

E3 video game show comes with rise of celebrity player

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The appetite on sites like Twitch and YouTube Gaming for play video, commentary, trailers, and more seems insatiable, industry insiders say

New consoles and blockbuster games always make a big splash at the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo, but this year the undisputed winners are online stages for video game play and commentary.

And with them comes the rise of the celebrity player.

The appetite on sites like Twitch and YouTube Gaming for play video, commentary, trailers, and more seems insatiable, industry insiders say.

"There are hundreds of millions of users watching gaming content every month," YouTube global head of gaming content Ryan Wyatt told AFP at E3 on Tuesday.

Wyatt admits that he is surprised "that it is this big now."

YouTube Gaming, a version of the Alphabet-owned video-sharing service tailored as a one-stop shop for game lovers, launched with a website and mobile applications in August 2015.

Now, billions of hours of gaming content are watched monthly at the service—and that number is rising, Wyatt said.

YouTube has made a priority of "empowering content creators," personalities who captivate online audiences with play, comedy, wit, commentary or combinations thereof.

"They are superstars in their own right," Wyatt said.

"They are celebrities."

Making a killing

Wyatt noted that more than half the Top 10 "YouTubers" are gamers, with popular personalities "making a killing" when it comes to earning money.



People play 'Forza Horizon 3' during the 2016 Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) annual video game conference and show in Los Angeles, California

Last year, entertainment industry magazine Variety published a survey showing that YouTube personalities had the kind of influence on teens typically attributed to Hollywood celebrities.

For example, more than 45.5 million people subscribe to the YouTube channel of Swedish-based comedian and gamer PewDiePie.

"They are basically transcending the gaming industry," Wyatt said of YouTube gamer stars.

The Amazon-owned Twitch.tv lets anyone broadcast game related content and allows them to connect with publishers or advertisers.

More than 20,00 people attended last year's TwitchCon gathering of

"broadcasters" and publishers, and nearly two million more watched it online, according to the San Francisco-based pioneering game-play streaming service.

"Overall, viewership is skyrocketing," a Twitch spokesman who goes only by the name 'Chase' told AFP.

"We break milestones every year, there is no sign of streaming slowing down at all."

There are Twitch broadcasters who boast six-figure incomes and who have people queue "around the block" for autographs or selfies at public appearances, according to Chase.



Gaming fans wait in line to sample 'Gods of War' and 'Call of Duty' during the 2016 Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) annual video game conference and show in Los Angeles

Sony Interactive Entertainment chief executive Andrew House saw the technology-driven [video game](#) industry as a natural venue for the rise of content creator stars and "the democratization of celebrity."

"To put it bluntly, it is about time," House told AFP.

"It is great to have faces and a personality for the industry."

And, there is direct correlation between people watching video games and buying them, according to Twitch and YouTube.

Trailer battles

US online retail giant Amazon snatched up Twitch and its huge audience for live-streamed gaming in 2014.

The purchase was one of the largest in Amazon's history—\$970 million in cash for the three-year-old Internet company.

YouTube Gaming created an online destination for all things E3, and is hosting a "battle of the trailers" in which online viewers get to vote for a favorite clip teasing a coming video game.



Gaming fans watch the screens as costumed characterizations from the game 'For Honor' by Ubisoft roam the stage during the 2016 Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) annual video game conference and show in Los Angeles

A "Battlefield 1" game trailer logged more than five million views in the 24 hours after its release. A video of a PlayStation press event held late Monday had racked up more than a million on-demand views at YouTube by late Tuesday morning.

Fan voting on [game](#) trailers also signalled keen interest in coming "Gears of War" and "Zelda" games, as well as "Quake," according to Wyatt.

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