

# Asia powers PC rebound in computer gaming industry

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Fairgoers play video games in front of the stand of gaming peripherals producer "Razer" at the CeBIT trade fair in Hanover 2008. Despite Apple's conquest of mass-market computing and the current dominance of consoles such as Sony's Playstation 3 among avid gamers, PC gaming is clawing back lost ground thanks to its diehard supporters.

It looks like many other industrial buildings in Singapore with its squat form and grey exterior.

But make your way past firms producing lights and prams to the top floor of the seven-storey block and the sight that greets visitors is enough to make many young gamers think they've died and gone to heaven.

Welcome to the Singapore research and development centre of Razer, a cult brand among hardcore gamers worldwide who lust after high-

performance devices such as mice, keyboards, headsets and joysticks

Despite Apple's conquest of mass-market computing and the current dominance of consoles such as Sony's [Playstation 3](#) among avid gamers, PC gaming is clawing back lost ground thanks to its diehard supporters.

Entertainment industry research firm DFC Intelligence said in a market report released in September that the PC could dethrone consoles as the dominant hardcore gaming platform in three years.

Data from the firm showed that the global PC games market raked in a record \$16.2 billion last year, up 20 percent from 2009.

Although the console games market -- valued at nearly \$25 billion in 2010 -- outperformed the PC platform last year, DFC predicts a reversal of fortunes by 2014 because consoles have lost momentum.

"The Xbox 360 was released in 2005 and both the Playstation 3 and (Nintendo) [Wii](#) were released in 2006. That means that there's been a full five years since the last current console was released," DFC said.

But Razer's PC gaming doesn't come cheap.

The Black Widow Ultimate Stealth keyboard retails for \$139.99 while the Razer Tiamat 7.1 headset, which will be released in the coming months, will carry a \$179.99 price tag.

"I think this is a phenomenal time for the PC gaming industry," said Tan Min-Liang, the Singaporean co-founder and chief executive of Razer, which was founded in 1998 in San Diego, California.

The privately held firm now generates "triple digit millions" in revenues, Tan said.

The lack of new gaming console announcements, the PC's superiority in game graphics as well as new business models such as free-to-play online gaming are cited by industry observers to justify the PC's resurgence.



A man tries out a computer game on an Xbox in August 2011 during the gamescom fair in Cologne, western Germany. Despite Apple's conquest of mass-market computing and the current dominance of consoles such as Sony's Playstation 3 among avid gamers, PC gaming is clawing back lost ground thanks to its diehard supporters.

At the other extreme, casual gaming on Apple devices such as the iPad and iPhone is regarded with some contempt by [hardcore gamers](#) who couldn't be bothered to play "Angry Birds" and other popular titles in the genre.

Matt Ployhar, president of the non-profit PC Gaming Alliance, whose mission is to promote the platform, was understandably bullish.

"PC gaming is on track to match or exceed all three console manufacturers' combined revenues by 2014 or, barring any economic factors, possibly even earlier," he told AFP.

Ployhar added that Asia, particularly China, South Korea and Japan, were the main drivers of PC gaming growth worldwide, accounting for more than 45 percent of the global PC gaming market.

"The overall leader in terms of revenue and size is China," he said.

Razer's Tan said PC gamers in China -- where consoles such as Microsoft's [Xbox 360](#) and the Playstation 3 have been banned since 2000 even though they are made there -- far outnumbered their US counterparts.

The ban was imposed in 2000 after pressure from parents concerned over the impact of gaming on China's youth.

Nevertheless, a military shooting [game](#) called Crossfire currently has four million players in China at any given time, Tan said.

Professional gamers swear undying loyalty to the PC.

"It's like a tradition for me to play on PC," said Grzesiek Komincz, 17, a professional Starcraft II player better known to his legions of fans worldwide by his online moniker "mouzMaNa."

"Since I was a kid I've been playing on a computer so I kept continuing to play on the PC till this day," the Polish player told AFP by email.

So-called "Esports" tournaments, which star pro gamers such as Komincz, routinely feature more PC games than any other platform.

Prize money offered in top-tier tournaments often runs into the tens of thousands of dollars, sometimes up to \$100,000, making "Esports" a viable occupation for pros, particularly in South Korea.

Tan said Razer was not limiting itself to PC gaming -- it's also expanding into console accessories for good measure.

"The entire market is growing in a crazy pace," Tan said.

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