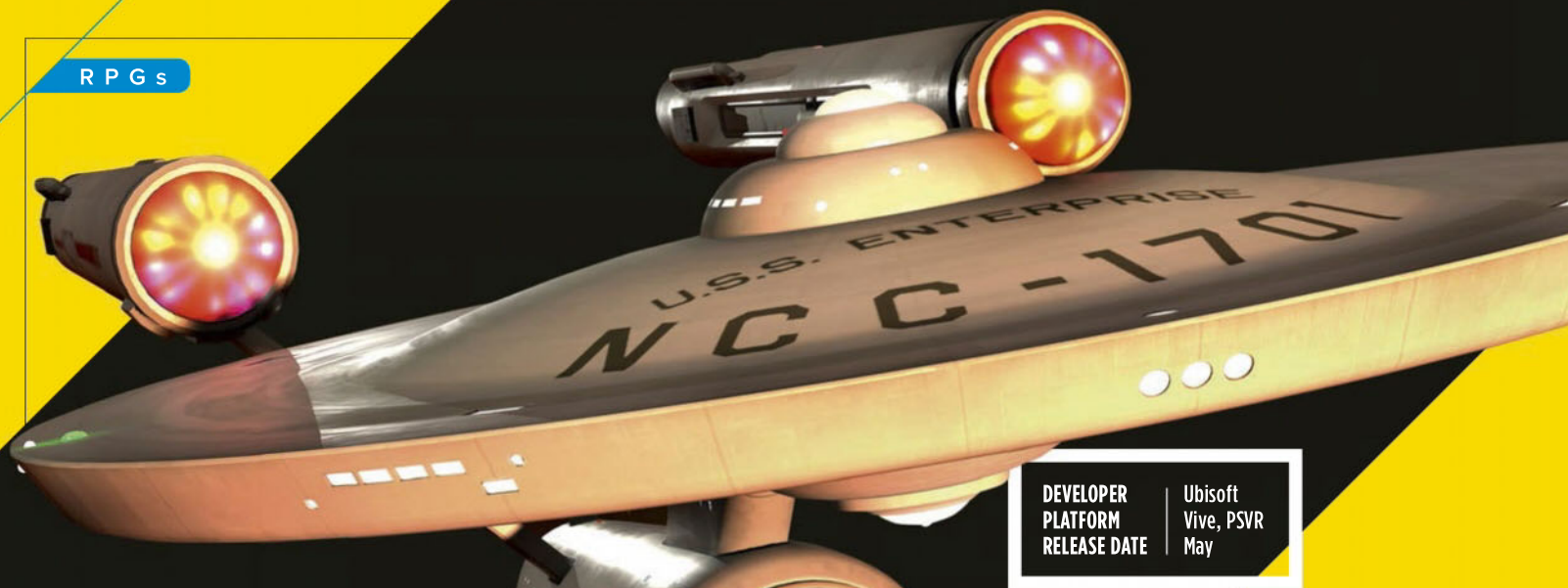
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COOL INNOVATION





DEVELOPER	Ubisoft
PLATFORM	Vive, PSVR
RELEASE DATE	May

## Star Trek Bridge Crew

It's still the early days of virtual reality gaming, of course, but it already seems like developers have decided that movement can be a major issue in VR games and that often the best solution can be to make it so (sorry) the player is doing something that involves sitting down. Cockpits, for instance, are great - you're sitting down but you're most likely piloting something cool like a car or spaceship that's moving around. But what if your cockpit was, I dunno, the bridge of a starship from Star Trek and your crew consisted of other players also wearing VR helmets and you had to coordinate with your helm, tactical and engineer officers as you explore an uncharted sector of space and take on missions and Jesus Christ this is surely every Trek nerd's wildest fantasy brought to life in one game. I mean, like Space Team is cool and all, but this is really something else entirely.



## Pyre

Following up Bastion and Transistor with a sort of post-apocalyptic sports game might not seem the next logical step, but you can rely on developer Supergiant to not care for tradition or where one genre gives way to another. Pyre has you control a three-person team trying to shoot an orb into the opposing team's pyre. The individual character holding the orb is vulnerable while not in possession they can attack the opposition. It's fast but tactical, relying upon considered use of each character's unique abilities. But it's only one part of the whole game. Elsewhere this is a narrative-heavy RPG where you travel across the wastelands, managing resources, talking to people, levelling up your stats. Supergiant wanted an RPG where you could lose the combat and carry on, so they made combat into a sport. They've just announced a 1-on-1 mode, too.

DEVELOPER	Supergiant Games
PLATFORM	PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE	2017



Let's hope there's a commentator in the style of Bastion's narrator





# Dungeon League

Dungeon League is the Mario Party of dungeon crawlers. Up to four players compete in short rounds that see them dropped into a randomly generated dungeon and assigned a randomly generated quest to complete. Like Crawl, this Early Access game has seen frequent updates and should be ready for full release this year.

DEVELOPER	Achebit
PLATFORM	PC
RELEASE DATE	2017

# Crawl

Riffing on Dungeon Keeper, Crawl is a hack and slash action-RPG where one player is the adventurer and up to three other players are the monsters. When one of the latter manages to land the killing blow on the adventurer, they swap. Crawl's been in Early Access for a couple of years now and is edging closer to a full release.

DEVELOPER	Powerhoof
PLATFORM	PC
RELEASE DATE	2017



# Don't Starve Mega Pack

Don't Starve is one of the better and most feature complete survival RPG sandboxes in recent years, thanks in part to its unique art style and Klei's deft design. This so-called mega pack bundles together the base game and its expansions and sticks them all on a disc that you can insert into your home console. Crazy.

DEVELOPER	Klei
PLATFORM	PS4, XB1
RELEASE DATE	June



# Divinity: Original Sin 2

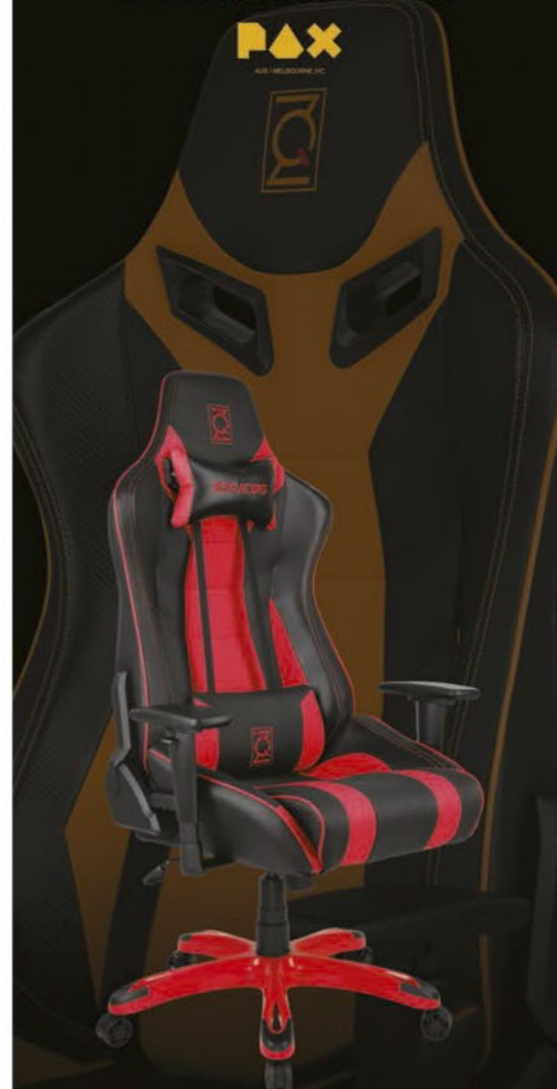
Okay, you've caught us cheating again. But we needed one more RPG to round out this page and we really, really like the Divinity series, especially Original Sin. What we're banking on is Larian adding co-op support to this sequel just as they did for the, uh, original when they ported it from PC to console. They've not ruled it out yet and so neither will we. ☞

DEVELOPER	Larian
PLATFORM	PC
RELEASE DATE	2018



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# MARIO KART DELUXE

## ZOOMS ONTO NINTENDO SWITCH



**M**ario Kart 8 Deluxe takes the Wii U's best-selling game and brings it to Nintendo Switch, with a host of improvements and new additions to entice long-time fans and newcomers alike! The best Mario Kart game ever made is now even better, and you can take it with you anywhere you go. This isn't just the best version of Mario Kart 8 - it's the definitive Mario Kart experience.

### THE BIGGEST MARIO KART EVER

Mario Kart 8 Deluxe includes all the previously released DLC, including 16 extra tracks. That's 48 in total, the most tracks ever in a Mario Kart game, and they're all unlocked from the start. There are 42 characters to choose from, including the newly added Inklings from Splatoon 2. King Boo, Dry Bones, and Bowser Jr. round out the roster, and there are more vehicle customisation options than ever before! 200CC mode makes a return as well, offering an intense challenge for Mario Kart experts - and now if you manage to beat all the cups you'll unlock Gold Mario to race with.



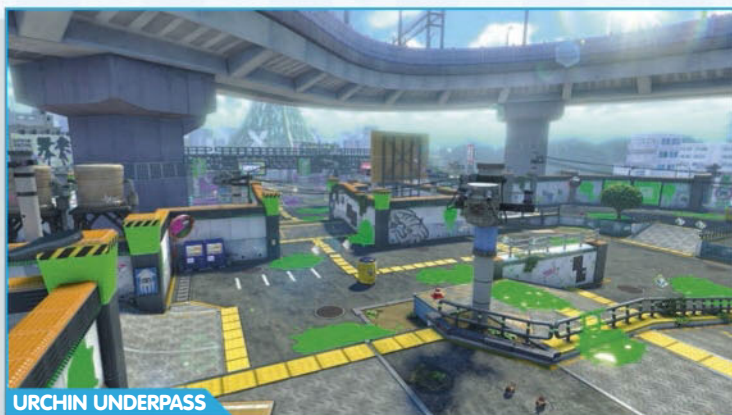
BATTLE STADIUM



LUIGI'S MANSION



BATTLE COURSE 1



URCHIN UNDERPASS



**NEW AND IMPROVED BATTLE MODE**

Battle Mode is back, with eight new courses and five modes to compete across in local and online races! This is the Battle Mode fans know and love, where you take each other on in wide open arenas. There are three classic arenas - Mario Kart 7's Wuhu Town, Luigi's Mansion from Double Dash, and the SNES classic Battle Course 1 - along with five brand new arenas, including Splatoon's Urchin Underpass! The feather, a classic Battle Mode weapon, has also returned, letting you hop right over your opponents to gain the upper hand - or one of their balloons.

The five modes included are:

- **Balloon Battle**, where you compete to try and burst your opponent's balloons until you're the last kart standing.
- **Bob-omb Blast**, which lets you fight it out using only Bob-ombs.
- **Shine Thief**, where one player holds the Shine and everyone else tries to take it from them.
- **Coin Runners**, in which you all compete to hold the most coins by the end of the match.
- **Renegade Roundup**, a never-before seen mode where one team tries to snatch up the other team using Piranha Plants.



**MORE CONTROL OPTIONS**

You can play Mario Kart 8 Deluxe in multiplayer straight out of the box with the Nintendo Switch's two included Joy-Con controllers, which is perfect if you want to settle those rivalries straight away! The game is also compatible with the Pro Controller and the Joy-Con grip, along with the Joy-Con Wheel Pair (sold separately), which make motion controls more intuitive than ever before.



**NEW FEATURES**

Mario Kart 8 adds anti-gravity racing to the series, meaning that courses can twist around in ways you might not expect. You can put yourself into the game with a Mii, and if you scan compatible amiibo with the game you can unlock special outfits for them! Mario Kart TV is back too, letting you record and upload your best moments.

If this is your first time with Mario Kart, the new Smart Steering feature will keep you from falling off the track. This is a great way to get new players into the game, or you can use it to learn all the trickier shortcuts! You can carry two weapons at once now, and the Boo power-up, which turns you invisible and lets you nab someone else's weapon for yourself, has returned.



**PLAY IT ANYWHERE**

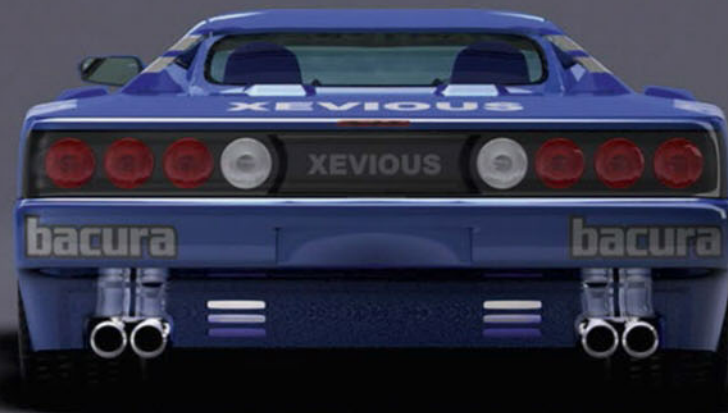
Mario Kart 8 Deluxe will let you settle your rivalries on the track anywhere, anytime! Up to four players can play together on a single Switch unit with split-screen in both TV and tabletop mode, and by using multiple consoles and Wireless Play, up to eight players can take part together in the same room! There's even support for

twelve player LANs, with one or two players connected per screen. Online play is back, letting two local racers face off in 12-player races against competitors across the globe. Even if you just want to try and beat your lap times on the bus, the Nintendo Switch's portable mode lets you play wherever you want to!

**MARIO KART 8 DELUXE IS AVAILABLE NOW EXCLUSIVELY ON NINTENDO SWITCH.**







## HYPER MULTIPLAYER MEMORIES

# Ridge Racer V

DEVELOPER	Namco
RELEASE DATE	2000

Say what you like, but when it comes to arcade racing games, nothing beats the feeling of a perfectly executed power-slide. That's the truth, and if you can't trust the opinion of a 40-year-old guy who has never had a license or driven a car, who can you trust? When Cam Shea took over from Elliot Fish as editor of Hyper, and I stepped in to be his deputy, we both accepted this universal truth of racing games. Power-sliding was all, so we spent a lot of time - arguably way too much, and we were rivals in the realm of the power-slide. Our battleground was Ridge Racer V (and later 6). It was an uneven field to begin with, as Cam had more experience with console controllers, whereas I was from a PC background.

In the beginning Cam was the clear leader in nearly every race but quickly things became much more balanced to the point of races usually just coming down to how fast we managed to get off the starting line. A win would have milliseconds in it. We'd always choose the same car so neither one of us could blame a defeat on our choice of machine. It all came down to skill. Well, skill and the inordinate amount of time we skived off work to challenge each other to race.

Soon the win/loss ratio was so close that we

started making special rules up to add some sort of skill challenge to our races. We had to take every corner as a power-slide. We had to string a certain number of power-slides together. We had to cross the finish line backwards by power-sliding into a bootlegger reverse. When that became too easy, we had to perform a full 360 spin through the finish line. After not too long the only real fun with we were having with the game were with the stupid rules we made up for ourselves.

Why we spent so much time playing a game we got bored with remains something of a mystery. There were other, better ways to waste time, with numerous other multiplayer games literally being within reach, but Ridge Racer V was our chosen battleground. It could have been the fact that the both of us were equally skilled that gave the game its staying power. Maybe that made the game the ultimate level playing field for us to battle for some kind of dominance on. Maybe it was the sense of familiarity. The fact that we played a fair bit of Ridge Racer 6 when it came out points to this end. Ultimately though, I think there was another reason we stuck with Ridge Racer V for so long. We were just too lazy to try to master anything else. **Daniel Wilks** 🗨



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**THE ENDURING LIFE OF  
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If you followed Nintendo-centric magazines circa the Nintendo 64 era (Next's own N64 Gamer and Future's N64 Magazine being the standouts), you'll know that a lot of the console's fun vibe spilled into how it was written about. One standout in my head was an N64 Gamer photo guide to hosting the perfect multiplayer gaming night, which ended in the crew supposedly hiring the guy who delivered their pizza that night after getting him fired for staying at the party.

**FEATURE**

# Nintendo All-Nighter At James O'Connor's Place

## Nintendo's rise and fall in the living room

I spent my 1999 school holidays trying to pull all-nighters with friends. It was very important to us ('us' being the rotating group of me and Matt and Sam and Dan and the other Matt) that we play Mario Party, San Francisco Rush, and Goldeneye for as long as possible. Our goal was always to forego sleep entirely, and damn the consequences. We never quite made it - typically we'd be protesting that we weren't tired at 3, and asleep by 3:30 - but the ambition to play multiplayer games for as long as we could manage was pure.

Years later, when online services had expanded to the point where even Nintendo, somewhat begrudgingly, had to start offering them, the company was still focusing a lot of its energy on the lounge room and other shared gaming spaces. Now, with the Switch upon us, we're being encouraged to take our consoles with us into other people's homes. Nintendo has always wanted to bring people together and make them play their games together, although whether they've succeeded or not has shifted on a console by console basis.









## Nintendo Entertainment System

The recently released NES Mini comes with thirty games. Of those thirty, ten feature simultaneous two-player modes, while six feature alternating multiplayer. These are the cream of the console's crop, but only a handful of them are really better with two players. The NES isn't typically thought of as a party console, and had less of a multiplayer focus than the consoles that followed. Many of the games that allowed for multiplayer did not let players play simultaneously - in Super Mario Bros 1 and 3, for instance, competing was simply a case of taking turns, with progress for each player being tracked.

While games on the NES may not have often offered multiplayer options, but they still often encouraged players to come together. Try beating The Legend of Zelda or Metroid without the Internet, and without talking to anyone about what to do or where to go - it's very difficult. At the same time, Nintendo was fostering an image as a family-friendly company, an image that would stick with them for years to come. Back then, it was extremely uncommon for kids - the NES' target audience - to have their own televisions separate from the family unit, so the system needed to appeal, on some level, to all ages. This would turn into a guiding philosophy for Nintendo.



### TOP 5 MULTIPLAYER GAMES

- Battletoads
- Bubble Bobble
- Contra
- Chip 'n Dale: Rescue Rangers
- Tecmo Bowl



## Super Nintendo

Street Fighter II is an important game, pioneering a style of fighter that still endures today. The SNES would eventually host four iterations of Street Fighter II, generally released at a premium price. The Switch is getting its own, original version of the game this year, such is the game's endurance.

While the NES hosted many arcade ports, it was the SNES that best showcased how consoles could capture at least part of the experience of heading down to Time Zone with a friend and a pocket full of shiny dollar coins (even if no console would host a perfect port of Daytona USA until the Dreamcast years later). Street Fighter would eventually drift away from Nintendo consoles - in the next console cycle, the PlayStation controller and the system's audience were a much better fit for fighting games - but the system's ability to bring (at the time) relatively complex arcade games into the home was a big plus. Of course Nintendo was infamous for toning down the content in their games back then, which meant that several arcade ports had content changed or removed. Their game content guidelines at the time stated that no games that "depict random, gratuitous, and/or excessive violence", nor "depict graphic illustration of death", would be allowed. Consequently, the SNES Mortal Kombat experience wasn't ideal.

Nintendo themselves weren't responsible for most of the SNES' best multiplayer games, though (the main exception being Super Mario Kart). Aside from a handful of sport, racing, and puzzle games, Nintendo largely focused on the big-ticket single-player experiences - still a big focus today, of course, but they've expanded their repertoire and their ambitions somewhat along the way. It wasn't until the N64 that Nintendo would really get a reputation for their devotion to same-room multiplayer.



### TOP 5 MULTIPLAYER GAMES

- Micro Machines
- Street Fighter II Turbo
- Secret of Mana
- Super Bomberman 2
- NBA Jam Tournament Edition







### LONGEST POWERSLIDE EVER

In 2014, four teenagers in the town of Warrnambool, Victoria, set a world record for the longest Mario Kart session. For 35 hours and 46 minutes they played through the N64, Wii and Wii U editions of Nintendo's kart racer, raising \$400 for charity Peter's Project in the process. I still think I could take 'em, though.



### THE DREADED MARIO PARTY PALM

The very first Mario Party for the N64 was a gem of a game, except for the mini-games within it that focused on spinning the stick as fast as possible. The best way to do it was to use your palm, which resulted in so many injuries that Nintendo was forced by the court to offer players a protective glove. Seriously, ripping your hand open on an N64 controller really burns.

## Nintendo 64

If you were an Aussie kid in the '90s, there's a good chance you remember A\*mazing, a game show for children that aired on Channel 7 five nights a week. The second-to-last round, which determined the team that got to enter the eponymous maze, featured a videogame showdown between the two competing schools. The players would face off across various games and consoles donated by Nintendo. If you stuck around for long enough, you saw the show progress from NES games in the early years, to a SNES, and finally an N64. It was smart marketing on Nintendo Australia's part: at the time, kids were very much Nintendo's target audience, and the show made competing in these games look exciting.

The Nintendo 64 was the family-friendly party console. Even its more violent games – most notably Rare's shooters – were fairly light on graphic content and adult situations, and most of the system's more popular 'adult' games seemed to come from a single publisher, Acclaim. You could have a perfectly good time with the N64 if you stuck to the games with cute mascots.

The PlayStation may have beaten it in sales, but it was the Nintendo kids who were getting together for gaming focused sleep-overs. The four controller ports helped – four-player gaming required an additional device on the PlayStation, so few games on the system supported more than two. Nintendo themselves published 37 multiplayer games in the west, along with their third-party titles. For many, this is still looked back at as the golden age. Goldeneye and Perfect Dark are remembered with exceptional fondness (even if neither has aged as well as you might like) as are the likes of Mario Kart 64, Diddy Kong Racing, and the Mario Party series (despite the game's proclivity for injuring players – see boxout).

