

Gadget Watch: Car game leaves Hot Wheels in dust

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This photo provided by Anki shows the toy race-car company's new iPhone-controlled car game. At the International CES gadget show in Las Vegas, Anki gave onlookers hands-on time with its high-tech game, Anki Drive, where several players control different toy cars on a plastic track that can roll up and go anywhere (AP Photo/Anki)

So long, Hot Wheels. You just got lapped by toy race-car company Anki, which showcased its iPhone-controlled car game at Apple's developers conference in June. At the International CES gadget show in Las Vegas this week, Anki gave onlookers hands-on time with its high-tech game, Anki Drive.

Several players control different toy cars on a plastic track that can roll up and go anywhere.

Boy, was it fun.

THE CONTROLS: The track appears to be painted with a pattern that is readable by a tiny infrared camera on the bottom of each car. Using the pattern, the cars know exactly where they are on the track, and even where the other cars are.

The iPhone app, which also works on iPads and iPod Touches, controls the cars. There are two main buttons: a throttle that swipes up or down, and a weapon button that drivers tap to shoot straight ahead. Enough hits will disable the vehicle in front of yours, allowing you to take the lead.

Rotating the iPhone left or right steers the car, though it can't leave the painted-on borders of the track. Keeping the device straight keeps the car going round and round the track in roughly the same lane.

LOTS OF FUN: Playing the [game](#) is kind of exhilarating, and scoring enough hits or wins earns you points. You can use those points to upgrade your car with better weapons or shields. It's like a video game in that way, except it all plays out in the real world.

Sometimes the cars spin off the track or get stuck by accident, but it happens less frequently than you might think. Setting them back on the track in a hurry is part of the fun.

THE THINKING: Stephan Ilberg, Anki's director of marketing, says the game helps tech-savvy kids have mind-blowing fun without staring at a computer screen or game console.

"It gets the kids off the video screen and back to the family room," he says.

PRICING: Anki, which is based in San Francisco, has a \$200 starter kit

that comes with two cars. Each extra car costs \$70. iPhone not included.

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