

Xbox 360 launch finds waiting throngs

November 23 2005



In the wee hours of Tuesday morning in College Station, Texas, David Rosenfeld, a 26-year-old software developer and avid video-game player, cruised by his local Best Buy to try and find an Xbox 360 game console. But he was quickly dissuaded.

Upon his arrival there was already a line of people, some in tents, braving the 34-degree weather, waiting for their own units.

The situation is pretty much the same throughout the United States: avid video-game fans lined up overnight at stores offering the long-awaited console for its Nov. 22 release just after midnight. The frenzy continues

online, as recently purchased units draw bids as high as \$1,500 on eBay.

The must-have item of the pre-holiday season, the Xbox 360 is the successor to Microsoft's Xbox video-game console. Eagerly awaited by an avid fan base and the first of the next-generation video-game consoles to ship (Nintendo and Sony are expected to ship new products next year), the console boasts significant upgrades over its predecessor.

Sporting an advanced multiple-core processor, upgraded graphics system, additional system memory, detachable hard drive, wireless functionality, full support for HDTV systems and built-in progressive scan DVD playback functionality, the console offers all the bells and whistles a video-game fan could want.

The console is available in both basic ("Core") and Premium packages, which retail for \$299.99 and \$399.99 respectively. The Core package offers the buyer an Xbox 360 unit, a wired controller, faceplate and standard AV cable with which to connect to a television. The Premium configuration adds a detachable 20-gigabyte hard drive, headset, wireless controller, high-definition AV cable, Ethernet cable and remote control to the basic package. Accessories such as additional controllers, memory cards, AV cables and detachable hard drives can be purchased separately. Sixteen video-game titles accompany the new console's launch.

Till now the Xbox Live network service has been used primarily for multiplayer game play. This has changed significantly in the new version. Upon setup and registration of their Xbox 360 consoles, players can sign up for either a free Xbox Live Silver account or pay \$7.99 per month or \$69.99 per year for access to an Xbox Live Gold account. The Live Silver account offers access to player profiles, voice chat, text messaging, video messages from Live Gold account holders and access to certain online games. The Live Gold membership includes the

functionality found within the free Live Silver account but provides access to all online games, video chat, tournament access and entry to all Xbox Live special events.

Online functionality is extended through the Marketplace and Arcade features. Marketplace, which offers game demos, high-definition game trailers, themes, downloadable images for gamer profile cards and access to a micropayment system, serves as a marketing and retail tool for the console. The Arcade system, also part of the Live network, offers quick access to arcade-style games, which, while less elaborate than marquee titles, are available for \$5 to \$10 each. These games can be downloaded to play in demo versions or unlocked for full access once a payment has been made.

Social elements have also changed with the revised Xbox Live architecture. As with previous versions of the system, players will be able to keep a list of friends they can easily locate and play with online. In the new version of the network, players are able to easily pull up profile information for other players as well as choose which area they play in.

Multiple "zones" on the Live network, each geared toward certain play styles (the R&R and Family areas tend to be more casual than the Pro and Underground), help provide the type of environment players want to be in. Improved filtering technologies also allow users to rate their experiences with other players. This feedback then improves or decreases the chance that a player will run into that person in the future.

In addition to its role as a game console, the Xbox 360 also acts as a media center. Players can synch the unit with Windows Media Center PCs to be able to access their pictures, movies and music wirelessly. Players can also stream their own audio tracks through the console by plugging a portable audio player such as an iPod into one of the USB

ports or attach a video camera for videoconferencing.

Older Xbox game titles can be run via emulation functions but require the detachable hard-drive accessory. The hard drive, which includes code that emulates both the hardware and the software of the original Xbox, allows most of the older titles to be played seamlessly.

Unfortunately, quantities shipped to retail stores have yet to meet demand. In some cases, pre-orders for units placed months in advance were not honored in the face of only a few dozen units arriving at each location.

Copyright 2005 by United Press International

Citation: Xbox 360 launch finds waiting throngs (2005, November 23) retrieved 6 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2005-11-xbox-throngs.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--