The N64 was also, of course, the machine where Nintendo's sales and popularity dipped dramatically. The machine garnered a reputation as a machine for kids, which was far more damaging a reputation than it had been previously. If you wanted serious multiplayer, well, online play was starting to take off on PC. Why gather your friends together, some asked, when you can play Quake II against anyone in the world online? This sentiment would spread over the next several console generations, as online play became an exciting prospect, and eventually an essential function.

For many, the enduring legacy of the N64 were the real technical marvels, the Super Mario 64s and the Ocarina of Times and what-have-you, the single-player experiences that showed off the machine's abilities. But to really understand what the N64 achieved, bring up Goldeneye or Mario Kart 64 in any crowd of people aged between 23 and 35 and watch how many eyes light up.

### TOP 5 MULTIPLAYER GAMES

- Mario Party 2
- Goldeneye 007
- Perfect Dark
- Super Smash Bros
- Mario Golf 64





## Gamecube

There's a handle on the back of the GameCube. While the official line was that it was there to make the console easier to carry, it was perhaps, ultimately, more of a symbolic addition – no one was carrying the system around like a briefcase, but Nintendo wanted people to take the GameCube with them when they went out. They wanted the system's owners to evangelise the machine, to bring it to their friends' places for multiplayer good-times, perhaps because they knew it wasn't necessarily going to get into every home through high sales. The fact that the PS2 outsold the GameCube at a rate of 7 to 1 meant that most gamer homes were already equipped with Sony's console, despite it, yet again, only having two controller ports.

One of Nintendo's more confusing ideas from this period was their focus on multiplayer gaming that was enhanced by the Game Boy Advance, attached to the console with a link cable. A handful of games, including *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles*, *Zelda: Four Swords Adventures*, and *Pac-Man VS* (which headlined a particularly disastrous Nintendo E3 presentation in 2003) encouraged players to gather up three friends, each armed with Game Boys and link cables, and play these games together.

Of course, years later the Wii U would better illustrate some of what Nintendo had been trying to do here all along, but the idea of each player having their own secret screen never really gained traction. Nintendo was going for something very different from the competition – while Xbox gamers were playing *Halo 2* online, GameCube users who wanted to take advantage of *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicle's* much-touted four player mode not only had to get in a room together, but they needed to own all the appropriate kit and actively plan the session in advance. It's not a surprise that it didn't take off.

On the other hand, *Super Smash Bros Melee* was so incredibly popular that people are still playing it regularly in tournaments today, so that's a win.

### TOP 5 MULTIPLAYER GAMES

*Super Smash Bros Melee*  
*Super Monkey Ball*  
*Timesplitters 2*  
*The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures*  
*F-Zero GX*



## Wii

In March 2007, four months after the system's launch, a nursing home in Chicago hosted a *Wii Sports* bowling tournament for its residents. In Greenacre, New South Wales, reports emerged of a *Wii* becoming the preferred method of exercise and entertainment for several residents. Throughout the system's life, the *Wii* was being actively recommended as a fun, competitive form of physiotherapy in retirement villages. This has been the *Wii's* rose-tinted legacy – it was a machine that invited everyone to give it a shot, and which promoted activity among friends. The *Wii* was, for that first year at least, the king of any communal room it sat in. *Wii Sports* was one of the most important launch games of all time – not only was it a system seller, but it was the one piece of software *Wii* owners needed to show what their machine could do.

A lot of the discussion around motion controls has focused on the space of our living rooms, and what they can and can't accommodate. The *Wii* was designed as a console that was best taken out of the bedroom and set up in a place where everyone could see and play with it and move around, but it didn't require you to move objects around or reposition your furniture in quite the same way the *Xbox Kinect* did (although it would have been nice if the sensor bar had slightly better range). It prioritised accessibility: when someone saw how the *Wii* was used, they could pick up a remote and start playing immediately.

The fact that the technology wasn't all there just yet at launch was largely irrelevant. Even the general fatigue everyone felt for motion controls within a few years (including Nintendo, seemingly, as many of their later games on the system were more traditional experiences) can't tarnish the *Wii's* success at bringing multiplayer gaming to a much wider audience.

### TOP 5 MULTIPLAYER GAMES

*Wii Sports*  
*New Super Mario Bros. Wii*  
*NBA Jam*  
*Wii Party*  
*Boom Blox*





## Wii U

The stated intent of the Wii U related directly to the lounge room. When the console was first unveiled, it was discussed as a machine that was being built with the modern family living situation in mind. It was a console for the kids who didn't want to stop playing Mario while their parents watched the news, Nintendo said. Now that everyone was looking at smaller screens in their hands at all times, they figured, a system that let you take the action off the TV should appeal pretty widely.

Nintendo was wrong. They ceased production of the console at the end of 2016, having sold 13.5 million units. The Wii U was Nintendo's worst-selling console of all time, and had the lowest sales of any home console since the Dreamcast. As it turns out, no one was that fussed about playing their games on the Gamepad's crappy screen within a short range of the TV while their family, partner, or housemate was trying to watch Neighbours.

The irony of Nintendo's misunderstanding of living room dynamics was that, during the Wii U's life, couch multiplayer actually did make a bit of a comeback through the indie development scene... but not necessarily on the console itself. On the other hand, Nintendo themselves seemed to embrace multiplayer game development more aggressively with the Wii U. Online services were improved, Super Mario 3D World added a great multiplayer mode to the series (Super Mario 64 DS technically pipped it to the post, but with lesser results), and franchises like Mario Kart and Smash Bros thrived. Many of Nintendo's best single-player franchises were put aside for a moment - even the only Wii U timed-exclusive Zelda game, Hyrule Warriors, was a multiplayer spin-off.

The actual best multiplayer game on the Wii U - Splatoon - is absent from the 'top multiplayer' list below. The Wii U is the console where Nintendo finally properly embraced the benefits of online multiplayer, and Splatoon, for its numerous charms, had a pretty weak couch multiplayer experience. It was a big step forward for Nintendo - perhaps, one hopes, Nintendo will finally provide amply for same-room and online multiplayer with the Switch.

### TOP 5 MULTIPLAYER GAMES

*Nintendo Land*  
*Pikmin 3*  
*Super Smash Bros for Wii U*  
*Super Mario 3D World*  
*Mario Kart 8*



### HOLDING HANDS

Nintendo's handhelds have taken a different route from their home consoles in regard to multiplayer, but the Pokémon games definitely stick out as vital multiplayer experiences. The DS, meanwhile, was the first Nintendo system to offer online play, with Mario Kart DS (which promptly revealed how terribly unbalanced the game was).

## Switch

The advertising in the lead up to the Switch's release focused heavily on the idea of gaming together in the same space. Your friends invite you to a rooftop party? Take the Switch with you, Antisocial Karen, and show it off to everyone. Heading out to shoot hoops with some friends? Shoot virtual hoops afterwards, which maybe you secretly wanted to do the whole time anyway. The Switch wants to provide a living room gaming experience that you can take with you anywhere.

Even with the console now in our hands, it's hard to say whether or not the Switch is a perfect realisation of Nintendo's grand plans to bring people together or not, but the signs are there that it has a shot. The machine launched with five titles that work best as shared experiences: 1-2 Switch, Snipperclips, Super Bomberman R, Just Dance 2017, and Skylanders Imaginators - of which only Bomberman (which supports up to 8 players on one console) is playable online. Throw in Fast RMX, and the post-launch releases of Mario Kart 8 Deluxe, Puyo Puyo Tetris, and a huge selection of indie games, and you've got a console that seems to be fully embracing the spirit of same-room multiplayer even as it goes portable.

The Switch is the first Nintendo console - indeed, the only major console in memory - to launch with two controllers by default. The Joy Cons can be used together for complex games, or can be split apart and used as separate controllers for various titles, complete with extra shoulder buttons that slot into place on their sides. These tiny controllers are much more comfortable than we had anticipated - not quite a replacement for the Pro Controller, but more than fine for a quick round of Bomberman.

The Switch's narrative isn't yet written, but what's clear is that it represents the continuation of a long-term goal to get people playing together, in-person. Nintendo may release the most advanced consoles, or offer the most generous libraries, but the company never seems to lose track of how much fun it is to stay up as late as you can, with your friends, playing games. 🗨

### FIRST YEAR MULTIPLAYER HIGHLIGHTS

*1-2 Switch*  
*Splatoon 2*  
*Arms*  
*Mario Kart 8 Deluxe*  
*Super Bomberman R*







## HYPER MULTIPLAYER MEMORIES

# Capcom vs. SNK 2

DEVELOPER	Capcom Production Studio 1
RELEASE DATE	2001

Back when Next Media was located in Redfern, PC PowerPlay and Hyper occupied cubicles at the opposite ends of a wall. Next to Hyper, Nintendo Gamer plied its wares, and between Nintendo Gamer and PCPP was an empty cubicle. This was set up as a games area, technically for the console mags (We also had a Playstation magazine and Total Gamer, what was ostensibly a kids gaming mag but was in reality a wonderfully subversive comedy mag put together by Dan Staines), but in actuality for the teams on each mag to take out their frustrations on their counterparts in fighting games. We played some Streeties in the games area, and some Tekken, Mortal Kombat and some Bloody Roar: Primal Fury, but the game we seemed to come back to most of all was Capcom vs. SNK 2.

It was never the best fighting game – many of the characters were terribly implemented, and the balance was all but non-existent, with some characters like Rugal, Shin Akuma and Evil Ryu capable of dealing massive, all but unavoidable damage very easily, while others, like Maki, Rolento and Dan Hibiki being weak to the point of near uselessness. Remember these characters, as they played a major role in our Capcom vs. SNK 2 battles.

One of our co-workers, the deputy editor of PCPP at the time earned the nickname of “Hockey Temper” due to his anger issues. He

would get angry at the strangest things for the strangest reasons, and sometimes it appeared that he would deliberately put himself in positions that would exacerbate his anger. Case in point, while the rest of us played our favourite Street Fighter or SNK characters, old Hockey Temper decided that he would master arguably the worst character in the game, Rolento. Sure he looked great, but Rolento was terrible, with attacks that locked the character into long animations easy to punish. Every time we played we’d beat him, sometimes mercilessly. It became a point of pride to beat anyone (especially Hockey T) with Dan Hibiki, the deliberately bad Ken/Ryu fanboy with hamstrung versions of their special moves.

At least once a day, someone would trounce Hockey T and Rolento, even after the hours he put in learning the moves and timing. We’d play, someone would beat him, Hockey T would get mad about something (especially if we were super cheap and used God Rugal against him), and someone else in the office would complain that we were making too much noise and force us to stop playing. We continued every day in this fashion, wasting our time, fighting with each other, mastering the art of trolling people with our Dan Hibiki skills and pissing off Hockey T until management had enough of our shenanigans and took our couch away. Good times. **Daniel Wilks** 🗡️



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FEATURE

# Social Hardware

From the arcade to the lounge room, **Chris Button** looks at the hardware that made playing video games with friends a household way of life.







#### LASER SQUAD

Boz has quite the unusual classic gaming console as a feature of his lounge room – the Pioneer CLD-A100 LaserActive. The LaserActive is first and foremost a LaserDisc player, but expansion packs add TurboGrafx, Sega Mega Drive and Genesis functionality. Unsurprisingly, Boz says it is quite the conversation starter!

In a bygone era, gamers looking to get their fix would have to visit their local arcade, pockets sagging with loose change, to patiently wait their turn to play the latest games. Although the nostalgic novelty of playing on an arcade cabinet remains for many, the revolution of home video game consoles forever changed the interactive media landscape. Despite recent technology advancements focusing on online interaction, multiplayer on the couch with good company is still one of the purest gaming experiences available.

#### IN THE BEGINNING

Although many people point to Atari as pioneering the first home gaming experience with Pong, technology commentator Tom Chatfield writes this is not the case in his 2010 book *Fun Inc. Why Gaming Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century*:

*Pong was neither the first commercial video game nor even an original idea. In fact it was based on an almost identical game that had appeared earlier that year on the world's first gaming machine, the Magnavox Odyssey.*

Released in 1972, the Odyssey featured a minimalistic controller with three dials as the only form of input. Its inventor, Ralph Baer, recognised television could become interactive when paired with the right hardware. Primitive by today's standards, the console was only capable of displaying basic white shapes on a black display. To compensate for this, the Odyssey was shipped with accessories such as paper money and playing cards, in addition to translucent television overlays to simulate different in-game locations. It was the Odyssey's table tennis game

that paved the way for many imitations to follow, arguably the most popular coming from then little-known Atari company.

Led by co-founders Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney, Atari's domination of the arcade market with Pong translated to success with their first home console, the Atari VCS (Video Console System), known today as the Atari 2600. Alex Boz, co-founder and editor-in-chief of retro gaming website *aurretrogamer*, says the 2600 was the first console to truly capture the public's imagination of what home-based gaming could do.

"The console had interchangeable cartridges that ensured there was an abundance of games available to suit all kinds of gaming tastes," Boz said. "Atari also realised that people wanted to play their favourite arcade games at home, so they ensured that their coin-op (arcade) games were converted for the 2600."

The pioneering nature of Atari's first foray into the lounge room is echoed by Perth-based Jessie Yeoh, the self-proclaimed "Ninja Boss" of The Nostalgia Box, Australia's first interactive video games museum.

"There are a few reasons why the Atari 2600 was so popular," Yeoh said. "It was affordable, and most importantly it had some really good titles – both original and from the arcade – such as *Space Invaders*, *Pitfall*, *Asteroids* and many more."

Despite selling over 30 million consoles, the 2600 could not prevent the well-documented video game market crash of the early 1980s, where sales of video games plummeted drastically. It wasn't until the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) that people started buying video games en masse again.







### THE BEST CONTROLLER

The never-ending debate: Boz says DualShock, "These controllers immediately feel familiar, comfortable and easy to use, even if you haven't picked one up in years!" Alternatively, Yeoh is team Xbox, "The controller is very well designed, comfortable to use for long periods, sturdy, and has a great feel to it."



The NES introduced many popular Nintendo franchises to gamers' lounge rooms, such as Super Mario Bros., Metroid, and The Legend of Zelda. These series became staples of gaming culture, spawning many fond lounge room memories for gamers Yeoh.

"I remember fighting with my brothers over the controllers, and being tricked to believe I was playing when they gave me an unconnected one to press on," Yeoh said. "Sneaky, but a good idea now that I think about it."

The old disconnected controller trick aside, the NES is still one of the most popular consoles of all time. Nintendo's drip-feed of stock for the NES Classic Mini since November last year sent the gaming public into feverish delirium, clamouring over it as if it were the last portion of rations in a post-apocalyptic wasteland. A range of high quality games across different genres helped to establish the original console's strong legacy. Although only two controllers could be plugged in at once, many of the NES' games were well-suited to hot-seat play, where players would take turns trying to beat their friends' high scores. This was a streamlined process due to the controller's simplicity, allowing anyone to pick them up off the couch and play. Boz recognises the NES' controller design relevancy to this day.

"Gunpei Yokoi's D-pad innovation cannot be understated," Boz said. "It revolutionised how games would be controlled (without the use of a joystick) and pretty much set the standard of control pads which we still see and use till this day."

The simplicity and competitive nature of these consoles' games revolutionised the lounge room from being a place of passive entertainment, to one of active, engaging play.

### SLAPPERS ONLY, NO JAWS, NO ODDJOB

The Nintendo 64 (N64) is regarded as one of the best lounge room consoles of all time, thanks to its extensive library of multiplayer games which can be played in four-player split screen. Its main rival, Sony's PlayStation, only had two controller ports, but four-player multiplayer was possible by purchasing a peripheral known as the Multitap - two of these devices could be stacked to allow up to eight players, albeit for a limited amount of games. However, these two consoles, like many technological success stories before them, merely honed in on an idea that hadn't caught on yet. Boz refers to the 1977 Bally Astrocade (formerly known as the Bally Professional Arcade) console as the first home console to feature four controller ports.

"The Astrocade pre-dates the N64 by 20 years," Boz said. "Bally was definitely ahead of their time."

For one man, a lifetime of Nintendo expertise began with owning his first-ever console: the N64. Daniel Vuckovic of Australian Nintendo community website Vooks believes the Nintendo 64 was the defining '90s gaming experience for the lounge room, with plenty of four-player split-screen games to cater to all tastes.

"It didn't matter that you could see the other person's screen, but if you looked you were a hack who probably got punched in the ribs," Vuckovic said. "There were no servers, no lobbies, waiting for matchmaking or lag. It was pure, like you were connected right to the console and your friends."

The N64, with its quirky three-handed controller introducing an analog stick, brought a multitude of gaming experiences to the lounge room. Many of Mario's escapades were high quality multiplayer experiences, such as Mario Kart 64, three iterations of Mario Party, in addition to the Mario Tennis and Mario Golf titles. In among the treasure trove of N64 games was one that is still a heavily ingrained part of gaming culture. Goldeneye 007, from legendary development team Rare, is regarded as one of the greatest multiplayer shooters of all time. Its highly-customisable





game modes were a part of its resounding success, such as the "Golden Gun" or "Slappers Only!" melee mode; gamers would invite friends over specifically to play the game, decking the lounge room out in sleeping bags and pillow forts, with half-empty confectionary bags strewn across the floor come the next day.

The N64 and PlayStation consoles ushered in gaming experiences that couldn't be replicated on an arcade machine - these games were meant to be played on the couch at home, doing everything within your power to conquer the people sitting next to you. There's a different sensation in receiving the instantaneous feedback of winning a photo-finish race in Gran Turismo against your friend who has kicked your arse five times prior than seeing your initials displayed on a list likely to be wiped overnight by the arcade manager.

Surely, this was the peak of the lounge room gaming experience - a statement quickly rendered obsolete by the dawn of consoles capable of being the all-in-one media solution.

#### PLAYING AND WATCHING, GAMES ARE FOR EVERYONE

The legacy of the PlayStation 2 (PS2) stretches far beyond being the highest selling home console of all time - it also brought consoles and home media together. All-in-one console solutions had been trialled in the past with limited success, such as the Pioneer CLD-A100 LaserActive, which could play LaserDiscs and games. It wasn't until the PS2's DVD capabilities that consumers realised they could save

money and space in the lounge room by getting a console that could play games, and the latest in home media. The PS3 went one step further, becoming what was at the time one of the cheapest and most reliable Blu-Ray players on the market. Now with the Xbox One and PS4, the concept of video game consoles bringing an all-in-one media solution to the lounge room is a standard feature. Video game consoles are not exclusively for gaming, nor have they been for a while, thanks to the various streaming and entertainment services available.

However, the unassuming Nintendo Wii arguably had a more significant cultural impact than the PS2, despite selling fewer units.

"If the Nintendo 64 defined the '90s of lounge room gaming, then the Wii was the second renaissance," Vuckovic said. "It got people playing in front of the TV again but in a whole new way; it inspired copycats again with the (PlayStation) Move and the (Xbox) Kinect and got people playing games who would never have thought of playing them in the first place."

Chatfield writes that the use of motion controls was what propelled the Wii to become the lounge room disruptor in a market filled with high-end graphics and hardware:

*Ending once and for all the increasingly ruinous race for more potent technology, the Wii was a less expensive, less powerful alternative to the other machines on the market. But it had one great innovation - motion-sensitive controllers - coupled to a*



*philosophy that chimed exactly with the sentiments of a new generation of gamers: that modern games could be not only a mainstream activity, but also something family-friendly, physically active, sociable and, above all, fun.*

Although Vuckovic is painfully aware there were many poorly made games for the Wii, he notes the games that properly used the Wii remote - affectionately known as the "Wiimote" - were great, accessible experiences.

"There's a reason Nintendo didn't get rid of it (the Wiimote) with the Wii U - it couldn't be topped," Vuckovic said. "It can be a motion controller, plugged into a traditional controller, used like a wheel or played with the nunchucks (peripheral). They've been around 11 years, through two consoles."

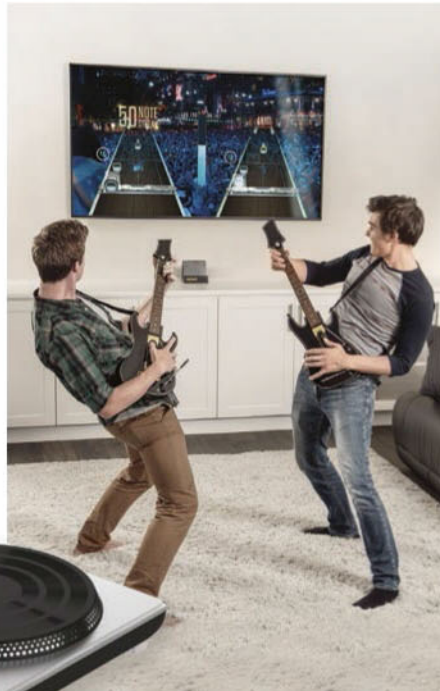
Infiltrating lounge rooms worldwide, the Wii appealed to a diverse audience. The simple

#### AT LEAST THEY TRIED

Although well-intentioned, some hardware did not fit the lounge room as expected. The Kinect wasn't the Minority Report tool it was made out to be, and its TV advertisement starring Aaron Paul unintentionally triggered many Xbox Ones' voice-activated power-on feature. The less said about Nintendo's Power Glove and Virtual Boy, the better.







qualifier for playing a Wii was dependent on one thing – if you knew how to operate a TV remote, you knew how to use Wii remote. The wireless nature of the controller eliminated the classic indecipherable mess of cords, and no more sitting within three metres of the screen.

