TECH —

Xbox 360: the Ars Technica Review

The first of the next-generation consoles have arrived, although they're hard ...

BEN KUCHERA - 11/30/2005, 2:20 AM

Introduction

Xbox 360
Manufacturer: Microsoft
Price: US$299 (Core), US$399 (Premium) — shop for this item

The 360 launch, of course, has been crazy. From people waiting in line, to the Ebay scalpers, to questions about backwards compatibility, I don't think there has been another console with as much speculation, hand wringing, and forum fodder. This is high drama folks! Aren't you glad for the next generation of gaming?

Microsoft is making some pretty major bets here. The system is powerful, and the inclusion of HD gaming as a standard for all titles is something that needed to happen for console gaming to move forward. The Marketplace and improved Xbox Live are both proof that Microsoft has designs for every part of your living room. For a Trojan horse to work though, you're going to have to want to drag the damn thing into your city walls, and it's games that are going to make or break this unit.

Remember when games were the one and only thing we would judge systems on? That time is long since past. Now we look at things such as hard drive space, online options, connectivity, DRM, file types, wireless vs. wired. These are the new battlefields of gaming, in a console generation where features seem to be more important than games. I've seen more questions online about whether you'll be able to stream your episodes of Scrubs from your computer than about the games themselves.

Well, we have a unit. While it's nearly impossible to find one now, we braved the lines and came back with a Core system and the major accessories needed to match the functionality of the Premier system. With this much hype I felt almost weighed down carrying the thing home; the moderately sized green box seems very unassuming for all the hubbub around it.

So let's go back a step and forget about everything we've read and all the rumors. Let's hook up a game system and see what it can do.

Apple-y

The system itself seems much smaller than the first-generation Xbox, and the matte white finish of the stock faceplate makes the unit seem almost plain. The hard drive slides right into the left hand side of the unit and sticks out about an inch. The aesthetics are much more pleasing than the bulging, house sized black brick that was the Xbox. Microsoft did some homework, and that homework was mostly "let's make it look like something Apple made."

AMD1318_0154155

It's white

And yes, that power brick really is as large as you've heard. The thing is a monster, weighing in at 6 pounds and hanging behind your entertainment center. You better plan for this thing when you're setting up space for the unit. Even the cable is wide with a giant connection to the back of the 360.

There's a reason the power supply is external

No big surprises with the cabling, as the HD cables still don't come with an optical cable so you'll have to buy one separately. Once you have it, the optical cable plugs into the wires where they meet the back of the system. The connection also has a switch where you can toggle between HD and regular TV since the cables also come with the standard resolution yellow video input. The component connections run in 4:3 480i mode when the cable is in regular TV mode.

The hard drive isn't very noticeable when plugged in, and installing it is as simple as removing a small piece of grating from the side of the unit, snapping in the drive, and letting the unit restart.

AMD1318_0154156

ATI Ex. 2134
IPR2023-00922
Page 2 of 24

The system also has two memory card slots in the front in case you don't feel like springing for the hard drive, and two USB ports hiding behind a spring-loaded door to the right of the faceplate. There's also another USB port in the rear of the system right below the Ethernet adaptor.

The Xbox 360 Core System. Note how Microsoft helpfully includes pictures of all the stuff that keeps the Core System from being worth buying

When powering on the system is certainly louder than current-gen systems, but not so loud as to be distracting when you're playing a game. The fans run loudest when the GPU and CPU go into game mode. The unit does heat up fairly quickly though, and there have been reports online about systems overheating and glitching up. I haven't seen that happen on my unit, but you'll still want to be sure you keep it in a well-ventilated area where the heat can escape, or failing that, raise the power supply off the ground a bit.

Overall the system aesthetics are functional and not very flashy. You can buy different faceplates but they all seemed to be a little to XTREME for my taste; the white cover is fine by me. The system looks plain, and to be honest I find it rather refreshing. The inward curves of the unit make it seem much smaller than it actually is.

Download the PDF
(This feature for Premier subscribers only.)

Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Next →

READER COMMENTS SHARE THIS STORY

← PREVIOUS STORY NEXT STORY →

Related Stories

Sponsored Stories
Powered by

10 New Cars We Are Super Excited About
Kelley Blue Book

You should never shop on Amazon without using this trick - here's why
Honey

Meet the new power couple: vRealize Operations and vSAN. Learn how the latest version of vRealize Operations 6.6 helps vSAN customers.
VMware

No, This Isn't a Giant Pterodactyl Egg - It's a Really Cool Camper [Video]
Digital Trends

Get Pain Relief For Psoriatic Arthritis
Yahoo! Search

How Older Men Are Looking Younger (Without Surgery)
Men's Health

Today on Ars

RSS FEEDS
VIEW MOBILE SITE
VISIT ARS TECHNICA UK
ABOUT US
CONTACT US
STAFF
ADVERTISE WITH US
REPRINTS

tive 1/2/14) and Privacy Policy (effective 1/2/14), and Ars Technica Addendum (effective 5/17/2012) . Your California Privacy Rights . The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or other

TECH —

Xbox 360: the Ars Technica Review

The first of the next-generation consoles have arrived, although they're hard ...

BEN KUCHERA - 11/30/2005, 2:20 AM

If it's only kind of broke, what do you need to fix?

The controller isn't anything new or different for console gaming. There are a few improvements of this over the first gen Xbox controllers though. For one, the controllers are nice and small; they feel incredibly comfortable in your hand. Microsoft must have learned from its mistakes in that area with the disaster of its original Xbox controller. They've also moved the awkward white and black buttons to the top of the controller, much like the double button design of the Dual Shock.

They still kept the triggers from the Type S controller, and while they're not quite as deep as they used to be they're still very responsive. This is pretty much the best of both worlds: the buttons are easy to hit and don't feel as bad as the white and black buttons did, and the triggers feel great in racing games and anything else that requires fine control. Another cool feature is that you can turn the 360 off and on via the controller. No more arduous trips from couch to console!

The controllers come in wired or wireless flavors, and the wireless controllers have to be synced to the system by holding a connect button down on both the system and the controller. The lights on the face of the controller then match up to the lights around the power switch and you're good to go. A little bit more complicated than maybe it needed to be, but still easy to set up and get working. The wireless controllers use two AA batteries to start, but you can also buy battery packs for US$11.99 each and then the play and charge kit for US$19.99. The Play and Charge Kit includes a battery and a charge cable.

The all-new Xbox 360 controller

An interesting note is that the wired controllers have a standard USB end to them, and you can hook them straight into your PC to use as a gamepad for your PC games. That's cool. However, the wireless controllers do not work with a PC when the play and change kit is connected. The USB connection appears only to be for power and to charge the units.

For the Luddites (just kidding)

The big question is whether or not the 360 is going to be worth it for the people out there who don't have high definition televisions. It's a tough call, as the system is

AMD1318_0154159

clearly designed almost from the ground up to take advantage of widescreen, HD displays. Even if you have a large television, if it isn't HD you're probably better off hooking the system up to your computer's monitor.

So many of the graphical improvements are tied into how smoothly the games run in high resolution. Without that, most of the games will look pretty close to a regular Xbox game. You'll notice a lot of graphical tweaks, but it's not nearly the jump that you'd get if you were playing the game in HDTV.

When you look at the cost of this system, and the PS3 as well, you may also want to add up the cost of upgrading your home theater to accommodate all the features these systems are going to throw at you. The games look pretty good anyway, but in full 1080i with the 5.1 speakers thumping they come alive. Luckily in the past few years both of these pieces of technology have really dropped in price, making a really good home theater set up economically feasible for most people. At least for most people who don't mind dropping US$400 on a game console.

Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Next →

READER COMMENTS SHARE THIS STORY

← PREVIOUS STORY NEXT STORY →

Related Stories

Sponsored Stories

Powered by

These Are The Summer Treggings For Every Body
WhoWhatWear

New Federal Program Pays Off Your Mortgage
Comparisons.org

Macy's Has Everything You Need To Stay On-Trend This Summer
Macys.com

Learn why VMware's vRealize Operations is ranked the No. 1 virtualization management solution.
VMware

Get Pain Relief For Psoriatic Arthritis
Yahoo! Search

How Older Men Are Looking Younger (Without Surgery)
Men's Health

Today on Ars

RSS FEEDS
VIEW MOBILE SITE
VISIT ARS TECHNICA UK
ABOUT US
CONTACT US
STAFF
ADVERTISE WITH US
REPRINTS

:tive 1/2/14) and Privacy Policy (effective 1/2/14), and Ars Technica Addendum (effective 5/17/2012) . Your California Privacy Rights . The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or other

TECH —

Xbox 360: the Ars Technica Review

The first of the next-generation consoles have arrived, although they're hard ...

BEN KUCHERA - 11/30/2005, 2:20 AM

Right, but again, can you game on it?

