

## Gift Guide: Adventures in the video game aisle

November 30 2009, By LOU KESTEN , Associated Press Writer

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In this file video game image released by Activision, an animated version of the late DJ-AM is shown in the video game, "DJ Hero." (AP Photo/Activision)

(AP) -- The video game aisle can be intimidating for aspiring Santas who haven't touched a joystick since "Pong." But it has something for everyone: riveting solo adventures, online multiplayer battles and fun-for-the-whole-family social games. Here are some of the best picks for this holiday season.

"Uncharted 2: Among Thieves" (\$60, for the PlayStation 3, rated T for teen)

Rakish adventurer Nathan Drake hunts for Shangri-La in this sequel, which mixes gunplay, fisticuffs and acrobatics with a witty, unpredictable story. One of the most beautiful video games ever published, it's an interactive version of a Hollywood blockbuster - one of

the good ones, like "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

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"DJ Hero" (\$120, for the Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and Wii, rated T)

"The Beatles: Rock Band" (\$60 for software only, \$250 with instruments, for the Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and Wii, rated T)

Rock-loving gamers have been grooving on "[Guitar Hero](#)" and "Rock Band" for a few years, but fans of hip-hop and dance music have been left out. "DJ Hero" corrects that, putting you behind the wheel of a fake turntable and letting you scratch and mix dozens of combinations of club tracks. It's like hosting a rave in your living room.

For those who prefer classic rock, "The Beatles: Rock Band" lets you relive the career of the Fab Four, from a Liverpool club to their London rooftop farewell. It's a loving tribute.

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"New Super Mario Bros. Wii" (\$50, for the [Wii](#), rated E for everyone)

The latest Mario Bros. installment returns to the 2-D, side-scrolling action that made the spunky Italian plumber famous. This time, though, up to four people can play cooperatively, so more experienced gamers can guide newbies across the familiar fire pits and floating platforms. Now you can finally show your grandma - or your kids - what the original magic was about.

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"Professor Layton & the Diabolical Box" (\$35, for the Nintendo DS,

rated E10+ for 10 and older)

Anyone who loves puzzles such as crosswords and sudoku will adore the latest chapter in the Professor Layton series, which weaves about 150 brainteasers into a clever mystery. Forget about those so-called "brain training" games; the exercises in logic, math, observation and object manipulation here really work out the gray matter.

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"Dragon Age: Origins" (\$60, for the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, rated M for mature)

"Demon's Souls" (\$50, for the PlayStation 3, rated M)

Then there are the hardest of hardcore players who want the toughest challenges you can throw at them. "Dragon Age" is a classic tale of sword-and-sorcery that will test the skill and strategy of even the most jaded "Dungeons & Dragons" nut. "Demon's Souls," another quasi-medieval epic, is so tough it will have mere mortals tearing their hair out. For the dedicated gamer, there's nothing more satisfying.

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"Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2" (\$60, for the Xbox 360, PCs and [PlayStation 3](#), rated M for mature)

This season's monster hit continues the global battle against terrorists, and it's bigger, louder and more brazen than its predecessor. A simulated airport terrorist attack has already drawn protest, and there's plenty more in "Modern Warfare 2" that's not for the squeamish. Older players with stronger stomachs will love it.

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