The Wii made physical movement fun in the lounge room, especially if it involved dancing or miming an instrument – but the likes of Wii Music was no match for the spate of other rhythm games on the market.

#### HEY NOW, YOU'RE A ROCK STAR, GET YOUR GAME ON

Introduced by the pop sounds of Jamelia's Superstar, Sony's SingStar on the PS2 gave millions of karaoke enthusiasts worldwide delusions of singing grandeur. What the popular mid-2000s franchise did differently than the old jukebox karaoke machine was provide a competitive edge to something everyone can do – or at least think they can do. Gamifying singing to the point of quantifying who has the better vocal talent allowed for a high level of replayability and bragging rights over that one smug friend of yours. Thanks to a couple of supplied microphones plugged in via a USB adaptor, combined with the EyeToy camera, the lounge room became the stage for many impassioned duets and battle royales. A party was a guaranteed success if there was a version of SingStar fired up on a PS2.

To take it one step further, publisher RedOctane – and later Activision – ensured the wannabe rock gods of the world wouldn't go without. Guitar Hero blasted onto the scene in 2005 and was a lounge room party mainstay for much of the late 2000s. Bundled with a guitar controller, often based on popular Gibson

models, Guitar Hero had players shredding and hammering-on to their favourite rock songs. Later iterations introduced drum-kit and microphone peripherals to replicate a full band in the lounge room. Yeoh said the social aspects of rhythm games like SingStar and Guitar Hero were the transformative catalyst for changing what sort of games were played at home, and the types of people playing them.

"Guitar Hero took the gaming world by storm and spawned a billion-dollar franchise," Yeoh said. "Its intuitive controls meant anyone could play. It encouraged social gaming like never before, and it was able to expand video games beyond its traditional audience in exactly the same way that Wii Sports had."

Vuckovic furthered the sentiment and referred to the Sony quiz game series Buzz!, which used buzzer peripherals akin to what television game-shows use, saying that everyone can join in on the fun.

"Everyone rocks out to music, everyone taps their fingers to a beat so why not take it to the next level?" Vuckovic said. "With Buzz! everyone thinks they're the smartest, with SingStar most people can't sing but they still do – putting aside that shame and doing it in front of your mates though, stepping up to the stage, that's what it's all about."

#### NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

With the ease of connecting devices to modern displays, the humble home computer is also right at home in the lounge room. The PC has long offered features that are only recently coming to consoles, as Boz points out.

"The PC is no longer shackled to the corner desk in the study," Boz said. "PCs are true multimedia beasts these days – they are a one stop shop for people to stream their favourite TV shows and movies,

interact with others around the world via social media, and very importantly, to play video games."

Yeoh adds that "the amount of content available on PC is unparalleled", which makes computers a perfectly valid option for sharing various forms of entertainment in the lounge room.

In addition to the increasing capabilities of PCs, local multiplayer on consoles looks to continue strongly, with the Nintendo Switch potentially taking traditional lounge room multiplayer experiences out of the home, thanks to its portable screen and JoyCon controllers.

New technologies are also introducing new ways to use the lounge room space; virtual reality (VR) is starting to take off, with Oculus, HTC, and the consumer-friendly price tag of PlayStation's offering give a taste of what's to come. Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes is a great example of how VR can change up the old convention of lounge room gaming – transporting one player into another room, while still able to interact with their fellow players. Throw Microsoft's augmented-reality HoloLens into the mix, and it seems it is only a matter of time until we reach the level of technological immersion seen only in science-fiction, such as Ernest Cline's Ready Player One.

Perhaps the lounge room we know will cease to exist, and our interactions with one another for work and play will exist purely in a digital environment – a boundless lounge room, so to speak. Regardless, despite future technological advancements, nothing will ever top sitting on the couch, good friends in tow, playing a fun multiplayer game on the same screen. ☞







**LOCAL MULTIPLAYER IS NOT DEAD**

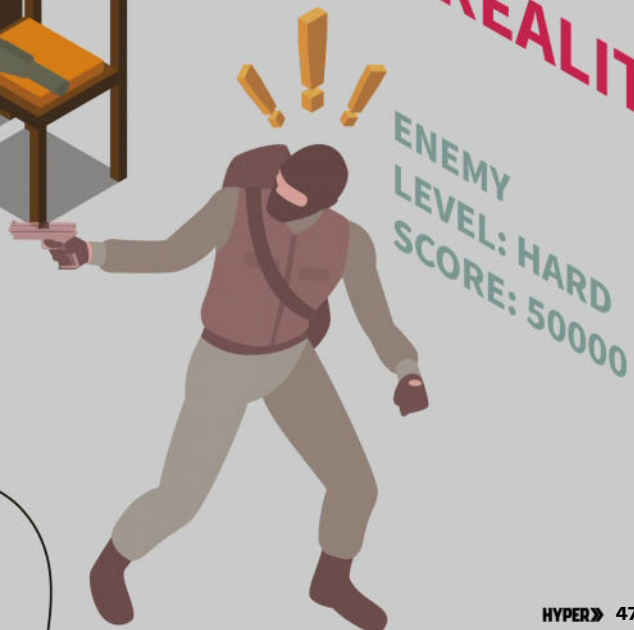
Local multiplayer is still strong in the online age. Divinity Original Sin: Enhanced Edition is a brilliant co-op RPG; Overcooked turns up the kitchen heat to 11; the Jackbox party games cleverly use smartphones to involve everyone; and Super Mario 3D World is one of the best.



PLAYER 1  
SCORE 97600



VIRTUAL REALITY



ENEMY  
LEVEL: HARD  
SCORE: 50000





## HYPER MULTIPLAYER MEMORIES

# Halo LAN

DEVELOPER | Bungie  
RELEASE DATE | 2001

After management was cruel enough to take away our couch, we had to move everything into a back room. Originally the room was for the capture PC, so we could play games in private and capture footage and hope to find a few uninterlaced frames to use as screenshots. Trying to grab screenshots that way was an exercise in futility and frustration – only the occasional frame would be usable, maybe one or two every half hour of footage – so after a while hands were thrown in the air and the room was quietly repurposed. We had a few Xbox consoles in-house, and some of the staff had consoles as well, so the back room was set up as our own dedicated Halo multiplayer LAN.

Not having played a craptone of Goldeneye like the other staff members, I was pretty rubbish playing a shooter with a controller, but Cam Shea flew the Hyper flag high with a combination of bunny-hopping antics and deadly pistol accuracy. Pretty soon after the LAN was set up, word spread throughout the company that we had multiplayer Halo on site and we became rather popular. Pre-press (the guys that do colour correction, make sure things are ready for print, within margins, colour densities and the like) were quick to glom on to our fun, coming down every lunch to play, leaving us to have to wait in line to play our own LAN during lunch and forcing us to have to play more during work hours. It was a tough call, but somehow we managed to find

enough time to get a few games in every day.

Although we played across the full range of available maps, mostly to be jackasses with vehicles, most of our serious matches took place in the smaller, indoor maps like Prison, Wizard, Rat Race, Derelict, Chill Out or Longest. Switching between players was always a chore, as half of us were invert players, and the other half did it wrong, so half of all matches seemed to start with someone swearing under their breath that the controller was set up wrong for their preferred style. Although sometimes two or more players might team up to gank another, repeatedly and forever (most of our Redfern multiplayer days had an element of cruelty to them), we never really bothered to play any team-based games. The chaos of people running around small, cramped maps, trying to score melee kills (the ultimate sign of Halo dominance) was more than enough for us. Or at least it was until a break in at the Redfern offices.

Although none of our Halo stuff was stolen, it changed the way the office looked at the back room. Rather than our play area, it became the secure lock up for the building, with a heavy, lockable door and lockable cabinets inside. Through no fault of our own, another of our gaming areas was taken away from us. Of course, this wouldn't stop us from finding new ways to waste time... **Daniel Wilks** 🍷





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The Society of Motion Picture & Television Engineers recommends a TV viewing angle of 30 degrees. To work that out, multiply your viewing distance (in cm) by 0.625. For example, sitting 300cm away from your TV multiplied by 0.625, equals 187.5cm is 73.82" - so a 70-75" TV would suit someone sitting 3 meters away.

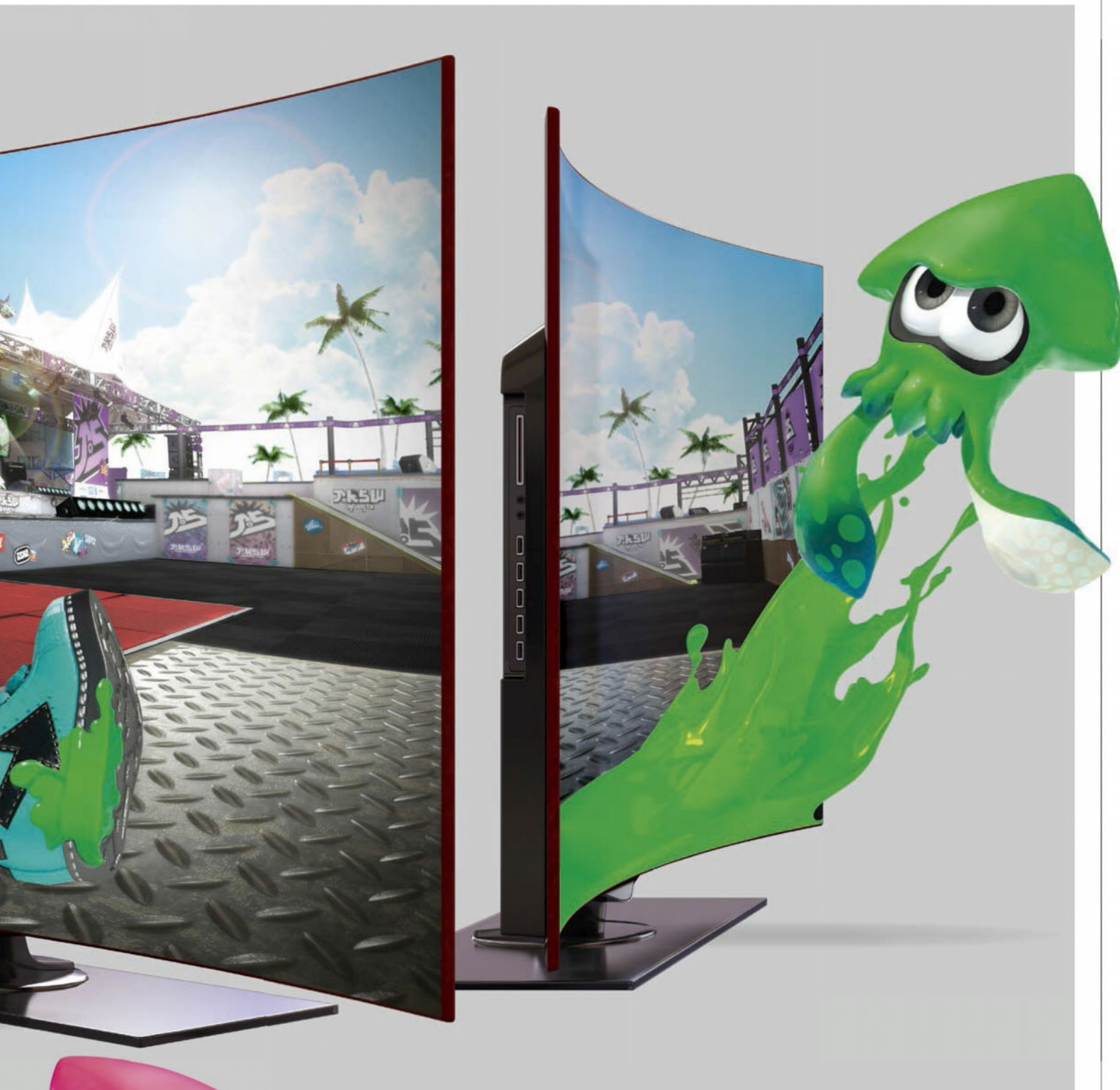
FEATURE

# Deciphering TV Feature Buzzwords

By Anthony Agius

Checked out a TV manufacturer's website lately? Buzzwords like X-Reality Pro, Triluminos, Quantum Dots, UltraSmooth Motion, ColourPrime, HDR and more litter the pages. It's as if the marketing team at these TV companies ate rancid food at their last ideas shower then spewed buzzwords and jargon all over the place! How's a regular person supposed to know what's worth spending the cash on and what's just marketing dribble?





**RESOLUTION**

High Definition, Full HD, 4K, UHD - these terms denote how many pixels are on the screen, which is called resolution. The more pixels, the sharper the image - if the image broadcast is the same resolution.

Full HD and HD generally refer to 1080p resolution (1080 horizontal lines of pixels) and UHD (Ultra High Definition) or 4K, refers to 2160p (2160 horizontal lines of resolution). There is a cinema 4K resolution, called DCI, that's a different aspect ratio and isn't found on consumer TVs.

4K content is slowly becoming more common. Netflix has an increasing number of titles available

in 4K and many YouTube videos can be streamed in 4K if your internet connection is fast enough. A handful of 4K Blu-Ray discs are now available, which look fantastic. Most content is still in 1080p (or worse) however and needs to be blown to up fit across all the pixels. The way the TV enlarges a 480p or 1080p image to fit on a 4K display can make a huge visual difference. Unfortunately, there's no real way to know how well a TV does this besides watching some non-4K content on a 4K TV. This is a case where trying before you buy can be useful.

**SMART TV**

The smart functions of a TV are

basically just a computer built-in to the screen. Each manufacturer has its own smart TV platform, with various capabilities, but even the most basic smart TV functions include a PVR & EPG. Connect an external hard drive to the TV's USB port and the TV can use that to record programs off free-to-air TV.

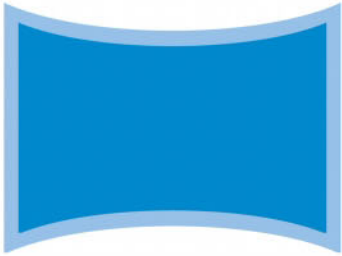
Most smart TV platforms include a way to watch Netflix, ABC iView or other on-demand services that require an internet connection (over Wi-Fi). They're usually a bit crappy and become obsolete quickly, so most people find far more value out of buying something like an Apple TV and using that instead of the TV's actual "smart" functions.



# 3D

## 3D

Luckily, 3D TVs seem to be a dying fad. Very few of the latest model TVs support 3D viewing. There was buggier all content in 3D anyways, just a couple of Blu-Rays really, so in 2017, having your TV support 3D is a waste of time.



## CURVED PANELS

Unlike 3D, curved displays are still a thing. What's the point of a curved display anyway? Some people like them because the perception of immersion and depth are improved. You also get a better viewing angle, so the image on the sides are not as washed out, particularly on large displays.

But for people not sitting directly in the middle of the display, having it curved can make the picture worse. Reflections can be a pain too, as where a TV may be reflection free in the past, the curved display can suddenly pick up light from an open window that a flat display didn't. Wall mounting a curved display can be tricky and leaves bits sticking out the sides instead of flush against the wall.

If you like the look of a curved display, go for it, but for the clear majority of people, it's not worth the extra expense.



## 100HZ/200HZ REFRESH RATES

Sony has MotionFlow, Samsung has ClearMotion and there's dozens of names for it, but this stuff is basically marketing jargon for putting lipstick on a pig and making sure the display doesn't blur when there's fast action on the screen.

That MotionClearMagicSmoothFlow stuff uses software to fake (sometimes well, sometimes poorly) the refresh rate and make images appear smoother, with less blurring. If you're a gamer, you want to turn that stuff off as it vastly increases

Most TVs have a "game" mode that reduces input lag on the HDMI ports. Input lag is the time it takes (measured in milliseconds) between you pressing a button on your controller and the action appearing on the TV. Turning game mode on disables a few image processing features to bring the lag down to an unnoticeable level.







input lag, making some games unplayable.

If the display has a native refresh rate (i.e. the refresh rate when any software enhancement is turned off) of at least 100Hz, you'll be fine - a higher refresh rate may make some things look better, but once you get above 100Hz-120Hz, the gains are marginal.



#### LED/LCD

Most flat panel displays these days are advertised as LEDs, not LCDs. Guess what, they're all LCDs! (except OLEDs, which we will get to later). The LED bit is referring to how the LCD is backlit, which is a fancy word for lighting.

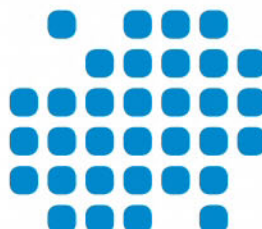
An LCD without a backlight is too dark to see. Turn the brightness on your smartphone down to zero - that's pretty much what it's like to have an LCD without a backlight. There's various ways to provide that light behind the LCD, and one of them is using a bunch of LEDs (little lights). An older way was using something called CCFLs (little fluorescent tubes), but those are practically ancient now.

The way those LEDs are arranged, how many of them there are, how bright they get, the quality of the light they emit and if they're dynamically controlled make a huge difference as to the quality of the image on the display.



#### QUANTUM DOT

Quantum dots are just a fancy way to improve the backlight in an LCD panel. These little particles of colour measure a few nanometres in diameter and are used with blue LEDs to create highly saturated colours that are otherwise difficult with traditional methods. Quantum dot technology results in better colour accuracy, better colour saturation and much higher brightness. One of the worthier buzzwords used to sell TVs.

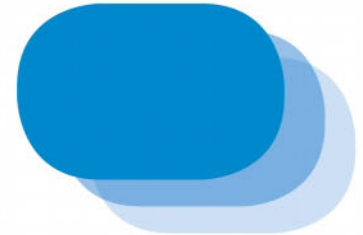


#### OLED

You've probably seen the LG advertisements on TV, with a certain Australian cricketer loving the image quality of OLED. That cricketer is correct - OLED displays look fantastic. Put an OLED display next to an LCD with all the quantum dots in the world and the OLED will look better.

The main reason OLEDs look so good is the fact their backlight is so even - because there is no backlight. The pixels themselves light up brightly, rather than needing an extra light source like an LCD. Contrast is vastly improved as blacks can be deep black, as the pixel is switched off, emitting no light at all. This also results in OLED able to be made paper thin.

The downsides of an OLED are their relatively low brightness and high cost. They're expensive to manufacture versus an LCD. OLEDs also aren't as bright, so if you're using one in a brightly lit room, it can be a bit of a downer. In a dark room however, an OLED looks amazing. If you can afford an OLED display, get one.



#### WIDE GAMUT/HDR

A new buzzword for 2017 is HDR, high dynamic range. Often HDR is marketed together with a "wide gamut" feature or 10 or 12-bit colour. These terms basically mean more colours.

Colour can be a very subtle thing. For example, red isn't just red - there's thousands of shades of red. The more shades of colour a display can show you, the nicer things look. New camera and broadcast standards mean these devices can capture more colour gradients than ever before, so it's logical that the displays we view the output of the cameras on, should show us all those amazing colours.

There's a few different colour standards out there. A popular one is Dolby Vision, but there's also DCI-P3, BT.2020 and others. These standards just mean that if the content was made with that standard in mind and your TV can show it, you'll see the content like how the creator intended.

The PlayStation 4 Pro and Xbox One S are also incorporating support for HDR TVs, which is something to keep in mind if you're a console gamer. The games that support HDR output can look amazing too.

Support for these fancy standards also mean the TV probably going to be half-decent. If it can display all those colours for the off chance you find yourself watching an Ultra HD Blu-Ray, it'll be great for the regular stuff you watch on free to air. Unlike most of the recent fads in TV marketing (curved or 3D TVs!) HDR support is quite good and worth spending the extra cash on. 🗨





## HYPER MULTIPLAYER MEMORIES

# Mashed

DEVELOPER | Supersonic Software  
RELEASE DATE | 2005

Let's go back in time, all the way to the halcyon days of the early noughties. It was a simple time, a happier time. For the gaming sector of Next Media, it was a golden age. Helmed by the dreamteam of Cam Shea, Malcolm Campbell, and Daniel Wilks, Hyper commanded the industry's respect with a potent mix of absurd humour and penetrating insight. In the next cubicle over, David Wildgoose, Darren Wells, and Amos Hong crafted Australia's best-selling games mag - PC Powerplay - and across from them, in the cubicle decorated with Street Fighter figurines, Patrick Alexander and I worked on a little A5 rag called Total Gamer.

An unintended but by no means unwelcome consequence of having so many gamers in close, constant proximity was that local multiplayer sessions were frequent. Our modus operandi was to fall completely in love with a game and play it literally every day for months, much to the chagrin of pretty much everyone else in the office. When I started in 2003, Pro Evolution Soccer 2 was the current king of the castle; when I left in 2006, it was Mashed, which had reigned uncontested for two years - longer than any other game. Mashed was something special.

Mashed is a top-down combat racer where the goal is to eliminate your opponents by either outracing them or destroying them. It's a bit like Mario Kart if it were viewed from above, but it's most like the old Micro Machines games, particularly Micro Machines 2. Simplicity is its chief virtue - anyone can play Mashed, and anyone can be good at it.

That last part goes a long way to explaining Mashed's enduring appeal. Most of

the other games that captured our attention - Pro Evo, Street Fighter III: Third Strike, Quake III - had fairly high barriers to mastery, requiring a lot in the way of dedication and practice. So although we all could play, say, Pro Evo to some degree, some of us (Goose) were notably better than others. In competitive games, the disparity translated into fatigue. We stopped playing Mario Kart DS because Cam was too bloody good at it. Ditto Quake III.