Like most systems nowadays when you first power the unit on you'll have to do some setting up. From the dashboard you can create a user name, set up your resolution, and make sure everything is running properly. The profile system is actually kind of interesting, it keeps track of each game you've played and how far you've gotten in each title. Each game has little challenges you can attempt called Achievements, and the more of these you complete the higher your Gamerscore gets. What a high Gamerscore means, I have no clue other than simple bragging rights.

The system comes packed with themes, high definition videos, and if you have the hard drive, the Pajitnov-created Hexic puzzle game. I spent about a half an hour when I first hooked up the unit exploring all the little odds and ends of the interface, and there's a lot there. Do you want to listen to a CD with some visualization? Do you want to stream some music from your portable mp3 player? Would you like to sign up for Xbox Live?

No, let's play some games and save all the doo-dads for later.

It's apparent at once when you put in your first game how much you've missed high def gaming without even knowing it. Even the text onscreen looks brighter and crisper, and the surround sound always has punch. Now that EVERY game runs in at least 720p and supports 5.1 surround your home theater will get the workout it's been waiting for.

The games, overall, look very much like PC games. It's almost jarring. The smoother frame rates, the hyper-detailed environments, the high resolution everything, we've seen all these things before. It's just that then we were huddled at our computers peering at a small monitor. Seeing this sort of thing on a 56-inch television is incredible. If you have a high end gaming PC though, there is very little here that's new to you.

Einvigi, is that you?

Many of the effects are subtle. At first a lot of the detail in the launch games doesn't reach out and scream next generation, but from the buttery smooth frame rates to the ability to see further due to the high resolutions to how alive some of the game worlds look with much more background detail the effect can be very convincing. It'll

AMD1318_0154161

ATI Ex. 2134
IPR2023-00922
Page 7 of 24

sneak up on you, suddenly you'll be in a room and the graphics are almost photo realistic. The stylized graphics in Kameo come to life with the ability to place thousands of characters on screen at once.

Right now there are not a lot of games that instantly scream next generation, but there is enough little delightful details and improvement that it'll become hard very quickly to go back to current generation games. You become spoiled by 1080i incredibly quickly.

We'll go over the graphics in more detail when we review some titles in the launch lineup. Overall, it feels like you're playing on a very stable, very expensive gaming PC.

Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Next →

READER COMMENTS SHARE THIS STORY

← PREVIOUS STORY NEXT STORY →

Related Stories

Sponsored Stories

Powered by

Navigate your cloud environment capacities with the latest version of VMware's vRealize 6.6.
VMware

Soup Up Your Home This Summer With Must-Have Items From Macy's
Macys.com

Locate Anyone by Entering Their Name (This is Addicting)
TruthFinder

Why So Many People Are Loving This Contact Lens
Hubble Contacts

Homeowners Born Between 1953 & 1983 Who Pay A Mortgage Must Read This
Comparisons.org

How Older Men Are Looking Younger (Without Surgery)
Men's Health

Today on Ars

RSS FEEDS
VIEW MOBILE SITE
VISIT ARS TECHNICA UK
ABOUT US
CONTACT US
STAFF
ADVERTISE WITH US
REPRINTS

:tive 1/2/14) and Privacy Policy (effective 1/2/14), and Ars Technica Addendum (effective 5/17/2012) . Your California Privacy Rights . The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or other

TECH —

Xbox 360: the Ars Technica Review

The first of the next-generation consoles have arrived, although they're hard ...

BEN KUCHERA - 11/30/2005, 2:20 AM

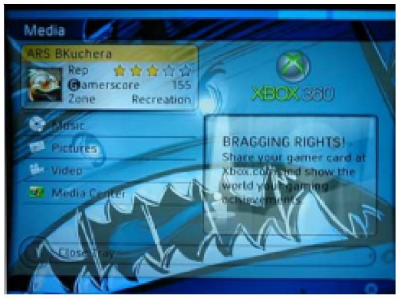
Let's go shopping!

The Xbox was a system that only really came to life when you connected it to your home network, but the 360 makes the Xbox's great online implementation feel positively stone aged. This is a system that requires an Internet connection almost as much as it requires a controller.

First, all of the games are Live aware, so you can send and respond to messages and invitations from every game. The older system had that though, but the fact that this feature is now universal is a nice touch. The real draw here though, is the Marketplace.

In theory the Marketplace is a shopping area you get to through the dashboard that allows you to access all sorts of content. Right now the pickings are kind of slim: a lot of high-definition movie trailers for films like Aeon Flux and Narnia, and a Red vs. Blue cartoon. You also have some gamer pictures that allow you to change your avatar online. Pretty basic stuff.

