

Casinos could see guitar-playing, car-racing, card-grabbing

December 6 2015, by Kimberly Pierceall



In this Sept. 29, 2015 file photo, people try Grab Poker, a skill-based gaming machine, at the Gamblit booth during the Global Gaming Expo in Las Vegas. The gambling industry is trying to attract younger players to the casino floor to revive revenues that have sagged in recent years. (AP Photo/John Locher, File)

Consider them the concept cars of casinos.

Whether it's shooting down enemy planes, strumming a guitar-shaped controller to hit the right notes or swiping a table-top screen to grab the

best set of cards first, the latest slot machines are looking a lot like an arcade. And that's what some in the industry are betting will attract younger players to the casino floor to revive gambling revenues that have sagged in recent years.

Until their September debut at the Global Gaming Expo, or G2E, in Las Vegas, it wasn't entirely clear what "skill-based slots" might look when Nevada lawmakers and gambling regulators opened the door to games requiring little or a lot of skill rather than simply random number generated chance.

For the legacy, big brands, including IGT and Scientific Games, the changes meant adding bonus rounds to their traditional slot machines, such as actually playing "Space Invaders" in between watching spinning reels. For a new "The Simpsons" slot machine, it meant the chance to physically scratch a lottery ticket during a virtual trip to the Kwik-E-Mart or catch handfuls of virtual doughnut sprinkles via a motion sensor capturing your own hands doing the scratching and catching.

It was the younger, smaller upstart companies that went further, offering up arcade-style games and more action per-square-foot, including NanoTech's take on "Pac-Man" and pinball, G2 Game Design's version of "Guitar Hero" or GameCo's 30- to 60-second racing and shooting games.

At least one upstart [game](#)-maker, California-based Gamblit, expects its games to be a road-ready reality next year after final regulations are passed by the state and the games are tested.



In this Sept. 29, 2015 file photo, Lauren Archer, of Philadelphia, plays a skilled-based gaming machine at the Gamblit booth during the Global Gaming Expo in Las Vegas. The gambling industry is trying to attract younger players to the casino floor to revive revenues that have sagged in recent years. (AP Photo/John Locher, File)

Some remain skeptical of the spending power of younger gamblers, including the chief of design for slot machine maker Scientific Games who said that his company wasn't ready to invest half of its research and development budget in games appealing to millennials.

"To be honest with you, they don't spend that much money," Allon Engelman said. "I don't know who's paying for those \$3,000 bottles," he said about the pricey bottles of liquor sold at reserved tables at Las Vegas nightclubs.

Elad Dory, 27, may not be buying \$3,000 bottles but he said he spent

about \$1,000 on [video game](#) consoles, games and mobile game apps in the last year.

The mobile game designer from Israel wearing a hoodie and sipping a beer, was strumming a guitar on the floor of G2E testing out a "Guitar Hero" style video game from G2 Game Design.

"I don't come to Vegas to gamble," he said. But he said he wouldn't mind paying 50 cents or more, depending on how bored and drunk he might be, to play something like that even if he didn't win.

For now, while skill-based games await the regulatory go-ahead to appear on casino floors, the casinos are re-working spaces to be more inviting to a new kind of gambler. The Encore Las Vegas recently announced it would add an area featuring a pool table, shuffleboard table, card tables and tables that are essentially oversized tablets that friends can crowd around to play games. More and more, electronic table games such as virtual poker or blackjack have cropped up to appeal to patrons intimidated by the real-life version.



In this Sept. 30, 2015 file photo, Brett Boge of Reno, Nev. plays Guitar Warrior, a skill-based gaming machine by G2 Game Design, during the Global Gaming Expo in Las Vegas. The gambling industry is trying to attract younger players to the casino floor to revive revenues that have sagged in recent years. (AP Photo/John Locher, File)

Steve Peshek, 28, from Cleveland, and his friends were eager to crowd around an electronic craps table at the Aria resort-casino. They had never played before.

"We actually don't gamble, period," he said. But when in Vegas, especially for the first time, the friends played a few traditional slots.

"It just ate our money and we were like, 'eh,'" he said, shrugging.



In this Sept. 30, 2015 file photo, people stand in front of a large slot machine at the Aristocrat booth during the Global Gaming Expo in Las Vegas. The gambling industry is trying to attract younger players to the casino floor to revive revenues that have sagged in recent years. (AP Photo/John Locher, File)

Their enthusiasm for the interactive craps table, with the video game avatar that goads the players to "push the button!" to make the dice settle on a number, was evident.

"Something's actually happening," he said.



In this Sept. 30, 2015 file photo, people look at slot machines at the Ballys Technology booth during the Global Gaming Expo in Las Vegas. The gambling industry is trying to attract younger players to the casino floor to revive revenues that have sagged in recent years. (AP Photo/John Locher, File)

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