Mashed was the great equaliser. With four players, it was chaos incarnate: a playing field where blind chance would determine victory almost as frequently as skill. Underneath any single round, innumerable variables conspired to rob the deserving and elevate the fortunate. Maybe Darren gets nudged by Goose, causing him to take a corner wide, thereby narrowly avoiding my carefully aimed missile... which plows into Wilks instead. Or maybe Amos slides into an oil slick with such speed that it causes his car to flip spectacularly over a prox mine and the finish line. There were no certainties in Mashed; every race was a potential Rube Goldberg machine designed to kick you straight in the genitals.

Which is not to say that skill was unimportant. Most gamers can pick up the basics of Mashed in a few rounds, but mastering its nuances can take months, a product of harsh lessons delivered by merciless competitors. Simply getting the hang of when and how to use the weapons available on each track was an enormous challenge. If you didn't know to save your shotgun for corners, where competitors are

forced to expose their flanks, you would learn at the hands of someone who did. Every week we discovered new tactics, new shortcuts, new nuances. There was a meta, albeit a simple one, and players that failed to keep up were punished.

Losing was one kind of punishment. Another, doled out gleefully by the victors, was trash-talk. I cannot overstate how important trash-talk was to the competitive ecology at Next Gaming. Playing the game was ever only half the battle; the real fight was in delivering a well-timed burn and getting under the skin of your so-called friends and colleagues. We'd do this for every game we played, but the chaotic ruthlessness of Mashed imbued our zings and barbs with special potency. Occasionally we'd go too far and some unfortunate would be roasted into sullen, seething silence, only to bounce back to life on the back of a lucky win a few moments later.

During Mashed's glorious reign at Next Media, I estimate we spent no fewer than 200hrs playing it. I don't think we ever missed a deadline because of it, but there were times a few of us ("cough") came perilously close. I mean, we would drop everything to play this thing. All it took was for someone to switch on the PS2 and say "Mashed?" and an entire afternoon would vanish just like that. Our collective addiction became so serious that somebody on the other side of the office was reportedly talking to management about staging an intervention. Fortunately it didn't have to come to that... but only, I suspect, because a bunch of us ended up leaving for new jobs. **Dan Staines** ❧





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## Archer VR400

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- Beamforming Technology improves wireless range and performance on 5GHz band.
- Supports storage and print service sharing.





# Are VPNs Still Relevant for Australian Streaming?

*The revolution was televised but not in your region, writes **Angelo Valdivia***

When Netflix finally arrived Down Under in early 2015, Australians went nuts. It was clear well before this that Aussies were ready to take their living rooms online, with competitors like Stan and Presto appearing in the lead up. The funny thing is, many of us were already streaming prime entertainment before Aussie corporations decided to finally start doing something about it. We did it the best way we know how: legally “grey areas”.

Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) are tunnelling systems that allow computers to connect to networks across the Internet via encrypted protocols. They can be used by businesses connecting to remote data centres; IT professionals maintaining office networks from home; gamers “LANing” Counter-Strike across borders; or by citizens of a country left in the dark by convoluted distribution rights.

VPNs have all kinds of uses, but their most recent (and arguably biggest) trend is for circumventing online geo-blocks via two methods: changing the DNS proxy on a device-by-device basis; or changing the DNS on a

router/modem, turning your local network into a gateway. Trying to watch video content on a website only to be met with “This content is not available in your region” is a more common occurrence than the “YOU DIED” screen in Dark Souls. This is why VPNs became such a widely-adopted mechanism, almost synonymous with the word “Netflix”, in Australia.

VPNs aren't illegal: they're services provided which allow secure connections between networks/computers over long distances. It's how they've been used to leap-frog regional restrictions that has many entertainment companies busting their monocles.

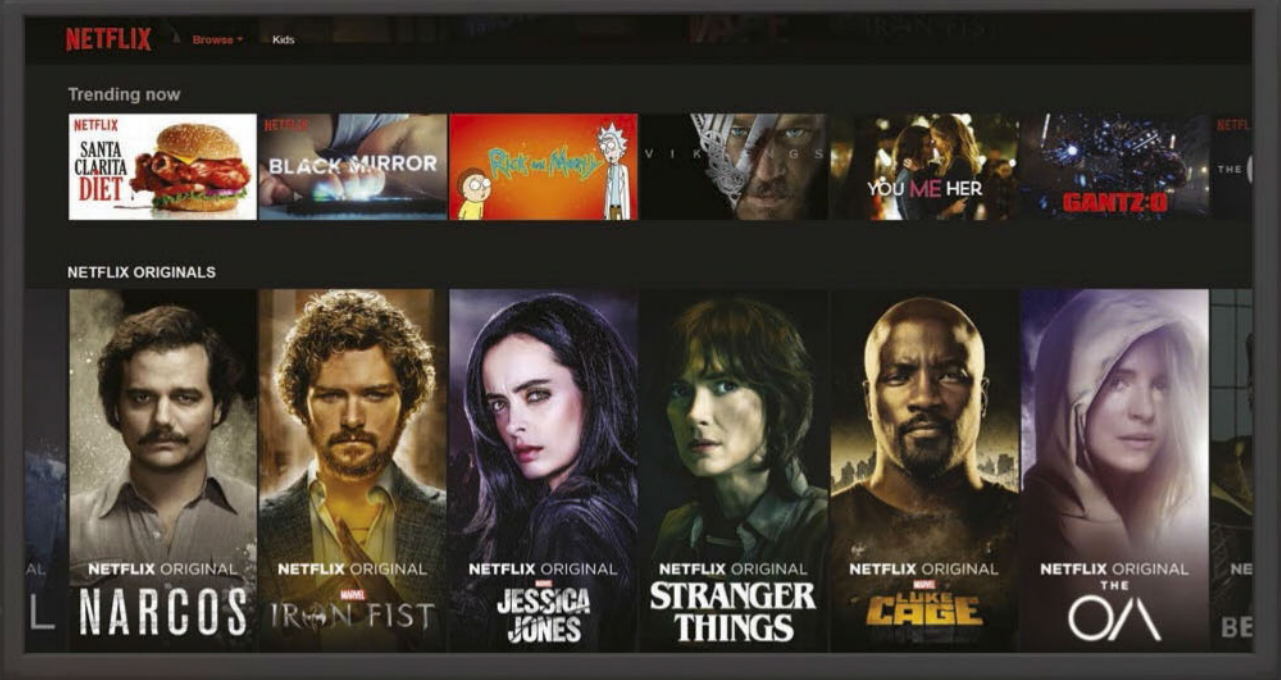
During the mid-2000s, as the Internet expanded globally and speeds increased, it became clear just how far behind Australia was in many ways. With easier access to information, we knew that we were getting movies and games later, that our online gaming experience wasn't up to snuff, and that online content services overseas were eclipsing what we had access to. It's why torrenting is such a big deal

over here, even today.

This is where VPNs become a contentious issue between rights-holders and consumers. In the instance of torrenting, thousands of people are copying (stealing) information that then manifests into media. But while the ethical and legal ramifications of that torrented mp4 of Doctor Strange you've got sitting on your flash drive are clear, circumventing geo-blocking is a more contentious issue. Bypassing geo-blocks means you're streaming the content from another region without stealing or doing immediate damage to the content maker/distributor. You're not keeping the content in any form for yourself or making your own efforts to distribute it.

The big problem is that it takes control away from those who have rights to it. Take Game of Thrones for example: every year when a season's first episode airs, news outlets all over the web have to remind the world that Australia is the most notorious for online piracy. There are three methods Australians can take to be part of the pop-culture phenomenon: subscribe







## WHICH VPN IS RIGHT FOR ME?

There are so many providers out there that it's hard to nail just one down as the perfect fit. Get recommendations from friends who use one or read up on your favourite tech site. Prices vary from free (with minimal security) to around \$10-\$15 a month. Most have free trials, so shop around.



“**VPN PROVIDERS HAVE FOUND THEMSELVES IN A TENSE GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE; PROVIDERS FIND A HOLE TO BREACH, BUT NETFLIX WOULD SOON PLUG IT**”

to Foxtel's 'Drama Package' for \$46 per month (as of this writing); subscribe to HBO Now (roughly \$20 per month when converted) via iOS/Android/third party tomfoolery and the use of a VPN; or illegally download it via torrent sites.

If you talk to Aussies who torrent content that's usually locked behind a relatively exorbitant paywall, we (at least, most of us) want to do the right thing and pay for content at the reasonable price. Comparing Foxtel's 100% legal solution in Australia to the "grey area" subscription to HBO Now via VPN is stark evidence of us being completely shafted, by twice the price. Consumers find it easy within themselves to justify going the illegal route because the "right" way is too expensive, the "not-good-or-technically-bad" way can be a headache, and the "wrong" way is easy.

This isn't to say there haven't been examples of Australian companies trying to help satisfy this hunger. There most certainly are, but the problem is that often their efforts have left a sour taste in people's mouths.

In the years leading up to Netflix's official arrival in the Great Southern Land, many companies

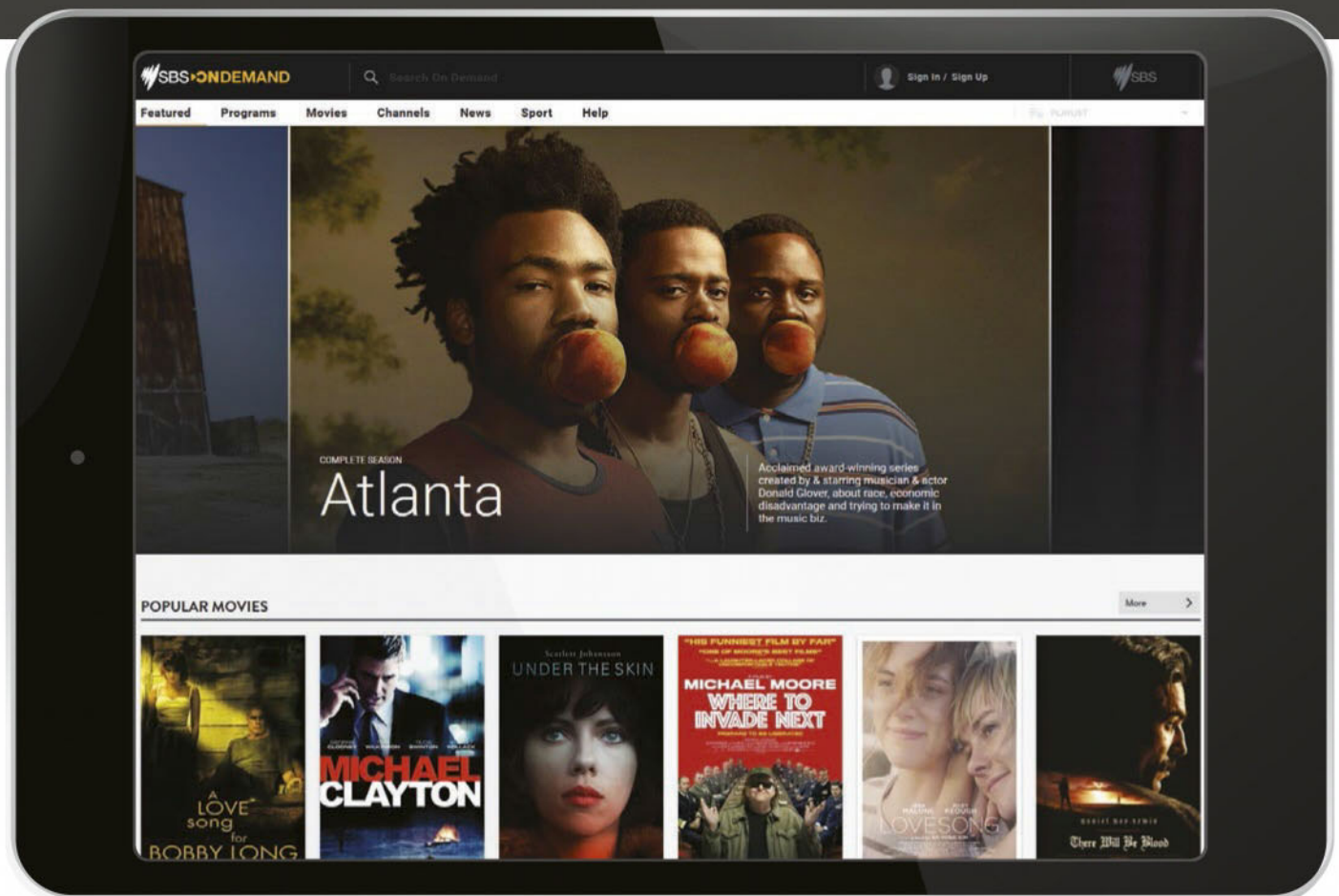
began springing up trying to fill the void that was rapidly beginning to grow. ABC iView was one of the first and most prominent free streaming services consumers could use to watch Aussie original programming and other popular shows like Doctor Who. SBS On Demand, TenPlay, 7PLUS and 9Now also joined the party but served more of a "catch-up" service rather than a premium offering with full TV series and libraries of films.

The first premium streaming service in Australia was one that let a lot of people down: Quickflix. Quickflix first started as a DVD-renting service in 2003, until eventually moving into online streaming eight years later. The company attempted mainstream market penetration in a partnership with Sony to provide their service on the hardware company's devices: Bravia TVs, Blu-ray players and PS3s. In fact, a firmware update in October 2011 saw the integration of Quickflix on the PS3's XrossMediaBar. The problem with Quickflix was that at the time it was pricey, had a small library of content and a clunky interface. To make matters worse, by the time Quickflix was out Netflix had already set the bar as an on-

demand service and had already been streaming in the US for four years. That's not to say that Quickflix was a total flop: in their October 2015 financial report they maintained up to 120,000 paid subscribers up to March that year, with numbers dwindling afterwards. Coincidentally, this was also the time Netflix arrived.

When Netflix announced it was coming here in late 2014, there was much rejoicing despite a significant Aussie subscription base already existing. Many had already begun subscribing via VPNs around the time Netflix's first original programme was made available: the fourth season of Arrested Development. But this new announcement meant that Australia would finally have access to a huge amount of content for a reasonable price that could be streamed at a decent quality, perhaps without resorting to backdoors. Upon its March 2015 launch however, it became apparent that Australians would still be somewhat left out.





## VPN SET UP

Stream TV on your PC? There are browser/client-based solutions with minimal set up. If you want your entire home network to be capable you can configure the DNS settings on your modem/router for all your devices to pass through (including phones and game consoles). Otherwise you can set your connections up on a per device-basis. Be sure to check your provider's setup page!

While Netflix finally opening shop here meant we would have a simpler, more "legitimate" method of accessing the service, a comparison between our content library and that of the US meant we mightn't be too hasty in cancelling those VPN subscriptions after all. Popular VPN service UnoTelly published a graph that same month revealing the AU/NZ library had just over 1,100 titles while the US boasted 7,200. And unfortunately, while the numbers have fluctuated over time, our catalogue remains dwarfed by other regions.

Aussies were so hungry to access wider ranges of movies and shows through backdoors that Netflix felt pressure from distributors and copyright holders because we were still bypassing region barriers. The streaming giant found itself in a tricky predicament that, in all fairness, wasn't really their fault. After all, they own distribution rights to their own programming - Netflix wasn't really in a position to meddle in the rights of other companies. Eventually, the pressure became too much and in early 2016 measures were put in place to begin detecting and blocking users with VPNs from accessing inter-regional content. Since then VPN

providers have found themselves in a tense game of cat and mouse; the providers would find a hole to breach, but Netflix would soon plug it. Rinse and repeat.

However, what some people need to realise is that Netflix isn't the be-all-end-all of online television. Sure, they're the biggest service with the largest library, but if you're smart about finding the content you want to watch, chances are there's another service that could have you covered.

Presto may have closed up early this year, but Stan is still going strong with a diverse range of shows and movies that not even Netflix has distribution rights to (at least in Australia), including its own original Aussie programming. And don't forget ABC iView, SBS On Demand and other Aussie free-to-air services that don't require VPNs. Australia even has its own (free!) anime streaming service thanks to Madman Entertainment's AnimeLab.

Using a VPN, you have access to a huge range of free TV streaming services outside of Australian ones, too. If DC's superhero shows Arrow, The Flash and Legends of Tomorrow are your jam, The CW's streaming app is the place to go. There's also NBC, AMC, plus many others to suit

your tastes - you just have to look.

Though if international paid subscription services really are something you're interested in, Amazon Prime Video has grown significantly in recent years and has seen some very high-quality original programming of its own. Arguably the biggest contender against Netflix, Hulu, has a substantial library of films, documentaries and TV shows, with some exclusives in those categories. There's also Crunchyroll if you need even more anime.

Whether or not you require a VPN for online television is completely dependent on what you want to watch and how much work you're willing to put in to get there. Ultimately, VPNs are good for some added security and in the case of entertainment, opening up your options. Be sure to shop around (most offer a free trial period) as there is still an ensuing battle between Netflix and VPN providers over geo-blocks, though often some find success for a time before returning to the drawing board. Unfortunately in Game of Thrones' case, we're still pretty screwed - but hey, at least there's only a couple of seasons left to worry about, right? ☞



# You're playing it Wrong

What happens when you throw the videogame rulebook out the window. **Mikolaj**

Sometime last year a guy known as Steambot came down with 'space madness'. This was quite a feat; since he was at home, in his living room, and sat on the couch when it occurred.

It all started when he decided to circumnavigate a planet in No Man's Sky on foot. As he explained in an interview with Kotaku, "Word had gotten out that the centre of the galaxy was a bit underwhelming, so I was kind of at a loss as to what I wanted to do next."

What was initially supposed to be a bit of fun soon turned into a 40-hour death-march across a strange alien landscape. As the kilometres began to mount, the waypoints that had guided his journey flickered and disappeared from view, and his sense of orientation went out the window, he was forced to confront his actions, and what it means to

play a videogame very, very wrong...

## RULES, RULES, RULES

Videogames are defined by their rules. The way we interact with them has been designed, scripted, and brought to life with code. But rules are made to be broken, and videogames are no exception.

As the medium has become more complex, emergent, and open-ended, the scope to create our own goals and challenges has greatly expanded. This can be as simple as multiplayer 'house rules' with a few friends, to fundamentally reimagining the way we play a game.

Get some people together, throw in some alcohol, and you can play Tekken Tag Tournament with a PS2 dance mat. Dust off the Nintendo 64 for some Mario Kart action and there's always that one person who decides to be a jerk and race

backwards. All good fun.

But for those willing to fall down the rabbit hole, there's a whole world of subversive, weird, and fundamentally wrong ways to play videogames.

## BREAKING BAD

Few games have been as wilfully deconstructed as Mario 64. One of the most popular titles in speed run circles, the game usually requires the collection of 70 stars before you're granted access to the final showdown. Over the years that's been whittled down through a combination of tricks, glitches, and shortcuts until someone finally achieved the Holy Grail in 2011 - a zero star run to complete the game in just over 5 minutes.









Jon Bois took a different approach, turning the binary code that powers EA's Madden series to moosh with his unrelenting torture of the parameter sliders. He documented all this in a weekly column for SB Nation, Breaking Madden, in which he observed, "Eventually, the game stopped caring about its own rules." And once the nihilism set in, the players were set adrift on a sea of existential despair.

This all culminated in a Super Bowl showdown so one-sided, uneven, and monstrous that the game chose suicide rather than the hell that Jon had subjected it to. As the score ticked over 402-0 in favour of New England Patriots vs. the Seattle Seahawks, the machine ground to a halt, refusing to continue no matter how many times he reset to the previous save.

As Jon explained at the time, "Madden wanted to die. It didn't want to give us a show or birth another demon baby. It wanted to stagger into the woods and die alone."

**MY OLD FRIENDS PACIFISM AND DEATH**

Whether machine code has the right to commit suicide is an argument for another time and place. What we do know is there's a subset of player that, for whatever reason, prefers pacifism to the comfort of a digital shotgun.

Undertaking a pacifist run in titles like Deus Ex or Fallout isn't anything new. A few years back the Wall Street Journal wrote a piece about a guy playing Skyrim as a pacifist monk. As he explained, "I guess not killing in videogames is rebellious."

Another popular option is permanent-death. As the name suggests, the death of an avatar draws the curtains on that play-through, forcing the player to start again from scratch. This not only ramps up the challenge and the tension, it can manifest strange and unforeseen terrors.

A guy called Hinckley experienced this firsthand when his permanent death / survivor run of Fallout 4 went horribly wrong. As his YouTube videos explain, a Non-Player-Character in his party glitched out, turned hostile, and pursued him to the ends of the earth like some sort of digital Terminator. What was

already a challenging run turned into a cat-and-mouse horror movie as Hinckley tried to outwit and outrun a monster of his own making.

**NOW YOU'RE JUST SHOWING OFF**

Sometimes people just like to show-off. If you want to witness a ridiculous feat of dexterity google 'Ikaruga 1 Player - 2 Player game'.

Ikaruga is one of the most complex shooters ever created, utilising a unique black/white bullet stream to chain together attacks. Someone decided that they'd complete it (with full chains and S++ rank) while simultaneously controlling both ships. If you've ever played the game you'll appreciate how ridiculous this is, and if you haven't then you should track down a copy.

Or you can just get creative with peripherals. Resident Evil 4 was launched with a limited edition chainsaw controller that looked nice but was mostly useless to use in the game. That hasn't stopped people from playing completely unrelated games with it.

There's also the crazy person who managed to complete

Red Vs Blue wasn't the first machinima but it popularised the form







“  
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 GLITCHED OUT,  
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 AND PURSUED HIM  
 TO THE ENDS OF THE  
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 SORT OF DIGITAL  
 TERMINATOR**”

Dark Souls with a pair of modified bongos originally intended for Donkey Konga on the Gamecube. Which he did in approximately five hours, thereby putting everyone else who's ever held a controller in their hands to shame.