The fun begins when you realize you can now download demos and videos from games directly from Xbox Live. If this feature takes off you'll be able to sample a ton of different games before you buy right from the console. Right now there are just a handful of demos available, but as long as this feature is kept up with it'll make buying magazines just for game demos a thing of the past. Free demos and content, which PC gamers take for granted, are now something that console gamers can now enjoy.



The Dashboard

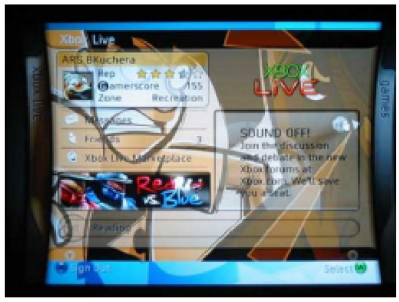
My favorite part of the Marketplace though is Live Arcade. This service lets you purchase and download games from around US$5 to US$15. The games range from futuristic shooters to puzzle games. You can also find throwbacks like Gauntlet and Joust with slight graphical facelifts. The best part? You can play Gauntlet on Xbox Live with up to 4 players. I can't believe I just dropped almost a grand on a system, accessories, and games only to be excited about playing Gauntlet online.

AMD1318_0154163

/me kicks your eggs into the lava

The games are almost all great, addicting, and look awesome in high-def. The shooters Geometry Wars and Mutant Storm are a great way to spend some time, and the best part is that you can download trial versions of every game to try before you buy it. Even without spending any money you can blow a few hours playing through all the neat little demos of the Arcade games offered.

The importance of the Arcade can't be overstated. Similar to Valve with Steam, Microsoft now has a way to publish and release smaller niche titles and sell them directly to consumers for low prices. Independent and smaller game developers have a place to make a modest game and turn a profit selling it. The initial offering of games is pretty impressive, and Geometry Wars is pretty much a must buy, but I'm hoping this is something that will see a lot of support and some varied and genre-straddling games.



The dashboard is rock solid, and easy to customize

The free content is good, from music videos and movie trailers, and I was surprised to see a new music video from Franz Ferdinand pop up today. My girlfriend got excited since she's a fan, and now she's asking me to show her how to check what new videos are being released. This ability to draw in nongamers with content and get them comfortable with a controller and the system is something that the 360 may be able to do better than any other console. Microsoft now has a direct window into your living room, and not only that, they have a way to sell you any kind of content they want. Songs? Videos? Movies? It's all possible.

The main beef I have with this set up is that the interface could use a little work. Finding content to download and then finding it on my hard drive takes a few more steps than it should. Also, why can't I do anything else while I download? Are you honestly telling me this hardware can't let me play Zuma while I'm downloading some videos? Lame. Allowing me full use of the dashboard while downloading is something they need to start offering yesterday. At least I can hook up a USB keyboard and use that for inputting credit card numbers and the like.

All in all though, you can't help but think that the Marketplace is the future of gaming. You can get content for your games, try your hand at some old-school shooters, or demo the latest game before you plunk down your US$60 at the store for it. It's all here, and it's easy to get into and use. This is the real power of Xbox Live, and it shows that Microsoft isn't messing around with integrating the 360 into your entertainment center.

AMD1318_0154164

ATI Ex. 2134
IPR2023-00922
Page 10 of 24

Again, my girlfriend hates consoles and she loves the fact that she can download and watch movie trailers, music videos, and games like Zuma onto our big screen television. I love the fact that if I get bored I can download a demo or a full version of a game for a few bucks without having to get up off my lazy butt. Well done.

Say it with me: Zuma is worth the $10 so your girlfriend has a reason to let you keep your system

When it comes to gaming, Live Integration is a blessing and a curse. Games **KICK YOU OUT** when Live disconnects, even if the game's not a multiplayer title. Condemned did this to another Ars staffer several times due to an unruly 2.4Ghz phone in the house, and the same thing happened to me. Any time the phone rang, the wireless connections in the house all went down, taking his Live connection with it and booting him back to Condemned's starting screen. Keep in mind that Condemned is a one-person game. Why it should pee down its pants leg when Live goes down is anyone's guess. The simple solution is to sign out of Live when playing it, but you shouldn't have to do that.

