

Coming to a theater near you: esports

March 17 2015, byDerrik J. Lang



In this Aug. 7, 2009, file photo, a participant plays a computer game during the Intel Friday Night Game, a competition of the ESL, Electronic Sports League, in Dresden, Germany. The Electronic Sports League and live event broadcaster BY Experience announced plans Tuesday, March 17, 2015, to bring a series of live esports events to 1,500 to 2,000 movie theaters around the world. (AP Photo/Matthias Rietschel, File)

Competitive gaming is ready for its close-up.

The Electronic Sports League and live event broadcaster BY Experience announced [plans](#) Tuesday to bring a series of live esports events to 1,500 to 2,000 [movie theaters](#) around the world.

The "Esports in Cinema" series will launch in July with the debut of an esports documentary from filmmakers Christine O'Malley and Patrick Creadon, followed by live competitive gaming and a Q&A session in front of a live studio audience.

The event will be broadcast from the ESL studio in Burbank, California, on July 23 for North American and Latin American audiences and from the ESL studio in Cologne, Germany, on July 28 for European and Asian audiences.

"I think this documentary and the broader partnership is symbolic of how far we've come," said ESL managing director Ralf Reichert in a statement. "When we started out, I dreamt about us filling stadiums, but I never entertained the idea of filling cinemas."

BY Experience plans to broadcast "ESL One Cologne 2015," the league's "Counter-Strike: Global Offensive" tournament, to be held Aug. 22 and 23 at the Lanxess Arena in Cologne, Germany. The company is also expected to broadcast three to four other ESL events.

"The in-cinema broadcasts will afford esports fans an unprecedented opportunity to get together in their communities to enjoy several high-profile events throughout the year, as part of a global shared experience," said BY Experience co-president Julie Borchard-Young. "Cinemas provide the optimal setting for spectators to watch their favorite players and teams compete across an array of gaming titles, broadcast live on a 70-foot cinema screen in surround sound."

It's the first foray into gaming for BY Experience, which has [broadcast](#) such live events as David Bowie concerts and Metropolitan Opera productions in movie theaters.

Last year, theater chain Cinemark beamed Riot Games' "League of Legends" world championships into theaters in Plano, Texas; Evanston, Illinois; and Bellevue, Washington.

Over the past 10 years, esports has evolved from a niche genre of gaming to a lucrative sport capable of drawing tens of millions of spectators both online and in person to such arenas as Los Angeles' Staples Center and Seoul's World Cup Stadium.

The ESL was founded in 1997 and is the largest esports league with more than 5 million registered players.

More information: www.esportsincinema.com

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