**A LIFE IN PICTURE**

The alternative to all that gritted teeth masochism is to completely ignore a game's challenges, bosses, and checkpoints while letting your inner artist shine through.

The ability to take in-game photos has led to a small but vibrant online art scene that's more interested in shot composition than completion rates. Which maybe explains why Time magazine 'embedded' conflict photographer Ashley Gilbertson to document what he found in The Last of Us.

Meanwhile, sites like Videogame



Tourism are documenting and discussing this new medium while looking to people like Elliott Erwitt for inspiration. To borrow a quote from him. "Photography is an art of observation. It's about finding something interesting in an ordinary place... I've found it has little to do with the things you see and everything to do with the way you see them."

Firewatch takes things one-step further, offering a photo processing service that transforms your in-game shots into a Kodak style print roll for \$15. While the game's developer admits it was a logistical nightmare, it showcases the continued crossover between games as an interactive experience, and an artistic one.

If you prefer moving images, Machinima has been around in some shape or form since about the mid-90s. The term was coined by a guy named Hugh Hancock and refers to "the use of real-time computer graphics engines to create a cinematic production." Short films like the Halo inspired Red vs. Blue helped popularise the craft in the early 2000s, and it's

since been taken up by thousands of armchair directors.

One of the more original productions was the 2014 mini doco, Grand Theft Auto V: Into the Deep. Ignoring the game's criminal leanings, the 13 minute video takes viewers on a David Attenborough inspired journey into Los Santos' undersea pockets while documenting the wildlife found within.

**GHOST IN THE MACHINE**

And there's the rub. Some people are compelled to test the limits of man and machine. Breaking something so completely it transcends its original design and becomes altogether new, phoenix like, rising from the ashes.

As game design becomes more open-ended, emergent, and ambitious in its scope, the ability to sail beyond the binary limitations grows ever stronger. And so does the temptation.

But the question remains - at what point does the machine code push back? And what does that mean from both a philosophical and a technical standpoint? “





## HYPER MULTIPLAYER MEMORIES

# Quake 3 Arena

DEVELOPER	id Software
RELEASE DATE	1999

If you walked into a renovated warehouse in Redfern in 2004, past a delightful receptionist named Kate, past the fishbowl offices occupied by boring senior management types, through the flood-prone production farm, ducked out the back door and squeezed along a tiny, freshly watered alley that lead to a second less-renovated warehouse that HYPER once shared with half a dozen other games magazines, a handful of kids magazines, and a non-regulation-sized indoor cricket pitch, you would hear, as the time ticked over to 5pm, someone call out.

"It's Quake o'clock!"

Who are we trying to kid here? It was often well before 5pm.

Back then Next Media (which, to clarify for the Nextmedia lawyers reading this, was a totally different company to the Nextmedia that publishes HYPER today) actually employed lots of people to write about video games. They even staffed multiple magazines with these people. There was HYPER, of course, and its three full-time staff; PC PowerPlay and its five full-time staff; there was PlayStation World and Total Gamer and PC Gamezone, too, all of whom employed professional games journalists. The world was very different back then.

When you put a dozen or so games journalists in a room together with unrestricted access to the office network they inevitably feel the urge to shoot each other in the face. And even though it was five years old at the time, Quake 3 Arena remained Next Media staff's preferred method

of shooting each other in the face. Impressive, especially when you consider the other options available in Redfern at the time.

Despite the ludicrous, almost bombastic nature of its overwrought heavy metal aesthetic--I mean, come on, it's like the art team at id Software actually said "You know what's better than doing sci-fi or fantasy? Sci-fi AND fantasy!" before onanistically sketching gothic cathedrals floating in space--there's a purity and simplicity to Quake 3 that was rare at the time and unheard of today.

There are no roles or class abilities. Every character is the same. There are no loadouts or unlockable weapons. Every weapon spawns on the map in the exact same spot every time. There are no character specific ultimates. Powerups can be picked up by any player and also spawn on the map in the exact spot every time. It's as level a playing field as any deathmatch shooter can be, one that rewards players who take the time to learn the map, plan routes between weapon spawns, and know when exactly the powerups are gonna respawn.

Of course, not everyone back in 2004 was a noble entrant into the Quake 3 Arena. There was one HYPER deputy editor who would mod his character skin to appear smaller than the model's hitbox would register. And there was the PC PowerPlay editor who would launch the server but then disconnect if he was losing and quit the game for everyone. We didn't care though. Come 5pm the next day, the call would go out.

"Quake o'clock!" **David Wildgoose** ❧



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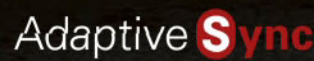
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# Lounge Room PC Build Guide

Miniature journalist **Bennett Ring** builds a miniature PC

There's been an influx of small, pre-built gaming PCs making their way across my test bench in recent months, and it's all thanks to the miniaturisation of components, as well as today's hardware requiring less energy than ever to churn out fluid framerates. From shrinking SSDs to power-sipping GPUs, these technology evolutions have allowed the creation of miniature gaming PCs that are just as fast as a full-sized desktop. Their small size makes them perfect boxes to live in the lounge room, hooked up to your huge 60 inch screen, controlled via Bluetooth control pads.

However, this reduction in size has come at an increase in price; most pre-built miniature PCs offer inferior performance than a mid-tower or full tower gaming desktop of the

same price. I'm going to show you how to build your own lounge room mini-PC for a fraction of the cost of the pre-built models that cost upwards of \$2000. On the flipside, I'll also show you how to build one that isn't exactly cheap, but will have the horsepower to drive the beautiful new 4K HDR TVs that are becoming the norm.

The focus of this article will be on the components to use, and then I'll give you a quick guide on how to put it all together. Building one of these machines is very similar to a regular desktop, but there are subtle differences due to the size restrictions. Cable management and the order in which components are installed are the key differences, but before we go into that, let's take a look at the components you'll need.



## Case Option 1 Fractal Design Node 202

PRICE \$140  
URL [www.fractal-design.com](http://www.fractal-design.com)

My first case recommendation is on the higher end of the pricing spectrum, and that's because it's designed to fit horizontally inside a standard AV unit that your TV is likely perched upon. Measuring 377mm wide by 88mm high and 332mm deep, it's about the same size as a gaming console, so should easily squeeze inside your AV unit. You'll need to buy a Mini-ITX motherboard if you go for this case, as well as an SFX-form factor power supply no longer than 130mm.

Thankfully these small PSUs now offer up to 600W of power, which is more than enough for the hardware we're whacking within.

Key to this case are the separate cooling chambers for the motherboard and GPU. You want a lounge room PC to be as quiet as possible, and the unique thermal design of this case will help no end in this regard. Despite its small size, you can fit in a full-sized graphics card measuring 310mm x 145mm x 47mm, which is very important for a gaming PC.







## Power Supply

### SilverStone SFX Gold 600W SX600-G

PRICE \$125  
URL [www.silverstonetek.com](http://www.silverstonetek.com)

It's tiny, thanks to the SFX form factor, Gold rated, and comes with fully modular cable management. Oh yeah, it's also got a semi-fanless design, leading to basically zero sound levels. This makes it the perfect PSU for both systems.

## Case Option 2

### Thermaltake Black Core V1

PRICE \$60  
URL [www.thermaltake.com.au](http://www.thermaltake.com.au)

The second option I've gone for is a more affordable case, but due to its square dimensions you'll have to house it outside of your AV unit. Most people won't care, and it's still incredibly small anyway, measuring a mere 276mm x 260mm x 316mm. Yet thanks to its shape, there's room inside for a full-sized power supply and graphics card. It won't take an ATX motherboard, instead using the Mini-ITX form factor.

Like Fractal, Thermaltake has separated the interior into two chambers, but this time one is for the PSU, while the other is for the CPU and GPU. There's even room for a small radiator if you want to water cool, as well as a double slot GPU up to 260mm in length, and a whopping four hard drives, double that of most mini-PCs.





## Motherboard Option 1

### MSI Z270I Gaming Pro Carbon AC Mini ITX

PRICE \$275  
URL [www.msi.com](http://www.msi.com)



Once again my first choice is on the upper end of the spectrum, aimed at those with a little more cash to burn. It's obviously a Mini-ITX motherboard which means it will fit in either case, and is based on Intel's latest Z270 chipset. This brings full support for the 7th Gen Core CPU to the table, though you can save some bucks by buying a Z170 based board, which also supports these CPUs.

One of the main reasons I'd

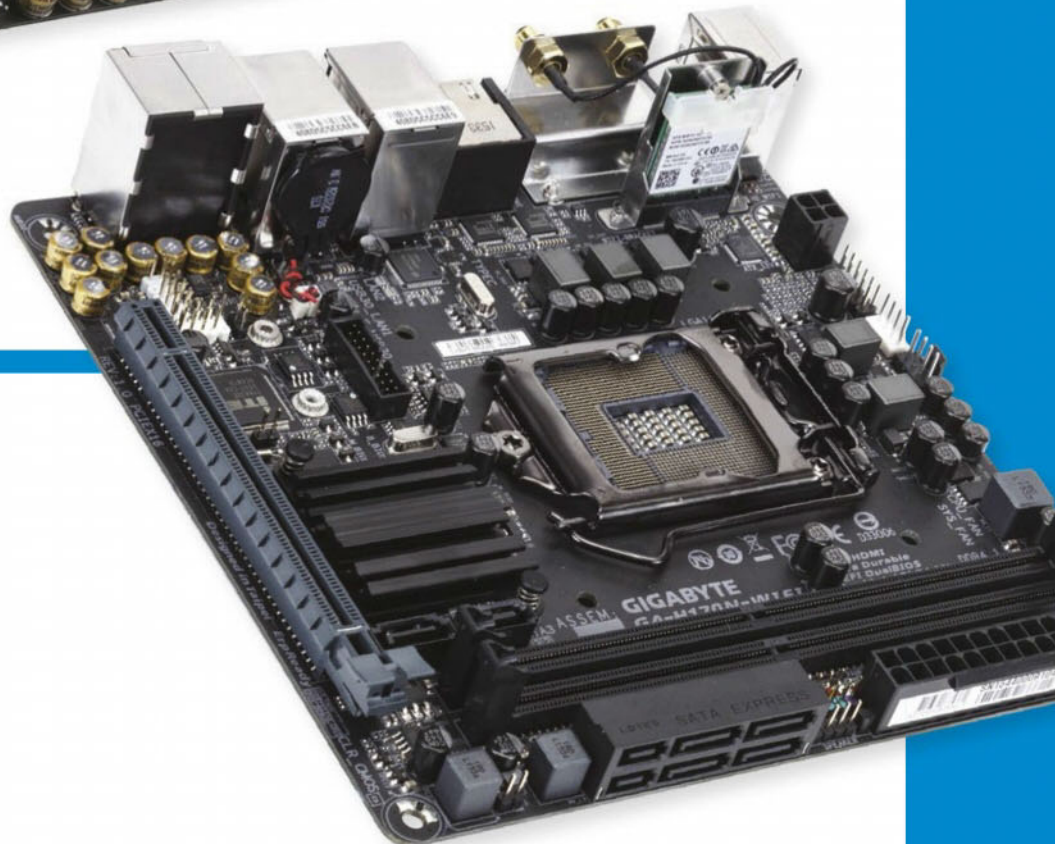
recommend this board include the exceptional onboard audio, in the form of the "Audio Boost 4" solution. While most of you will probably not need the onboard audio, instead piping audio over HDMI to your AV receiver, it's a nice feature to have if you've got an older amplifier that doesn't support HDMI. It's also got excellent heatsinks, helping to keep everything nice and cool, which is very important in the closed confines of a small PC. USB 3.1 Type C is also included for high speed connectivity, while 802.11ac Wi-Fi is integrated into the board itself. There's only one M.2 port for a high-speed M.2 SSD, but that's all I'd recommend anyway as your main form of storage.

If you want to overclock - something I probably wouldn't suggest in small form factor PC - there are plenty of overclocking options. Perhaps if you paired it with the Thermaltake case and a quiet water cooler overclocking wouldn't be too much of a problem, but personally I find the high fan noise annoying in a lounge room PC.

## Motherboard Option 2

### Gigabyte H170N-WIFI Motherboard

PRICE \$170  
URL [www.gigabyte.com.au](http://www.gigabyte.com.au)



If you'd rather save a stack of cash, this H170-powered motherboard should do the job. While it's officially not as powerful as the Z270 chipset, in reality the performance delta is a mere percent or two when it comes to game performance. It's also fully compatible with the latest 7th Gen Core CPUs, which is what we'll be using at the heart of the system. Once again this has to be a Mini-ITX board to fit inside our case, yet Gigabyte has jammed quite a few goodies onboard.

There's a single M.2 slot, along with a solo USB 3.0 Type-C connector and six USB 3.0 ports. The onboard audio solution isn't quite as good as the MSI board, yet the inclusion of twin Ethernet ports should deliver exceptional network transfer speed provided your router supports bridging. There's also integrated 802.11ac. Note that both boards only have a single PCIe 3.0 physical lane, which I'll be filling with the GPU.





## CPU Option 1

### Intel 7th Gen Core i7-7700K

PRICE \$480  
URL [www.intel.com.au](http://www.intel.com.au)

If you want maximum performance with minimal compromise, look no further than the top of the line Intel Socket 1151 CPU. With a top speed of 4.5GHz, it'll crank through anything you can throw at it; there is no faster processor on the market. Sure, it's not cheap, but it's also uncompromising. The fact that it's from the K-series means you can overclock it if you so dare.

If there is one hitch with this CPU, it's the TDP. With a relatively high TDP of 91W, you're going to need to ensure you've nailed your cooling solution to keep this chip happy while ensuring your system remains cool. This means going for a high-end, quiet cooler, as well as some extra case fans to feed it fresh air from outside.



## Heatsink Option 1

### NZXT Kraken X42 140mm AIO Liquid CPU Cooler

PRICE \$170  
URL [www.nzxt.com](http://www.nzxt.com)

If you're going with the Thermaltake case and want to overclock your i7-7700K, this All-in-One water cooler should do the job nicely without sounding like a whipper snipper every time you fire up The Witcher 3. It uses a 140mm radiator which will fit snugly in the front of the Thermaltake case; owners of the Fractal case will have to stick with

an air cooler instead. NZXT claims it has the most advanced controls ever seen on an AIO cooler, thanks to the CAM software support. This allows full custom fan curve controls, as well as pump speeds and water temperature monitoring. It's not cheap, but it is arguably the best way to overclock a CPU inside such a small space.



## CPU Option 2

### Intel 7th Generation Core i5-7500

PRICE \$250  
URL [www.intel.com.au](http://www.intel.com.au)

For those with slightly thinner wallets, this is a fantastic mid-range CPU. It's only just been launched, and comes with all of the benefits of Intel's 7th Gen architecture improvements (as minimal as they may be). It'll hit a top speed of 3.8GHz, which is still more than fast enough for basically any game you can think of, but it is multiplier locked, so there'll be no overclocking shenanigans here. While it is a quad-core chip, it doesn't support HyperThreading; thankfully this means jack all to gamers in the vast majority of instances.

Best of all, thanks to the slightly slower speeds, this thing operates much cooler than the first CPU option, with a TDP of just 61W. This will make taming its thermal output that much simpler, allowing for a more affordable heatsink.



## Heatsink Option 2

### SilverStone NT06-PRO CPU Cooler

PRICE \$69  
URL [www.silverstonetek.com](http://www.silverstonetek.com)

This ultra-low profile CPU cooler is the perfect fit for the fractal case. It'll easily handle the 7700K provided you don't overclock, as it's rated to handle 95W CPUs if you use the 12020mm fan. Add another 12025 fan on top and it'll handle 150W, making it suitable for overclocking, but you'll hear it from the next room. Best of all, if you

include it with the more affordable i5-7500 CPU, you can remove the fan entirely. That's right - this thing can operate in fanless mode with CPUs of up to 65W TDP, delivering a totally silent experience. We'd highly recommend a case fan or two though, to ensure it's got a healthy breeze passing by to remove heat.



## GPU Option 1

### GeForce GTX 1080 Ti Founder's Edition

PRICE TBD – approximately \$1500  
URL [www.nvidia.com](http://www.nvidia.com)

Yes, this GPU costs more than some entire PC systems. However, I'm choosing this as the superior option for those who want to game on their fancy new 4K UHD Premium TVs. It's really the only single-chip GPU that can handle 4K gaming without having to compromise on graphics settings, thanks to new high-speed memory subsystem. The incredibly energy-efficient design means it's not too noisy. It's the same size as a regular GeForce GTX 1080, so will fit in both cases listed here, at approximately 267mm in length, yet will deliver up to 40% better performance.

The inclusion of HDMI 2.0b means it can handle 4K at 60Hz, all while delivering full HDR support, perfect for making the most of today's HDR-enabled screens.

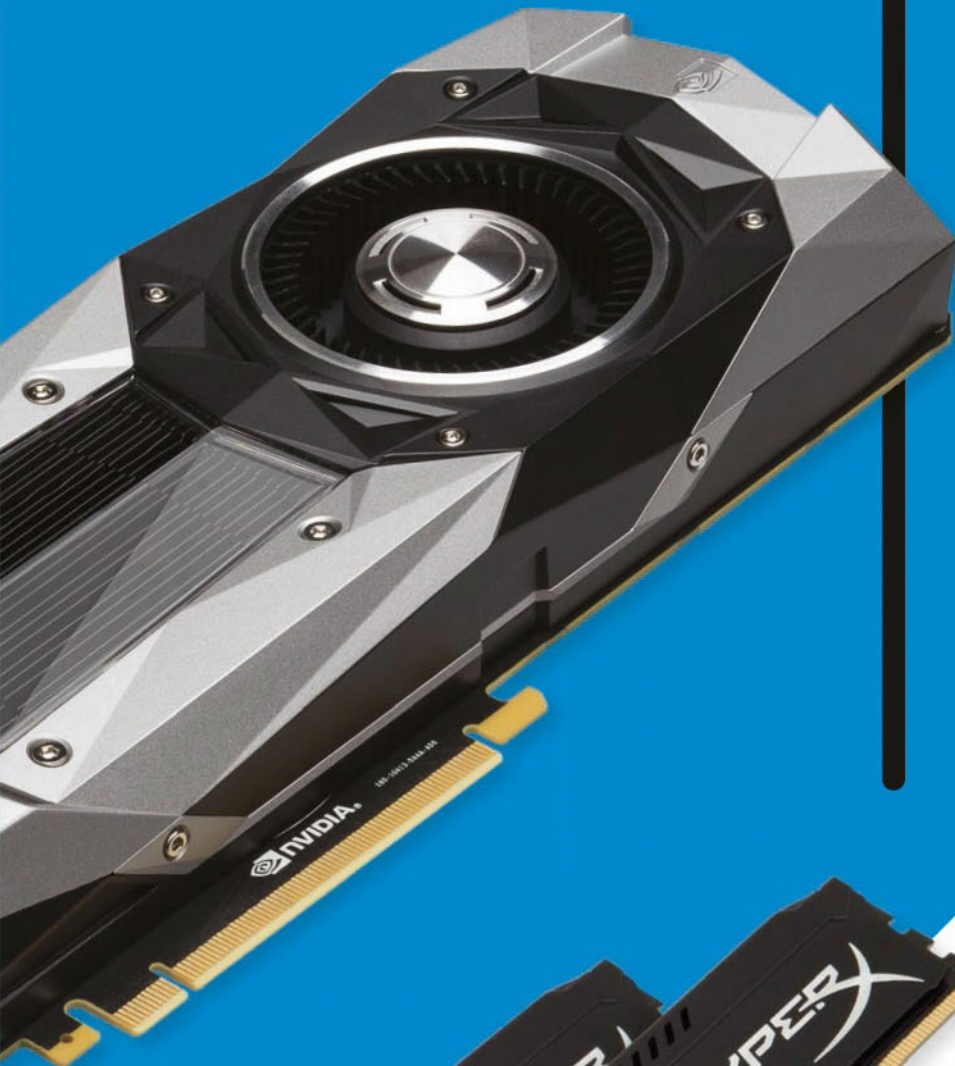


## GPU Option 2

### Gigabyte GeForce GTX 1070 Mini ITX OC 8GB

PRICE \$ 570  
URL [www.gigabyte.com.au](http://www.gigabyte.com.au)

I originally whacked an Asus GeForce GTX 1060 into this option, as it's only \$299. Yet in the bigger scheme of things, I figure an extra \$270 is easy to justify when there's such a huge performance leap. We're talking between 30% and 45%, which is massive when it comes to being able to crank up the detail levels. It's not going to run 4K games at Ultra settings, but back things down to medium and you might be surprised at what you get for this price. It's also got the full HDMI 2.0b support required to drive 4K panels at a full 60Hz the minimum framerate for smooth gameplay. One last thing - it's tiny, making airflow that much easier in a small case.



## Memory

### Kingston HyperX Fury HX424C15FB2K2/16 16GB (2x8GB) DDR4 Black

I'm not going to recommend two different types of memory for these builds, as the speed of DDR4 memory really has minimal impact on performance. Instead I'm going for one of the most affordable twin 8GB stick kits; this means you'll get maximum bandwidth via your motherboard's dual-channel memory support. I like the HyperX Fury kit as it's relatively low profile, unlike Corsair's extremely tall Vengeance range, which could cause issues when installed in a tiny case.