Of course, the darker side to all this is that with a constant Internet connection and a ton of stats and achievements being tracked, Microsoft is going to know everything about playing history. How long do you play each game? When do you play your games? Against whom? Are you renting them (easy to tell if you play a game for two days intensely and then never again) or buying them? How often are you using voice chat?

Your gaming habits are going to be watched, commented on, and tabulated by Microsoft over the long term. While a lot of this is good for the gamer, as it allows for things like Microsoft being able to update servers in certain areas or during peak hours, a lot of it is just creepy. Microsoft is going to be able to aim content at you with laser-like precision once it realizes you only like playing FPS shooters games past three in the morning, or that you really love playing puzzle games before you go to work.

While I'm not hiding my gaming habits, it does kind of concern me to think of all the things that are being tracked online about me and my buying and playing schedules. You can even go to Xbox.com, look up people on your friends list, and see what games they've been playing or when. This may make it hard to avoid that Internet stalker who keeps inviting you to be his friend and then whines when he loses, and the whole thing is more than a little creepy. Microsoft is watching us, we're watching each other, and it's all very spooky.

Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Next →

READER COMMENTS SHARE THIS STORY

← PREVIOUS STORY NEXT STORY →

AMD1318_0154165

ATI Ex. 2134
IPR2023-00922
Page 11 of 24

Related Stories

Sponsored Stories

Powered by

Why So Many People Are Loving This Contact Lens
Hubble Contacts

This Man-Made Private Island Might Be The Most Luxurious Thing On Earth
Digital Trends

Make The Most Of Summer With Must-Have Styles From Macy's
Macys.com

Automate your data center workload balance with the latest version of vRealize Operations 6.6 from VMware.
VMware

These Slimming Treggings Are $69 and "Flatter Every Body Type"
WhoWhatWear

How Older Men Are Looking Younger (Without Surgery)
Men's Health

Today on Ars

RSS FEEDS
VIEW MOBILE SITE
VISIT ARS TECHNICA UK
ABOUT US
CONTACT US
STAFF
ADVERTISE WITH US
REPRINTS

:tive 1/2/14) and Privacy Policy (effective 1/2/14), and Ars Technica Addendum (effective 5/17/2012) . Your California Privacy Rights . The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or other

TECH —

Xbox 360: the Ars Technica Review

The first of the next-generation consoles have arrived, although they're hard ...

BEN KUCHERA - 11/30/2005, 2:20 AM

Will this replace your components?

One of the big draws of the PS2 when it first came out was the fact it was also a pretty competent DVD player. At that time DVD players were pretty expensive, so this was a large selling point for the system. Since that time prices have dropped to the point you can buy an entry-level player for around US$40 and a good progressive scan player can be found pretty easily for under US$100. The prices have fallen and the number of things we expect from a DVD player have gone up. Is the DVD player in the 360 something that will work in your home theater instead of buying a stand-alone player?

Well, first off, the player is decent. The system played all my discs and even some burned DVDs. Using the menus and options with a wireless controller was pretty straightforward, and of course you lucky premium pack buyers will have the media remote to further help things along. The player is functional; I'll give it that.

On the other hand, this is something that is designed to be hooked into people's home theaters, and frankly on a large high definition screen the 360's DVD player simply doesn't keep up. The colors are murky, and in many scenes it's easy to notice dithering and artifacts in the deep black areas of the picture. Considering the picture the system cranks out for games is so sharp and clear, a DVD player this mediocre is a head scratcher. Did Microsoft just not care enough to put the time and money into making sure the DVD player had a great picture? It seems as if they were more interested in a bullet point on the back of a box than having something that people would actually want to use on a day to day basis.

I was going to pick up a good standalone DVD player after my last one died, but I was hoping to avoid some clutter and cabling issues by simply using the 360 as my progressive scan player. While I'm on the low end of video-phile geekiness this doesn't come close to delivering the picture I'm used to seeing out of even middle-level players.

Boo-urns.

The slideshow feature for pictures needs some work as well. There's only one mode—a zoom up/zoom down panning from picture to picture. You can't sort by date of creation, only by filename, and your images must be stored in a folder. If you're looking for a background slideshow for your TV, this won't cut it since you can't adjust the interval or the cut/pans to the next picture.

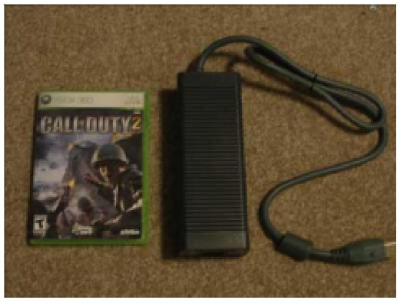
So, how defective are the launch units?

