

Video game sales improve slightly in September

October 19 2009, By BARBARA ORTUTAY , AP Technology Writer



FILE - In this Aug. 28, 2009 file photo, video gamer Paulette Rivera, 13, looks over "Rock Band 2" bundles at a Game Stop store in Los Angeles, Calif. Games such as "The Beatles" Rock Band," "Guitar Hero 5" and "Halo 3: ODST," along with price cuts for all three consoles should give the industry a much-needed kick-start for the holidays. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes, file)

(AP) -- After six straight months of double-digit declines, U.S. video game sales finally saw an improvement in September.

But the rebound was much more muted than analysts had hoped, a sign that the recession has cut deep into consumer spending on interactive entertainment. Even recent console price cuts weren't enough to push hardware dollar sales higher year-over-year.

Market researcher NPD Group on Monday reported a 1 percent increase

in September sales of video game hardware, software and accessories compared with the same month last year. The total came to \$1.28 billion. Year-to-date sales were down 13 percent.

Hardware sales dropped 6 percent to \$472.3 million. For the first time since its launch three years ago, Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 3 sold more units than both the [Nintendo Wii](#) and the Microsoft Corp.'s [Xbox 360](#).

"This portrays a very strong consumer reaction to the price decrease, as August and September both realized a lift of more than 70 percent over the prior month," said NPD analyst Anita Frazier of the PlayStation 3's performance.

Sony cut the price of the [PlayStation 3](#) by \$100 in August. Microsoft also slashed the Xbox 360's price by \$100 that month, and Nintendo cut the Wii's price for the first time since its 2006 launch by \$50 in late September. The average retail price of console hardware declined 8 percent from last September.

The top-selling gaming platform was still the handheld Nintendo DS, for the sixth month in a row.

Microsoft's "[Halo 3: ODST](#)" was by far the month's best-selling game. It helped push software sales 5 percent higher, to \$649.3 million, though this was still well below what many analysts expected.

David Magee of SunTrust Robinson Humphrey forecast an increase in the low double digits. Wedbush Morgan's Michael Pachter expected a 21 percent jump.

Both "The Beatles: Rock Band" and "Guitar Hero 5" were among the top 10 best-selling games, along with Nintendo's "[Wii Sports Resort](#)" and "Madden NFL 10" for the Xbox 360.

Shares of GameStop Corp., the world's largest [video game](#) retailer, slipped 30 cents to \$27.86 in after-hours trading.

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