## SSD Option 1

### Samsung 960 EVO NVMe M.2 1TB SSD

PRICE \$630  
URL [www.samsung.com.au](http://www.samsung.com.au)

As the fastest SSD on the planet, the fact that it's smaller than a stick of memory also makes this a prime contender for being your main drive in a high-end mini-PC. With a full Terabyte of NVMe enabled SSD speed, this performance demon will have all of your apps loading faster than ever. Yes, it's crazy expensive.

## SSD Option 2

### Samsung 960 EVO NVMe M.2 250GB SSD

PRICE \$175  
URL [www.samsung.com.au](http://www.samsung.com.au)

Basically identical to its bigger brother, the main difference here is the capacity, at just 250MB. There is also a slight performance drop resulting from this as well, but it's still a blazing fast drive that takes up next to no space in your PC.

#### DOLLARS AND SENSE

Total cost of High-End Loungeroom PC: \$3310 (note, this is built with the Thermaltake case and water cooling, to allow overlocking)  
Total cost of budget loungeroom PC: \$1489  
As you can see, our budget PC comes in at just under \$1500, yet has superior specifications compared to the majority of \$2000+ mini-PCs that are pre-built. All it takes is some clever component selection and the will to build it yourself.

## HDD

### Western Digital WD Blue WD10JPVX 1TB

PRICE \$70  
URL [www.wdc.com](http://www.wdc.com)

Delivering a Terabyte of storage in a tiny 2.5" form factor, this drive is perfect for backing up your media files, as well as games where load speeds aren't quite so crucial.



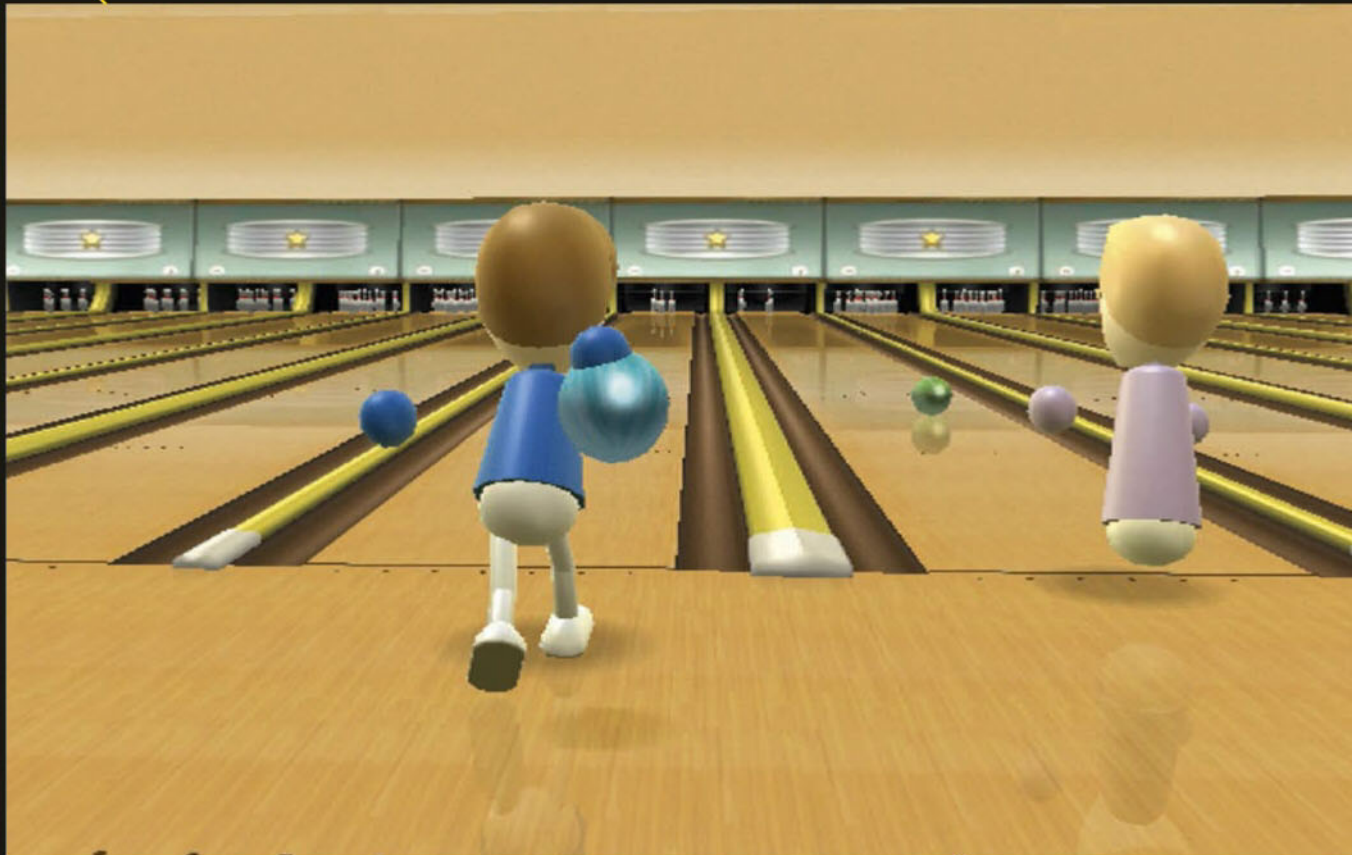
# Building your loungeroom PC

Approach building your loungeroom PC identically to a desktop PC, but with a couple of minor exceptions. Firstly, you'll want to install the CPU, cooler, M.2 SSD and memory before you install the motherboard into the case. You don't always have to - if your case is big enough to let you do it after the motherboard is installed, feel free to do so. Secondly, cable routing is everything in these cases. Buy a pack of cable ties and, if possible, special short cords to minimise cable tangle, such as shorter SATA cables or modular

power cables. This will allow the air to flow through the case as swiftly and silently as possible. I'd also recommend adding one or two low-noise case fans to help keep the interior components nice and chilly.

While major PC manufacturers might like to suggest that building a small loungeroom PC requires a huge leap in price, as you can see even our top-end rig is relatively affordable. You can literally save thousands by doing it yourself, and you'll end up with a much more powerful rig in the process. ☞





## HYPER MULTIPLAYER MEMORIES

# Wii Sports Bowling

DEVELOPER | Nintendo  
RELEASE DATE | 2006

Have you ever given yourself an injury playing a videogame? Well, the Next Media crew did playing Wii Sports Bowling. Nobody hit another person with a Wiimote, or hit themselves in the face, or jammed their hand through a TV. Our injuries were of the repetitive strain kind. More precisely, a few of us got Bowler's Elbow. It's similar in most ways to the better known Tennis Elbow - an inflammation of the tendons in the elbow caused by repeated strain on the tendons, usually through grip and sudden movement. Rather than our injuries being caused by holding a weight at the ends of our arm, causing the tendons for grip to be strained, our injuries can from the lack of weight. Swinging our arms around like idiots going for super curves or amazing strikes.

How did this spate of injuries start? Well, the Wii came into the office, and we kind of fell in love with Wii Sports. This was partly because the majority of Wii Sports was genuinely good, but also because of the lack of better titles. Although some of the first-party titles were good, the majority of games we received to review were terrible ports or quick cash-in party titles. So Wii Sports, and Bowling in particular became the only game that we played long term on the platform. We had a TV set up and all but dedicated as a bowling station, but the game started long before the first ball was rolled down a lane. The creation of a Mii was as important as the game itself, and

Dan Staines, editor of comedy/games mag Total Gamer was the master of Mii creation. We had Stalin and Hitler, Patrick Stewart, Abe Lincoln, Michael Jackson and more. Once the immortal rivalries were decided, the matches would begin.

In the beginning the matches were pretty sedate affairs, with everyone involved trying to master the rather iffy motion sensing of the Wiimote so as to get a handle on spin and curve, but once that was done, matches became a lot more frenetic and people begging out with swollen and painful elbows became a more common occurrence. Instead of taking it easy and working within the limits of the controller, we instead played games like they were real, and slinging your arm at the speed you would when bowling with a ball when there's no weight for momentum and balance can lead to some serious jarring.

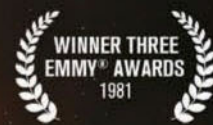
I was the first to fall from Bowler's Elbow, but Cam Shea and others followed soon after. Ultimately, though, it wasn't injury that killed our daily sessions of Wii Bowling. It was familiarity. Once we realised that muscle memory was more important to a good bowl rather than anything on screen, and that we could play near perfect games facing away from the TV, things began to lose their shine. We bowled until we hurt ourselves and then we bowled some more, but eventually we simply bowled too long and too hard. **Daniel Wilks** 🍷



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FEATURE

# Digging up the past, to preserve the future.

Or why collecting old videogames is fun. *Mikolai*

John is telling me about the day he purchased a Mega Drive. "It was around 1991. I'd sold my old Commodore 64 to help get the money together. I still remember walking into the store to pick up the launch system with *Altered Beast*."

We're at the Video Game & Pop Culture Market in Stones Corner, Brisbane, and he's browsing through the classic Mega Drive titles on offer. John says his collection includes everything from a Panasonic 3DO and Atari Jaguar to a Japanese Sega Saturn plus a few hundred games.

"I don't really play them as much these days, but there's something comforting about having them around. They remind me of different times and places."

#### TELL ME ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD

According to Dr Rebecca Spelman, a psychologist writing for the UK Telegraph, "Our fascination with collecting objects starts early in childhood. So a comfort blanket

or cuddly toy teaches us that it is possible to have an emotional bond with something lifeless and inert. And so a positive relationship with the idea of holding on to and amassing material things is formed."

As we get older, the objects we choose to collect vary, but the underlying psychology remains the same, whether it's videogames, postage stamps, or trading cards.

As Dr Spelman continues, "For most of us, being a collector has nothing to do with financial gain - it's an emotionally driven action, often with people collecting objects they connect positively and emotionally with at particular times in their lives."

It's a sentiment that Alex Boz from AusRetrogamer can relate to. "For myself and others I have spoken to, the appeal of retro titles is primarily nostalgia. Being an adult is hard work, you have so many responsibilities, so these old titles are a connection to our past, when times were carefree and fun. That feeling is quite intoxicating."





Video Game Market

**THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY MCGUFFIN**

Nostalgia may be factor, but it doesn't tell the whole story. People are drawn to different videogame consoles, genres, and eras for a range of individual reasons.

As Mark Cassar from Retro Domination explains, "The biggest appeal of retro titles is being able to play the games and systems that we enjoyed growing up. In some instances, it's also a way of playing systems and games that we weren't able to experience back then because of price or the fact they simply weren't available here.

"The Neo Geo and PC Engine systems are two prime examples of this. It also gives us the opportunity to enjoy genres that don't really get much representation on modern day systems, like beat 'em ups and platformers, which have taken a back seat to first-person shooters."

Brisbane's Bevan Gee, who has a background in DJing, and runs the Video Game Market, found himself rekindling his love of games when the local music scene got old. "In late 2014 the music / DJ stuff got super boring, monotonous, uninspiring, overly political and over saturated. I went online and noticed there was this Neo Geo X Gold console. I bought it to play Blazing Star in my spare time and to give

myself a break from music."

That led to a series of emulated consoles, but as he explains, "None of it felt authentic enough. There were problems with lag, it felt cheap, and it wasn't the real thing. So I went hard out and started collecting the original old systems."

**THE TACTILE NATURE OF LIFE**

These days it's possible to access the entire history of videogames from a single laptop. Find the ROMs, plug in a control pad, cast to a TV, and you can sample everything from obscure Japanese MSX games to the latest indie title from the comfort of your lounge room.

While that's all fine and good, when it comes to retro games, collecting the physical cartridges, boxes, and inlays has its own appeal.

According to Graham, also at Brisbane Video Game Market, collecting videogames is as much about the tactile nature of the objects as the binary code contained within. "The cover artwork of Japanese Mega Drive games, the inserts and instruction manuals. All of that is important. It's a complete package. Maybe I'm showing my age here, but you don't get that from binary code and ROMs."

An appreciation for physical media in an increasingly digital world isn't unique to videogame

AusRetrogamer







Video Game Market



AusRetrogamer



collectors. According to various news reports, vinyl sales are experiencing a huge resurgence, with the highest sales since 1991. If you need any proof just duck into your local JB Hi Fi and observe the crates of records by the front door. And it's not just about an appreciation for music, or a desire to own a physical item.

Writing about the resurgence of vinyl sales in Time Magazine, digital anthropologist Nik Pollinger noted that, "What we display in public is used to send social signals about our identities. Making our taste in music visible has historically played an important role in such signalling for many people."

Simply stated, the items that we surround ourselves with help define us. Whether that means obscure punk singles or Japanese import copies of Radiant Silvergun, the purpose is the same. They provide social cues and reference points for other people.

### TO PLAY OR DISPLAY?

A neatly arranged shelf of Japanese imports is one thing, but when it comes to videogame collectors there's one fundamental issue that divides the community - to play or display?

Bevan Gee is adamant that the titles he acquires are there to be played. "I 100% play the games I collect. I personally find it pointless collecting sealed games or collecting 'complete collections' for the sake of it. Trophy hunting or stamp collecting really defeats the overarching purpose of gaming. I buy what I like and love, and pass the rest on to others. I just love playing games!"

On the other end of the spectrum, a forum member on

Nintendo Age recently showcased a full Nintendo Wii collection - 1264 games in total. As he explained in his post, "I felt it would be an interesting challenge. The Wii is a fascinating system. It sold over 100 million units, no other Nintendo system can touch it on sales. [Yes] there's lots of shovel ware, but that's cool. The crappy games tell an interesting story as well."

### IS THERE A CASH CONVERTERS NEARBY?

Whether you want to play the games, display them, or obsessively collect a full set of titles, finding those rare gems is a huge part of the appeal, and can provide just as much satisfaction as booting up an old favourite. Generally speaking, there are three ways to source older titles; eBay, second-hand shops like Cash Converters, and weekend markets.

As Aleks from Weird and Retro notes, "eBay is a great source but it's getting harder to find a bargain. Car boot sales can be really good but only if you get up early and are one of the few to be there from the start. Op-shops can be a good source but I find that too many people are scouring them so retro gaming items do not last. At this stage with all that I have, I tend to mainly use eBay and look for rarities from overseas, with most coming from the US."

Those experiences are quite common among the collecting community, which is why the Brisbane Video Game Market is such a refreshing change of pace. As Bevan Gee explains, "My background is in DJing, I had absolutely no friends into gaming, and had a hard time figuring out the scene whilst making a transition

### TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

Everybody has to start somewhere, so if you're looking to take your collection beyond a few older PS2 titles and broken Master System from your childhood here are some pointers.

1. Figure out what it is you want to collect. It might be particular system, a certain publisher or developer, games you grew up with, or something else entirely. It doesn't really matter, but narrowing down your focus makes it much easier to start looking.
2. Let people know you're collecting. In many cases they'll happily pass on their old, neglected systems to a good home. That boxed N64 might not mean much to them, but it's a potential treasure trove for your collection.
3. Scour secondhand shops. While Cash Converters have cottoned on to eBay and will often check prices before slapping on their own outrageous mark-ups, you can still find plenty of bargains.
4. Check the 'bulk lots' category of eBay. Less frequented than other sections, you can often find some obscure gems boxed up alongside all those old copies of FIFA and Madden.
5. Check the Facebook market app on your phone. It's less trafficked than eBay, and is more like an impromptu garage sale on your phone. In other words, it's full of random bargains.







Retro Domination



Weird and Retro



from music. I thought the best way to get into it would be to throw an event where a few mates could trade amongst each other to help foster interest. The first two events had about 10-20 people pop by and the trading/selling happened amongst the few vendors. A 'made \$50, spent \$100 type' deal. Then Pokémon Go was launched and the media and Facebook got wind of the third event and things took off from there.

"There's a loose community of people congregating every three months or so to buy, talk, trade and sell games," says Bevan. "I'm starting to remember faces, which lets me know there are diehard fans, collectors and supporters of gaming here in Brisbane. I hope to grow the event but also keep it at a grass roots level."

Meanwhile, the news that Amazon Japan would begin shipping games overseas provided the retro community with a new way to feed their habit without having to scour Japanese back alleys. "I've been two Japan twice and one of the first stops has always been Super Potato in Akihabara," says John, back at the markets. "They still have great stock, but everyone knows about the place, so you're going to pay through the roof if you want that copy of Thunderforce V for the Saturn, or whatever it might be."

Regardless of how you come across a title, the thrill of the chase is as much a part of collecting as anything else. For Alex Boz from AusRetrogamer that means a free Sega Dreamcast kiosk he found by the side of the road.

"I was driving down the road (near my home), when I noticed the famous Dreamcast swirl on what looked like a stand. To my surprise, it was a Dreamcast kiosk left on the median strip on a major road. I quickly called my dad and told him I needed his help with something. I

picked him up, we drove back to the site, and I wheeled the kiosk across three lanes to the car. People do shake their head in disbelief when I tell them how it was acquired. I guess it was a case of being in the right place and the right time."

Aleks from Weird and Retro found the bargain of a lifetime in a local Cash Converters, although this explanation probably doesn't mean much to anyone who isn't knee deep in the scene. "[I came across] a Rarity 10 Ultravision T-Handle Karate cartridge for the Atari 2600. I stumbled across it at a Cash Converters store in NSW and couldn't believe my luck! Prior to purchase I was reading through rare Atari 2600 games on Racketboy.com and it's listed as between \$2,500 and \$4,000. I found it priced at \$10."

#### CURATING A COLLECTION

Whether it's a neatly curated mix of high-end classics, or a vast trove of PS2 shovelware titles, everyone has their own way of display and interacting with their collection. Some people have a dedicated room, others get fancy and highlight their big-ticket items in display cabinets, and others have had to relegate their collection to the basement when faced with the grim reality of parenthood and small children with greasy fingers.

"I have an office in which I keep a number of systems and games," says Alex Boz from AusRetrogamer, "but the bulk of the collection is on display and ready to play in the converted garage that we call the fun factory. I prefer to have the systems on show, with the games hidden in the designated cupboards. I like to look at the systems more so than the games on shelves. At last count, there were 220 gaming systems (consoles, computers, handhelds and tabletops), 2500+ games, two pinball machines and a

Neo Geo MVS."

Bevan Gee has seen his record collection take a backseat to games, although they both co-exist side-by-side. "I own a fair chunk of it from all generations, handhelds included. It's stored in a large media unit that takes up a wall of the living room, a few metres wide by a few metres high. There's another wall with some CRTs set up with various consoles hooked into it, depending what I feel like playing. Games are stored in front of my record collection. The shelving is about six metres long by about three metres high."

#### MY CATHODE RAY TV WEIGHS A TON

While hunting down old classics and scoring bargains is all good clean fun, playing the games isn't as easy as it used to be. Most people don't have room to connect a bunch of old consoles to their living room TV, and even if they did, modern TVs are not designed to handle the output from a creaking old NES or even N64.

Without getting into a whole big technical thing, HD TVs do a really bad job of displaying sprite based pixels, which is what older games are made up of. They can sort of 'fudge it', but the end results often look stretched and blurry. The only way around this is to revert to a classic CRT television. Or better yet, a monitor.

"I highly recommend gaming on a Commodore 1084S monitor," says Aleks. "These things are crisp and magnificent for anything that outputs in composite! The 14" screens are just right for pretty

**I WAS READING THROUGH RARE ATARI 2600 GAMES ON RACKETBOY.COM AND IT'S LISTED AS BETWEEN \$2,500 AND \$4,000. I PAID \$10.**



much everything retro gaming,”

If that’s a bit specific, GumTree offers a range of extremely heavy, very large, low-res televisions that can play the original Sonic the way Yuji Naka intended.

Recent years have also seen the rise of emulation consoles that can play a range of older cartridges from different systems. Systems like the RetroN5 offer a compromise between authenticity and the convenience of actually playing the retro titles you own on your giant HD TV.

### ARCHIVING VS. ENJOYING

While that’s the dream for many collectors, modern life has a way of sucking up your spare time. Between family, work, a social life and maybe a couple of kids, the hours available to play and collect tend to shrink.

For Aleks from Weird and Retro, that’s meant finding other ways to share his collection. “I used to play a lot more when I had the spare time, now I collect more for play and display at events like EB Expo

and PAX AUS. The main time I get to play these days is at the monthly retro gaming club meet-ups when we get together for some old-school fun.”

Chelsea, who is at the Brisbane Video Game Markets looking for PS1 era RPGs, says she organises monthly meet-ups with friends to play some of the classics in her collection. “Monkey Ball and Wario Ware on GameCube, Powerstone 2 on Dreamcast, Samba Da Amigo on Wii are all fun games that basically anyone can play with a drink in their hand, and as the night progresses you can bring out some of the more obscure titles and get a little weird.”

And that’s the common thread among videogame collectors. Regardless of their gaming preferences, collection size, or TV set-up, they want to share their passion. Local retro markets, PAX pop-ups, and casual Sunday sessions are a way to bring these older titles to life.

In the process, they’re helping archive the history of the videogames for future generations. 📺



Weird and Retro



Weird and Retro



Video Game Market

### TRACKING YOUR COLLECTION

Want to know how much that copy of Gamecube Ikaruga has appreciated? Lost track of all your Streets of Rage 2 cartridges? There are a number of websites and apps that can help you manage your collection and its value.

Pricecharting.com – How much is that game worth? If you’re collecting NTSC titles and want US prices this is great starting point.

Racketboy.com – If you’re serious about collecting this is basically home base.

