

Sony's PlayStation Move can't quite challenge Wii

October 1 2010, By Troy Wolverton



When Nintendo unveiled the Wii four years ago, few game industry pundits gave it much of a chance.

Its core processor was pedestrian compared with those in Sony's [PlayStation 3](#) and Microsoft's Xbox 360, the other new consoles that debuted about the same time. It didn't support high-definition video, unlike its rivals. And while the other two consoles could play movies and do other multimedia tricks, all the [Wii](#) did was play games.

But none of that mattered because of the Wii's innovative motion-sensing controllers. The controllers helped reinvent gaming, making it more fun and accessible to the masses.

Those controllers, along with some well-done games and a price that was significantly lower than its rivals, made the Wii a hit. Nintendo has now sold 74 million Wiis, nearly as many as the combined sales of the PlayStation 3 and the [Xbox 360](#).

It took them a while, but Sony and Microsoft finally realized that motion-sensing games are more than a passing fad. In hopes of luring past and would-be-future Wii buyers, Sony released its new motion-sensing system, dubbed the PlayStation Move, earlier this month, and Microsoft will soon follow with its own system.

The Move is actually a collection of accessories. The two core parts are the [Eye camera](#), a [Web camera](#) designed specifically for the PlayStation 3, and the Move [motion controller](#), which looks like a handheld microphone with a glowing ping pong ball on top.

There are additional accessories players may want or need. Some games encourage the use of two Move controllers per person. Others require the Move controller to be used in tandem with the Move navigation controller, which has a small joystick and extra buttons and is used similarly to the Wii's Nunchuk accessory.

The Move controllers work very much like those for the Wii. Game players direct the actions of their on-screen characters by making more or less natural motions with the controllers. For example, if you want your character to hit the ball in a tennis game, you swing the controller through the air as if it were the handle of a racket.

I'm generally a fan of motion-sensitive games. I've enjoyed playing the tennis, boxing, swordplay and other mini-games included in "Wii Sports" and "Wii Sports Resort." I've also had fun with the motion-sensitive elements of other games, particularly making Indiana Jones snap his whip in the "Lego Indiana Jones" games.

I tested out a handful of the new Move games for the PlayStation 3. Their big advantage over similar games on the Wii is that they are in high definition. As fun as the Wii is, its standard-definition games often look fuzzy on an HDTV. "Sports Champions" isn't all that different from the "Wii Sports" games, but it looks a lot better on a big screen.

As with the motion-sensitive games for the Wii, the Move games are designed to get players up and moving, rather than sit on the couch mashing buttons. I got a decent workout playing tennis in "Racquet Sports," playing beach volleyball in "Sports Champions" and having a sword fight with my son in that game's Gladiator Duel activity. I also found myself moving with my character while playing "Kung Fu Rider" and "Sports Champions" disc golf mini-game.

But the Move system differs from the Wii in important ways and overall comes up short.

The biggest difference is the price. You can get a new Wii with a controller, Nunchuk and two games for \$200. In contrast, a new PlayStation 3 with a Move controller and Eye camera costs \$400. And a bundle of the Move controller and Eye camera alone costs \$100.

The Move's underlying technology is different, but not always in a good way. The PlayStation 3 uses the Eye camera to track the ball on the Move controller. That allows players to become characters in augmented reality games as their images are projected on the screen holding a paintbrush or sword instead of a game controller.

But because it uses visible light, the camera can have a hard time tracking the ball against a bright background. I also noticed at times a lag between pressing a button on the Move controller and having the system respond.

Whether for those or for other reasons, I frequently found that the games I played didn't do a good job of mimicking my movements. I'd try to kick someone in "Kung Fu Rider," but nothing would happen. I'd try to hit the ball in a tennis game but my character wouldn't swing his racket.

I also found that the games generally weren't as inspired or fun as the motion-sensing games on the Wii. For example, the mini-games included in "Sports Champions" are similar to those in "Wii Sports," but "Sports Champions" includes a set of 20 stereotypical characters -- the jock, the tomboy, etc. -- that lack personality. Players aren't given the option, as they are on the Wii, of creating and personalizing their own zany characters.

"Kung Fu Rider" has a fun premise -- you ride through the streets of Hong Kong on rolling chairs and vacuum cleaners, collecting points and fighting off Mafiosi -- but its lack of responsiveness made it frustrating to play.

A slew of Move games is in the works, so better ones may come along soon. But given what's out there now -- and the Move's considerable price -- I think I'd stick with the Wii.

SONY PLAYSTATION MOVE:

- Troy's rating: 3.0 out of 5
- Likes: Brings high-definition to motion-sensing gaming. System's webcam allows players to become game characters
- Dislikes: Pricey. Didn't work well at times. Early games generally uninspired.

- How much: \$100 for accessory bundle; \$400 for bundle including PlayStation 3 console and Move accessories. Navigation controller (not included in either bundle, but needed for some games) is \$30
- Web: us.playstation.com

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