VGcollect.com – The easiest way to track and catalogue your collection



Video Game Market





## HYPER MULTIPLAYER MEMORIES

# Pro Evolution Soccer

DEVELOPER | Konami  
RELEASE DATE | 2002

FIFA 16 cover star Tim Cahill might tell you otherwise, but Konami's long-running football sim had the edge over EA's officially licensed FIFA throughout the PS2 era. Sure, in several iterations of PES (or Pro Evo, as we called it) the entire Dutch national squad were named "Oranges001", "Oranges002" etc, Ryan Giggs was called Gigs, and Arsenal were known as The Wengerboys (or something like that) while FIFA got every player and club name correct like the boring class nerd it was. But it didn't matter. Pro Evo played a game of football like we'd never seen before. From PES2 in late 2002 through to PES5 in late 2005, there was more Pro Evo played in the HYPHER office than any other game.

I can't recall exactly when or even which version of Pro Evo, but during this time we set ourselves a challenge: we would win the World Cup.

That probably doesn't sound too hard. No version of Pro Evo forced you to qualify for the World Cup. You just said I'm going to play the World Cup Mode, picked your team, and you were right there in the group stage of the finals. From there you had to win a handful of games to win the World Cup. Easy.

So we tweaked our challenge: we had to win the World Cup on the five-star difficulty setting while playing as Australia.

Now, for those who haven't played Pro Evo, bear in mind that five stars is as difficult as it gets. Even seasoned players, as we were, would struggle

at five stars to overcome the preternaturally aware AI defenders intercepting passes and goalkeepers pulling off freakish saves. And playing as Australia? Well, let's just say we had managed to invent for ourselves a six star difficulty setting.

We also had to play it together. That meant four players on one team, each one of us as determined to bask in the glory of scoring the decisive goal as we were culpable of neglecting our defensive duties, pulling the side completely out of formation and failing to man mark the opposition striker. It was breathless, exhilarating and utter chaos: four green and gold clad buffoons exhausting their stamina bars at an unprecedented rate as they all galloped after the same ball in a sight typically reserved for your local under-7s team on a Saturday morning now transported to the world stage.

Australia by this point had only ever qualified once for the World Cup finals, way back in 1974. But here we were, the Socceroos mixing it with the best from Brazil, Germany, England and Italy. We pulled off some stunning upsets (a 3-0 win over the then World Cup holders France was one to tell the grandkids) and some absolutely shambolic defeats, including a 2-1 reverse against Costa Rica. But we never won the World Cup. Our best result was a brave loss to Argentina (I forget the score) in the semi-finals.

Let's see if Tim Cahill can do any better in 2018. **David Wildgoose** 🍗



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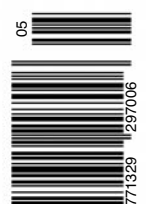
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FEATURE

# Go Figures

*Heidi Kempf doesn't care if you call them action figures, dolls or figurines*

For people who really, truly love games, it's not enough to simply own a chunk of code on a disc or a hard drive. We want to showcase our love for the games that have helped shape our hobby and ourselves through means that go beyond the monitor (or headset). That's where collectibles come in. By giving our favorite gaming icons a third dimension and a physical presence, we not only come to appreciate the design and care that went into these characters even further, but we get to have super awesome looking display pieces that'll turn the heads of nerds and non-nerds alike.

The field of gaming collectibles has expanded immensely over the past few years, and many companies have been keen to capitalise on it: EB Games now stocks a healthy selection of collectible goodies in their retail locations, Nintendo's

making plenty of cash on fan-pandering Amiibo, and high-end toy manufacturers from across the globe are scouting shows like E3 and Tokyo Game Show to look for the hot new properties to base their upcoming toylines on.

Perhaps you've seen some of these action figures and statuettes, thinking "Wow, these would look amazing in my game room and/or nerd den, but I don't know where I should even begin with collecting!" That's where we're here to help - we'll break down a few of the best-known toylines and manufacturers, and help you find the sort of collectible that's right for you.

#### THE NENDOROID INVASION

Good Smile Company ([www.goodsmile.info](http://www.goodsmile.info)) is known as one of the premier collectible toymakers in Japan - and the world - thanks in part to its enduringly

adorable line of Nendoroid toys. For over a decade, Good Smile has been producing these small representations of characters from across the pop-culture spectrum. While Nendoroids originally focused primarily on Japanese characters from anime, manga, and novels, the line has expanded dramatically in recent times, covering Western comics, movies, and video games with a distinctly "kawaii" Japanese flair.

Nendoroids typically stand about 10 cm high, and are split proportionally about half-and-half between the head and the body. They always come with a variety of interchangeable parts and accessories like hands, feet, weapons, and items to suit the character they're representing. Though they're typically not as extensively articulated as a typical action figure due to their small







Jakks Pacific

Bandai

size and unusual proportions, the accessories they come with still allow you to put them in a wide variety of poses and situations.

The most notable feature of Nendoroids are the faceplates. Every Nendoroid comes with additional face parts that can be easily interchanged by removing the front part of the figure's hair. Not only can you swap between several different expressions of the same figure, but the common shape and size of Nendoroid faces means you can often use different face parts across several different characters. You can even buy special accessory sets with plenty of goofy face parts that fit most Nendoroid figures on the market. Hands and accessories can often be interchanged between figures, as well.

Nendoroids have won over many collectors thanks to their general high-quality production and overwhelming appeal. The engineering on these figures can often be very impressive – such as the Kirby Nendoroid that uses magnets to attach the blobby hero's limbs – and the interchangeability of parts makes them a lot of fun to pose in dioramas. Upcoming gaming-related Nendoroids include several members of Overwatch's cast, characters from Dota 2, Atlas and P-Body from Portal 2, Link in his Breath of the Wild garb, and Mega Man X – among numerous already-released characters from Metal Gear Solid, Super Mario Bros., Disgaea, Fire Emblem, and more.

As one of the most successful collectible lines out there,

Nendoroids are pretty easy to obtain, especially from Japanese sellers. Some out-of-production figures might be a bit more difficult to acquire, however, and will require you to scour secondhand markets.

#### FIGURE IT OUT

As adorable as Nendoroids are, a lot of folks want something that's a bit more sizeable, but still offers the satisfaction of posing and playing. That's where action figures come in. Forget the little GI Joes and Ninja Turtles from your youth, though – these figures come in a variety of shapes and sizes with varying price tags to match.

If Nintendo's your thing and you're not looking to spend a lot of money, then Jakks Pacific's ([www.jakks.com](http://www.jakks.com)) World of Nintendo line will make you very happy. While these action figures are small and don't have a lot of articulation, they are very nice representations of classic characters that won't occupy a lot of space and won't break the bank, either.

If you're looking for something a bit higher-end, though, there's a lot to choose from. Starting at smaller end of the scale are figmas. These figures are about 1/12 in scale and are produced by Good Smile Company affiliates Max Factory (<http://www.maxfactory.jp/en/mxf/>) and FREEing (<http://www.freeing.co.jp/>). They come with a base figure, several accessories, and varied expression "faceplates" much like Nendoroids. Articulation of these figures comes in the form of easily movable (and removable) ball-

#### WHERE DO I GET MY LOOT?

Oftentimes, you can't just waltz down to the department store to pick up a cool gaming collectible – especially if they're imported. Thanks to the magic of the internet, however, you can easily acquire cool things from overseas. Here are some places to check out.

##### Hobby Search

[www.1999.co.jp/eng](http://www.1999.co.jp/eng)

A Japanese retailer with a huge selection and great customer service.

##### AmiAmi

[www.amiami.com](http://www.amiami.com)

Japan's largest hobby retailer, they offer a broad selection of goods and even a few retailer exclusives.

##### Hobbylink Japan

[www.hlj.com](http://www.hlj.com)

A fan-favorite Japanese retailer with superb customer care and a unique "warehouse" program to help you save on shipping.

##### Big Bad Toy Store

[www.bbts.com](http://www.bbts.com)

A US-based retailer with a massive selection of toys from across the globe. If you're a type who never opens the box, you can pay a little extra to ensure pristine-condition goodies.



Nendoroid



joints that, while not super sturdy, get the job done and don't require a huge amount of force to move. They also come with bases and a peg-based pivot arm for posing, along with a set interchangeable hands for holding accessories and emoting with gestures.

While figmas are quite popular (and can command hefty prices in the aftermarket for popular characters when they sell out), the quality can vary wildly from piece to piece. Anime-style characters with more detail and more accessories to use often turn out a lot better than more "realistic" characters or those with a limited pool of extras. Still, the combination of detail, poseability, and price means that figmas turn out nicely more often than not. Game characters in this line include Link in Skyward Sword, Link Between Worlds and Twilight Princess incarnations, Samus Aran

in both armoured and Zero Suit forms, Kiryu Kazuma and Goro Majima from Yakuza, Gwendolyn from Odin Sphere, Lucina and Corrin from Fire Emblem, numerous characters from the Persona and Shin Megami Tensei series, and even surprising figures for retro fans like Sarah and Akira from the original Virtua Fighter and the massive Iron Fossil ship from Dariusburst.

Bandai, meanwhile, has stepped up their figuremaking game with several game-related figures of their own from their S.H. Figuarts line. These figures are in a similar scale to figmas, and often come with a heavy focus on poseability and accessories - so much so that Bandai offers sold-separately "effect parts," like fire and energy blasts, to encourage you to put the figures in action-packed scenes of your own design. While the line tends to focus more on popular anime and live-

action characters, there are still S.H. Figuarts versions of several Mario characters, Pokemon critters, Mega Man robots, Persona personalities, and the World Warriors from Street Fighter, among many others. Be warned, though - many of these figures lack a stand out of the box, so you'll have to buy one separately.

For fans looking for things that are a bit bigger and more detailed, however, there are plenty of options. NECA ([necaonline.com](http://necaonline.com)) has a huge variety of videogame toys in a bigger, more detailed scale than figmas and Figuarts. While figma tends to focus primarily on Japanese licenses, NECA's offerings cover numerous Western-developed games, including LittleBigPlanet, God of War, Bioshock Infinite, and Uncharted, along with retro favourites like Contra and Castlevania. Their figures stand at seven inches (a little under 18cm) in scale, and the extra

#### WHAT NOT TO BUY

Not all collectibles are created equal. There's plenty of plastic crap out there that inspires little love and only serves to collect dust and fill up clearance bins. Here are some products to avoid.

**Funko POPs:** The Precious Moments of pop culture collectibles. Sure, they're cheap, but they're ugly, soulless, and often poorly-made. A shelf full of POPs staring at someone with beady black eyes would make any houseguest head for the hills. Avoid.

**Play Arts Kai:** You would think Square-Enix would make quality figures, but too often, Play Arts Kai action figures have serious paint or engineering flaws that make their high price tags feel like a rip-off. They might look nice in the box, but don't ever try to actually play with them.





## BAD INVESTMENTS

There are plenty of reasons to collect this stuff, but one thing you shouldn't be doing is looking at these as investments for the future. Much like comic books, trading cards, and yes, video games, only a select few collectibles go up in value over time for reasons that are often difficult to predict. Even that rare, limited-edition action figure variant you still have in the box is unlikely to sell for more than what you bought it for years down the line, especially if the subject matter is no longer trendy. Collect to have fun, not to make a profit!

Storm Collectibles



bit of size allows for more detail to be showcased. The figures do tend to be a bit "stiffer" in the joints than figmas, however, and have made some sacrifices with poseability to accommodate extra detail.

Other manufacturers have recently stepped in to offer similarly larger-scale and detailed action figures, as well. Storm Collectibles ([www.stormco.com.hk](http://www.stormco.com.hk)) is a Hong Kong based toymaker that has been producing some very impressive action figures based on Street Fighter and Mortal Kombat, complete with special effect parts and, in Mortal Kombat's case, some beautifully gruesome accessories to bring the ultraviolence to three-dimensional life. Another Hong Kong based toymaker, Kids Logic ([www.kids-logic.com](http://www.kids-logic.com)), is also joining the fray with impressive-looking chibi-sized and 1/6 scale Street Fighter figures.

If you want the highest-quality poseable figures, however, you're going to want to the 1/6 scale toys produced by Medicom Toy (<http://www.medicomtoy.co.jp/>) and Hot Toys (<http://www.hottoys.com.hk/>). These companies specialise in producing exquisitely detailed figures, such as Medicom's Real Action Heroes line, that offer things most "typical" action figures don't: Rubberised "skin" over an inner skeleton for extra poseability, real fabric clothes, stunningly realistic face sculpts (sometimes with options like individually moving eyes!), and a huge number of accessories. While these companies tend to focus more on Hollywood films and comics for their figures, when they do make a figure based on games - like Hot Toys's stunning Metal Gear Solid line, or Real Action Heroes Link from Skyward Sword - collectors sit up and take notice. However, this high quality comes with a price, as these figures will always cost at least a few hundred dollars.

## FIX ME UP

Okay, maybe you don't need something that's poseable - you might be paranoid that you'd break something by moving it too hard, or you don't like the look of all those joints and seams. That's fine. What you probably want to look at are fixed-posed figures and statues. While these are among the nicest-looking collectibles out there, they also tend to be among the most expensive, depending on size and material.

There are plenty of small fixed-pose figures out there that look quite nice. Medicom Toy offers a few 7-inch figures from their Ultra Detail Figure line of famous Nintendo personalities like Link and Mario. PDP ([pdp.com/en/pixel-pals/](http://pdp.com/en/pixel-pals/)) offers light-up sprite collectibles called Pixel Pals that are modeled after numerous beloved retro gamer characters. NECA and Gaming Heads ([www.gamingheads.com](http://www.gamingheads.com)) offer small-scale figurines like bobbleheads that can brighten up a cramped space with a little bit of gaming joy, as well.

It's the big pieces, however, that really grab attention and take your





Medicom Toy

breath away. Japanese companies are at the forefront of the fixed-pose figure trend, with literally dozens of companies snapping up licenses to produce PVC statues based on beloved game characters. Good Smile and its numerous umbrella companies, like Max Factory and Phat! Company, produce numerous figures based on games like Fire Emblem, Danganronpa, 7th Dragon, Guilty Gear, and numerous others. Alter ([www.alter-web.jp](http://www.alter-web.jp)), one of Japan's most highly-regarded PVC figure makers, also dabbles in gaming figures from time to time, particularly figures based on Bandai-Namco's Tales of RPG series, Odin Sphere, Persona, and Muramasa the Demon Blade. Other companies like Kotobukiya (<http://en.kotobukiya.co.jp/>), Vertex ([www.vertex-jp.net](http://www.vertex-jp.net)) and Union Creative (<http://union-creative.jp/en/>) offer stunning figures from game series like Pokemon, Tekken, Valkyria Chronicles, Soul Sacrifice, Gravity Rush, Hyperdimension Neptunia, and numerous others.

PVC figures have become quite popular due to the material being used to make being both relatively inexpensive and resilient - PVC has a fair bit of give before it breaks (though

it's not advised that you toss figures off your shelf with any degree of regularity). It does have a few problems, though: molding seams can be easier to see, they can warp in adverse weather conditions, and sometimes the figures' plasticisation chemicals can cause the figures to develop a weird, dust-attracting "stickiness" after several years. This brings us to statues made of resin and polystone, which are more commonly utilised by Western collectible manufacturers. While more brittle, these figures come with an impressive weight and heft that allows them to hold their form and look great for decades.

One of the most well-known manufacturers of these polystone figures is UK-based First 4 Figures ([www.first4figures.com](http://www.first4figures.com)). Besides being one of few collectible manufacturers whose primary focus is videogaming goods, they offer a stunning variety of high-end collectible statues, covering properties like Sonic, Kirby, Metroid, Mega Man, Tekken, Dark Souls, Katamari Damacy, Pac-Man, and Okami - amongst numerous others. Each limited edition statue is carefully painted and individually numbered (and frequent customers can request to get the same serial numbers on each figure if they collect full sets). They also offer exclusive editions of figures with unique embellishments like light-up parts to add that extra touch to already impressive displays.

Gaming Heads also has a selection of exquisitely-crafted

gaming statues for the discerning collector. Whether it's Gordon Freeman from Half-Life 2, Raziel from Soul Reaver, or a Big Daddy from Bioshock, they've probably got something that'll make you stop and go "whoa!" - be it the figures themselves or the pricetags attached. If fighting games are more of your thing, you might be more keen on the offerings of Pop Culture Shock ([popcultureshocktoys.com](http://popcultureshocktoys.com)), who make massive-scale statues based on Street Fighter and Mortal Kombat that will inspire awe from their sheer presence. In terms of sheer engineering coolness, however, it's hard to top the stunningly stylish statues of Kinetiquettes ([www.kinetiquettes.com](http://www.kinetiquettes.com)), which utilise magnets to attach parts easily and achieve neat effects like "floating." Their current offerings cover Street Fighter, Devil May Cry, and - rather interestingly - a figure of legendary Street Fighter player Daigo "The Beast" Umehara.

Of course, that's just a small sampling of the big, beautiful world of gaming-related figures and collectibles. There's plenty here we didn't cover, such as the thriving market for custom figures and plushies you can find at conventions or online sites like etsy, but part of the fun of collecting gaming goodies is getting out there and discovering precisely what appeals to you. We can guarantee one thing, though: once your game room has been spiced up with a few high-quality figures, it'll never be the same again! ❗



First 4 Figures



Gaming Heads

#### BOOTLEG STUFF

A big market for collectibles means that there will be unscrupulous retailers out there selling shoddy knock-offs at inflated prices, especially for popular toy lines like Nendoroids. Be careful when buying online or at conventions: Amazon and Ebay are filled with bootlegs, and shady con sellers might buy fakes in bulk to sell to the crowds. Don't be afraid to ask to inspect the goods before you buy, and look for things like missing/incorrect copyrights, poor paint/plastic molding, and shabby packaging - they're all signs of a fake.





HYPER MULTIPLAYER MEMORIES

# Mario Kart DS

DEVELOPER | Nintendo  
RELEASE DATE | 2005

With the exception of Mario Kart DS and Quake O'Clock, all of our other multiplayer obsessions were relegated to two to four players. With the advent of the dual screen handheld, wireless LAN play and one of the best iterations of the venerable karting game ever released allowed eight of us to race against each other. Even better, thanks to a download and play function, only one person in the office technically needed to own the game, as other players could wirelessly download necessary parts of the game for multiplayer races. Of course, being fans of karting and the vast majority of first-party DS titles, most, if not all of us owned a copy of Mario Kart DS.

What made the game so perfect for office rivalries is that, at its core, Mario Kart DS is a very simple game. It's racing boiled down to its very basics, with an accelerator, brake, hop, steering and some powerups on gorgeous, well-designed tracks. It's what you can do with these very simple tools that makes the game so appealing. Anyone can pick it up and be competitive, but with some practise you can learn the ins and outs of powerslides, snaking, slipstreaming, mini-turbo, shortcuts and alternate routes through tracks. And then there's the amazing granularity of racing style and handling achievable through combination of character and kart. It started off as a bit of a giggle, but after we began to come to grips with the subtleties of the game,

competition became serious.

It also became strangely quiet for the most part. While nearly all of our other multiplayer obsessions became quite noisy affairs, with heckling, cheers, jeers and occasionally beers, the wifi connection of the DS meant we didn't even have to leave our desks to race. An email would go round, a game was started and we'd all connect while still appearing to be doing work - at least to the casual observer.

There we would be, heads down, necks craned, aiming for the best start, the smoothest slide, the cheekiest snake, all the while hoping that those behind us wouldn't use an Inky on a turn, a Bullet Bill on a straight or the dreaded blue shell from last place. It would never be just one race. There would be disagreement about what track, how someone cheated (even though that was not really possible) and a host of other excuses for a rematch and another race would begin. There we'd sit, at our desks, heads down, shoulders hunched, looking for all the world like people doing something important. Or if not important, at least something our bosses paid us to do.

It may not have been a job, but keeping our racing skills at their peak was definitely hard work, and we definitely put in the hours. There were strained eyes and neck cramps galore, but momentary pain was worth the fleeting glory of defeating co-workers while racing through the cosmos on the Rainbow Road. **Daniel Wilks** ❧



23:57:30 IT'S TIME TO STOP WATCHING THE DOOMSDAY

AUSTRALIAN

# POPULAR SCIENCE

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# HYPER STUFF

... for the Ultimate  
Loungeroom Setup



*You want to game with your friends, but every setup needs some essentials. Here are some of our picks for the greatest gaming den.*

## Systems

*Your gaming living room should start with the basics. Here are the best reasons for you (and your friends) to be sitting on your couch.*

### PlayStation 4

**PRICE** \$400 - \$600  
**URL** [playstation.com/en-au](http://playstation.com/en-au)

Thus far the PS4 is doing a pretty good job of being the console to own if you only own one console. Although we're past the point of "games run better on PS4" (there's really no difference these days), Sony still boasts the superior lineup of games, especially from Japanese and indie developers. And we really like that controller.



### Xbox One

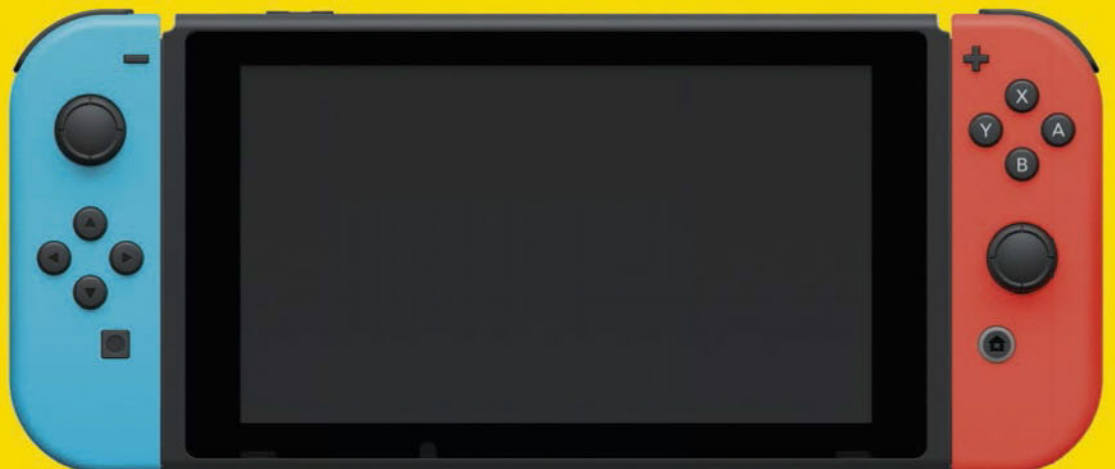
**PRICE** \$300-\$500  
**URL** [xbox.com/en-au](http://xbox.com/en-au)

After the success of the Xbox 360, Microsoft's had a rough time this generation. But they've turned things around somewhat from the confused launch with some great exclusives (Forza Horizon, Sunset Overdrive) and a much more focused "it's the games, dammit" message. And all those backwards-compatible 360 games are very convenient.

### Switch

**PRICE** \$470  
**URL** [nintendo.com.au](http://nintendo.com.au)

Sure, it's a Zelda machine right now, and while that is undoubtedly more than enough for any gamer worth their rupees, watching someone else slowly climb a mountain is not the stuff of an epic games night. So, bring your own Switch to the party, duh. Better yet, Mario Kart and Splatoon will be out soon.







## 3DS

**PRICE** \$150-\$250  
**URL** [nintendo.com.au](http://nintendo.com.au)

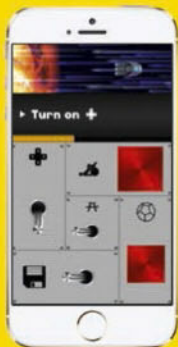
The Switch may be out (and portable) but Nintendo still has plans for its dedicated handheld. Admittedly, most of those plans involve Fire Emblem, which may not be to everyone's taste. Regardless, a 3DS is an essential addition to your living room, especially for some local Mario Kart multiplayer or teaming up online in Monster Hunter.



## N64

**PRICE** \$100-\$200  
**URL** [ebay.com.au](http://ebay.com.au)

You need at least one older console in your living room, and while there are solid arguments for any Nintendo hardware, we think the N64 comes out on top. For a start, it's got four controller ports and you're very likely to be able to dig up four controllers from somewhere. Plus, it's got Mario Kart 64, Goldeneye, and the best version of Mario Tennis.



## Space Team

**PRICE** Free  
**URL** [spaceteam.ca](http://spaceteam.ca)

No party is complete without at least one moment where you get into a heated argument and start yelling at your friends. We suggest channelling that into a "co-operative" iPhone game like Space Team. Just make sure everyone downloads the latest update in advance so you don't have to waste valuable time yelling "update the app!" at your friends, too.

## Screens

Assuming you're playing on a home console or PC, you're gonna need some sort of screen. Here's a few recommended TVs and projectors.



## LG E7 OLED 4K HDR Ultra HD TV

**PRICE** \$5199 (55"), \$7999 (65")  
**URL** [lg.com/au](http://lg.com/au)

If you want the best possible TV screen money can buy right this second then you want 4K OLED and LG offers the most consistent quality across the board. We think the E7 perfectly splits the difference between the top of the line W7 and the (cough) "budget" C7, offering great performance at a not-completely-insane price point. Of course, if you have all the money in the world you can get the flagship 65" W7, a TV only 4mm thick.



## Samsung KS9000 series

**PRICE** \$2500 - \$4000  
**URL** [samsung.com/au](http://samsung.com/au)

We're fans of the curved screen showcased here, though the viewing angle is obviously better for gaming solo rather than your favourite split-screen kart racer. Samsung's built-in Game Mode is a big plus, delivering exceptionally low levels of input lag and all but eliminating those multiplayer FIFA arguments over whether you pressed the shoot button in time. (Answer: You didn't.)



## LG 32" 32LJ550D SmartTV

**PRICE** \$799  
**URL** [lg.com.au](http://lg.com.au)

Of course, if you just have a regular PS4 or Xbox One (or indeed, any earlier HD console) and you reckon you're unlikely to be needing a 4K display any time soon, then a solid mid-sized 1080p screen, like say this one from LG, is really all you need. And the money you save is probably better spent on about 20 full-price games.



## Sony BVM-20F1E

**PRICE** \$700 - \$800  
**URL** [ebay.com.au](http://ebay.com.au)

Hook up an old standard def console to your brand new TV and you're in for a shock. It will look horrendous. For that authentic retro experience you're going to need a retro screen, and that means tracking down a CRT. The Sony BVM series, while technically a monitor, is the clear choice. You can find 'em on eBay for less than a grand.



## BenQ HT2050 Projector

**PRICE** \$2500  
**URL** [benq.com.au](http://benq.com.au)

Once you've played split-screen Halo on a projector, it's disheartening to go back to even the larger living room-sized TVs. This 1080p BenQ projector is a great all-round choice if you want impressive picture quality at a semi-budget price point. Just be careful you don't knock over your Mountain Dew or step in someone's pizza in the dark.



## Sony VPL-VW350ES Projector

**PRICE** \$10000  
**URL** [sony.com.au](http://sony.com.au)

Sony pretty much has the 4K projector market to itself. As such, and because this is Sony, their 4K projectors are really good, but also ludicrously expensive. The VPL-VW350ES came out last year and will still be the man of the match at your next FIFA night, but for the price you and your mates could probably all fly to Europe to watch the Champions League Final.



## VR

Virtual Reality is still in its nascent, “will it move beyond gimmick?” stage. But the ultimate gaming setup loves a novelty so we can’t resist.



### PlayStationVR

**PRICE** \$550  
**URL** [playstation.com/en-au](http://playstation.com/en-au)

The most affordable of the big three VR headsets--not only because a PS4 is way cheaper than a decent PC, PSVR's performance doesn't lag behind as much as the price

might suggest. After a strong launch lineup, new games and new announcements have been lacking, but Resident Evil 7 is perhaps the most persuasive VR sales pitch yet.



### HTC Vive

**PRICE** \$1400  
**URL** [htc.com/au/virtual-reality](http://htc.com/au/virtual-reality)

The most expensive of the big three VR headsets, the Vive is also the most feature-complete. Room-scale VR with motion controllers means it gives you more out of the box

than either rival. Rumours suggest we may see a Vive 2 sometime this year, so maybe wait for confirmation there before emptying your wallet.



### Oculus Rift

**PRICE** US\$600  
**URL** [oculus.com/rift](http://oculus.com/rift)

The Rift may have been first out of the VR blocks, but it's fair to say it's been surpassed in technology by the Vive and in accessibility by PSVR (and in ethics by anyone

who isn't Palmer Luckey). Still, it's cheaper than the Vive and those Oculus Touch motion controllers are on the way soon.

## Chairs

You've got a couch, of course, but what you really need is a dedicated gaming throne.



### X Rocker Triple Flip

**PRICE** \$250 plus shipping  
**URL** [xrockernation.com](http://xrockernation.com)

Ignore the Flying-V meets BMX XXX extreeeeeme name and just look at this thing. It's super comfortable, has a storage compartment (for your controllers, games and snacks) that doubles as a footrest, and can even pass as a regular old lounge chair if you squint.



### Cohesion XP 2.1

**PRICE** US\$200  
**URL** [ebay.com.au](http://ebay.com.au)

We like these baseless gaming chairs. They trick you into thinking you're in full gaming slob mode while actually offering comfort and support. Cohesion's XP 2.1 is a good budget-conscious choice, and we appreciate how it easily folds up for storage when you want your living room to look respectable.



### OpenWheeler Game Seat

**PRICE** US\$400  
**URL** [openwheeler.co.uk](http://openwheeler.co.uk)

Racing aficionados have long known that analogue sticks and trigger buttons just don't cut it for racing games. Once you've got your steering wheel the next step is to mount it in an authentic cockpit like OpenWheeler's Game Seat. They come customised and branded around your racing game of choice too.



## Headsets

Headsets offer the best audio bang for your buck. Plus, they let you game well into the early hours without disturbing sleeping partners, small children, parents and neighbours.

### Sennheiser Game One

PRICE \$370  
URL [en-au.sennheiser.com](http://en-au.sennheiser.com)

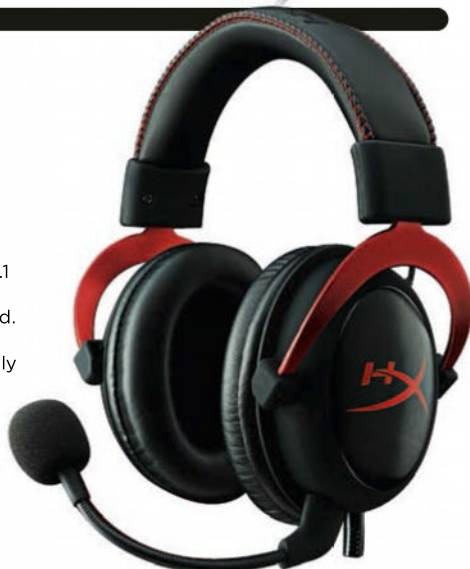
These are one of the most comfortable headsets we've ever used, the delightfully soft plush lining is like a massage for your ears during even the longest *Witcher 3* session. The noise-cancelling microphone is excellent and Sennheiser just make really good audio gear.



### HyperX Cloud II

PRICE \$160  
URL [hyperxgaming.com](http://hyperxgaming.com)

This isn't HyperX's top of the line headset, but it still offers virtual 7.1 surround sound and adjustable-everything-that-could-be-adjusted. All the HyperX headsets are worthwhile, but this is undoubtedly the best bang for your buck.



### Razer Man O' War

PRICE \$330  
URL [razerzone.com](http://razerzone.com)

Headset cables can be a bit of a pain, especially when they start getting tangled up with your controller cables. Razer's intimidatingly named Man O' War is our pick for the best wireless headset. They promise 7 days of use on one charge, but in reality that's about 14 or so hours of gameplay.



## Soundbars

Your TV's built-in speakers are more than likely barely adequate. Soundbars are a good choice if you don't like headphones or faffing with a multi-speaker setup.

### LG SJ9 Soundbar

PRICE \$1699  
URL [lg.com/au](http://lg.com/au)

The SJ9 is expensive, sure, but it's also a soundbar that incorporates Dolby Atmos, allowing it to give some excellent directional sound through a mixture of phase shifting and reflecting sound off walls and the roof. The effect is pretty damn impressive, but if you want even more grunt you can add a sub and satellites for true immersive sound.



### Creative iRoar

PRICE \$600  
URL [au.creative.com](http://au.creative.com)

Billing itself as a wireless intelligent speaker rather than a mere soundbar, the iRoar is as feature-packed as its name is groan-worthy. The dedicated "Game On" mode is tailored for bass-heavy gaming but you'll probably want to also invest in the iRock sub-woofer to complete the package. Pricey though.



### Razer Leviathan

PRICE \$370  
URL [www.razerzone.com](http://www.razerzone.com)

Like the iRoar, Razer's Leviathan will conveniently pair with all your Bluetooth devices. Unlike the iRoar, it actually comes with a sub-woofer packed in, which is remarkable given the price difference. It doesn't have the iRoar's flexibility or overall quality but it'll do the job if that job is making explosions in *Battlefield 1* sound fucking awesome.

### Yamaha YAS-106

PRICE Around \$300  
URL Various retailers

Coming in at a more entry-level price range is Yamaha's YAS-106 soundbar. There's no sub-woofer, hence the price, and it's really intended to be wall-mounted rather than simply sitting under your TV. Still, our ears give it the thumbs up (hey, we're mutants) and there's no shame in saving a bit of dosh.



## Decals

What better way to truly personalise your gamer style than with some crappy stickers.

### Glow-in-the-dark

PRICE \$30  
URL EB Games



Wouldn't it be cool if your console and controller glowed in the dark? Yeah, sure, just bear in mind they look like this in the cold light of day.

### Flames

PRICE \$30  
URL EB Games



We had an uncle who had flames just like this tattooed on his arm and decaled down the side of his shitty car. He's dead now.

### Day of the Dead

PRICE \$30  
URL EB Games



Probably the least terrible of the decals EB Games are flogging right now. At least we can pretend this one has something to do with Grim Fandango.

### Wood

PRICE \$30  
URL EB Games



When we first saw the Xbox One a few years ago its size and shape reminded us of 1970s home audio equipment. What was missing was the wood varnish finish.

### Digital Green Camouflage

PRICE \$30  
URL EB Games



It makes sense. Green, after all, is forever linked to the Xbox brand. It's just unfortunate this looks like someone puked all over your console.

## Controllers

*Vitatem num quae. Itasper ovitempera duntur? Qui ommoloruptas pe perum explign isquibus, quae lauda pratius voluptate dolorionsed quas dolut faccus aut lati*

### Xbox One Elite Controller

PRICE \$200  
URL Xbox.com

Aptly named, the Elite is Microsoft's luxury end controller. It's the controller you get when you decide to include everything no matter how much it costs. You can swap in and out three styles of analog stick caps, or two types of d-pad, depending on personal preference and the type of game you're playing. It's fully customisable and just feels weighty in the hand and smooth and responsive whenever you hit a button or pull a trigger. It's two hundred bucks, but you can see why once you've given it a go.



### PS4 Revolution Pro Controller

PRICE \$180  
URL Playstation.com

Unlike the Elite, Nacon's PS4 Revolution is a third-party controller licensed by Sony, rather than an official PS4 DualShock design. It's ok, nothing more, with solidly redesigned triggers, four macro buttons you can assign however you like, and support for up to four custom profiles. But it's not wireless. And while it comes with a 3-metre cable, which is probably long enough for most gaming setups, it's not really the point is it? If you really don't like the PS4 DualShock, this is an option, but it pales next to the Elite.



### Chatpad

PRICE \$40-60  
URL Various

We didn't know you could still get these. We remember the first one for the Xbox 360 seemed like a great idea and worked flawlessly. But then we also remembered we barely used it because you really don't need to type on your console all that often. Still, they do the job they were built for and they do it well.



### PowerA Controller Caps

PRICE \$20  
URL www.powera.com

These little caps clip on to your PS4 or Xbox One controller's analog sticks to provide additional grip (so your thumbs don't slip off in the middle of fighting Pontiff Sulyvahn, something that has happened to us far too many times to be mere coincidence) and extra durability (so the original rubber doesn't begin to fray and fall off from having to fight Pontiff Sulyvahn again and again for reasons already touched upon). Recommended.



## Cushions

Comfort is crucial is any gaming den. You've got to take care of your butt when the future of Hylia is at stake. But sometimes comfort's not everything.



### Dragon Quest Slime Beanbag

PRICE Too much  
URL play-asia.com

I mean, seriously, this how do you even sit on this? It's like a single-pronged space hopper than doesn't bounce.



### Tetris Blocks

PRICE varies  
URL www.thinkgeek.com

These DIY cushions send a message to anyone who drops by. We're just not sure if it's: a) I am a tasteful gamer who appreciates pure gameplay or b) I haven't played a video game since 1991.



### Minecraft Pouffe

PRICE varies  
URL www.etsy.com

Lazy people would buy a cube, wrap it in green fabric and call it a Minecraft cushion. It's the dedication to the pixel cause that enables this pouffe to stand apart.



### Pokeball Beanbag

PRICE varies  
URL www.etsy.com

Simple but striking. The only slightly sad aspect to this no doubt well-arsed beanbag is how rumped and deflated and distinctly un-ball-like it looks after use.



### Question Block

PRICE varies  
URL etsy.com

Hey, if you're gonna make a Mario themed cushion, this is the blindingly obvious option. There are at last count three million of these for sale on Etsy.



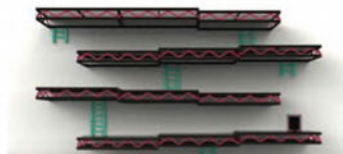
### Thwomp Cushion

PRICE \$30  
URL ebgames.com.au

This is the connoisseur's Mario themed cushion. There are at last count a mere two and a half million

## Random Stuff

*Vitatem num quae. Itasper ovitempera duntur? Qui ommoloruptas pe perum explign isquibus, quae lauda pratius voluptate dolorionsed quas dolut faccus aut lati*



### Donkey Kong Shelves

PRICE n/a  
URL www.thisiswhyimbroke.com

Theming your entertainment cabinet is fraught with danger. Too much and it'll distract from the screen on which you're gaming. These shelves inspired by the original Donkey Kong arcade game are perfect: iconic yet practical.



### Space Invaders Rug

PRICE DIY  
URL Your local carpet store

Possibly the least efficient floor covering we've ever seen, it'd be fantastic though for anyone who has a coffee table whose legs were just the perfect size and shape to fit into the gaps in the rug.



### Surface Tension Dual

PRICE \$4000  
URL surface-tension.net

The Dual is a coffee table that doubles as a sit down arcade cabinet. It comes pre-loaded with 60 games via MAME and features control options on opposite sides of the table for that classic head-to-head arcade vibe. The control panels fortunately slide back into the table when not in



### PlayStation Clock

PRICE varies  
URL www.etsy.com

The reason why this works so well is because this is exactly how we'd have to tilt our PlayStation to get it to read discs correctly. We wish we'd thought of hanging it on the wall back in 1997.



### Joystick Coathangers

PRICE Parts and labour  
URL bunnings.com

Nail these to the wall just inside your front door to cater for guests who might otherwise not know what to do with their excess clothing. We've seen NES, Dualshock and Xbox controller versions but these old school Atari style sticks are our favourite.



### NES Coffee Table

PRICE US\$3500  
URL www.thisiswhyimbroke.com

Most controllers would not make for practical coffee tables. The Atari Jaguar, for example, would be a carpet-staining catastrophe while the N64 doesn't even bear thinking about. The NES, however, is eminently suitable as this sample





HYPER MULTIPLAYER MEMORIES

# Guitar Hero (series)

DEVELOPER | Harmonix  
RELEASE DATE | 2005-

Fun fact - no Hyper editor, including Eliot Fish, an actual professional and recorded guitarist, has ever been particularly good at Guitar Hero. Deputies, on the other hand, seem to all be masters of the art of five button plastic guitar thrashing. Both Maurice Branscombe and Darren Wells were masters of the plastic guitar, effortlessly playing master level versions of songs that had the rest of us troubled at normal difficulty. They could play all the chords, sliding between three button combinations with ease, but despite all that, there was one mountain that both had difficulty climbing - getting to the end of Free Bird without hand cramps.

While some people saw Through the Fire and Flames, the ridiculous speed metal track by DragonForce as the ultimate tune to master in the series, we felt differently. There were two in particular that we would play over and over again. One for technical mastery and the other for endurance. As far as technical mastery goes, YYY, the amazing bit of prog rock wankery by Canadian band Rush was our song of choice, as it offered a nice challenge across difficulties thanks to speed and tonal changes. It wasn't the best song for Lead/Rhythm co-op, but a killer for competitive. It's not a short song either, clocking in at just shy of four and a half rather active minutes, but when

it came to endurance guitar hero sessions, YYY paled in comparison to nine odd minutes of Lynyrd Skynyrd's 1973 paean to fellow Southern rocker, Duane "Skydog" Allman of the Allman Brothers Band. At just nine minutes, the Guitar Hero cover of Free Bird was far shorter than the 14 minutes of the live version that the band often played, but those nine minutes felt far longer.

The first five or so minutes of the song are fairly simple to play for most people (including yours truly), even at higher difficulties, but these first minutes take one hell of a toll due to the fact that they mostly consist of held notes. After a few minutes, the tension of constantly holding buttons began to register. By the time you reached the hard part, your hand was a claw lacking dexterity or the ability to do much without pain. That, of course is when the crazy key combinations come in, and precisely why the song became the white whale of Next Media for quite a while. Beating Free Bird on extreme was both a show of gaming prowess as well as physical endurance. Other people might want to go to the gym and work out, or run marathons to prove to themselves that they can achieve something great physically. For us, and the deputies in particular, finishing Free Bird, hands intact, was our Rocky running up the Philadelphia Museum of Art moment. **Daniel Wilks** 🍷





# DESIGNED FOR ESPORTS



## FOUR ADDITIONAL FULLY-PROGRAMMABLE BUTTONS

The Razer Raiju features a total of four Multi-Function Buttons — two bumpers at the shoulders and two removable triggers on the underside, all of which can be individually remapped to any other controller actions, so you have absolute freedom to dominate with your winning configuration.



## ERGONOMIC SHAPE AND WEIGHT FAVORED BY TOP ESPORTS ATHLETES

To ensure undisputable gaming comfort, extensive research was done, and multiple iterations have been rigorously tested by prominent esports athletes. As a result, the chassis of the Razer Raiju not only perfectly accommodates the touchpad, but stays comfortable for use even in the most intense of battles.



## QUICK CONTROL PANEL FOR EASY PROFILE AND AUDIO CUSTOMIZATION

From toggling between profiles to adjusting both game volume and mic mute, the Quick Control Panel gives you easy access to a whole range of functions. Conveniently located between the grips, you can simply switch your preferences in-game without taking your hands off the controller.

**JB HI-FI**

[www.jbhifi.com.au/razer](http://www.jbhifi.com.au/razer)

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