This is a hard one to call, since of course other than people talking on the Internet there are no hard numbers to go on when we're talking about defective systems. Anecdotally damn near every interactive I've seen at retail has been frozen, turned off, or otherwise broken down. While I haven't had any issues with my unit yet, I think this is partly bad design, and partly people not realizing how to take care of their systems.

The 360 pumps out an extreme amount of heat. A lot. So much that you could heat a <insert absurdly large structure here> with it. After an hour or so you can put your

AMD1318_0154167

hand anywhere near the unit and feel just how hot it can get inside your entertainment center. I've seen a unit in an enclosed kiosk that had been on for most of the day, and the sides of the plastic case where almost painful to touch. If you cover a vent, or don't have adequate ventilation, or even just high carpeting, I have no problems imagining your system dying.



A shot of perspective: a classic game and 6 lbs of power brick

Overheating is going to be a big problem with these things, and you have to set up your system and home theater with heat dispersion in mind. You've got five or six feet of cable between the brick and the console. Use that to ensure the power brick is a good ways away from the system, make sure air can move freely, and that the vents aren't blocked in the slightest. While this sort of thing is second nature to PC gamers, console people may not realize just how much of an issue heat is with the 360 and kill their system before they even know what hit them.

Of course, without a huge warning on the box or the instructions this is going to be a problem. Microsoft isn't being very upfront about how to properly set up the system, and they should have taken steps from the design phase on to make sure the system has no problem pumping out all the heat the innards generate. The 360 runs hotter than any other console I've ever seen, hotter than my computer, and a touch hotter than the space heater I'm using to keep my feet warm right now. Why Microsoft isn't being more aggressive with educating consumers of this problem is beyond me. Telling people to make sure to keep the unit cool is a lot less of a headache than forum post after forum post complaining about glitched up systems.

Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Next →

READER COMMENTS SHARE THIS STORY

← PREVIOUS STORY NEXT STORY →

Related Stories

Sponsored Stories
Powered by

Meet the new power couple: vRealize Operations and vSAN. Learn how the latest version of vRealize

These Slimming Treggings Are $69 and "Flatter Every Body Type"
WhoWhatWear

Discover Cloud Service Providers Today
Yahoo! Search

Amazing Wild West Photos Show Things Were Different Than You Think
Post Popular - Cash me Online

How Older Men Are Looking Younger (Without Surgery)
Men's Health

Citi Working Towards a Sustainable Future in Urban Environments

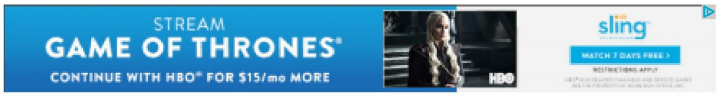
AMD1318_0154168

ATI Ex. 2134
IPR2023-00922
Page 14 of 24

Today on Ars

RSS FEEDS
VIEW MOBILE SITE
VISIT ARS TECHNICA UK
ABOUT US
CONTACT US
STAFF
ADVERTISE WITH US
REPRINTS

tive 1/2/14) and Privacy Policy (effective 1/2/14), and Ars Technica Addendum (effective 5/17/2012) . Your California Privacy Rights . The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or other



TECH —

Xbox 360: the Ars Technica Review

The first of the next-generation consoles have arrived, although they're hard ...

BEN KUCHERA - 11/30/2005, 2:20 AM

A look at the launch library

If you ask me, there hasn't been a really good launch line up in a few generations. No one seems to be able to get a truly great game out at launch. The PS2 had Madden going for it, and of course SSX was a pretty good game, but past that there was nothing. Can you honestly tell me you remember Orphen: Scion of Sorcery? Or that Fantavision is still in your collection?

The Xbox was just as bad. Halo was of course a system seller, but Azurik didn't exactly inspire confidence in the new system. It took a good long while for the Xbox to find its legs and deliver some really good content.

The 360 launch is a mixed bag. The good news is there's a lot here to go over, from new IP like Condemned to near perfect ports like Call of Duty 2. Perfect Dark: Zero fills the hole that Halo left with a FPS title that's bright, beautiful, and has great multiplayer online or off. Of course, there are also titles like Quake 4, and we all know nothing says lovin' like a stuttering frame rate and boring game play. Project Gotham Racing 3 is about the best racing that any console has to offer right now, while Ridge Racer 6 is the very definition of mediocre.

Hexic in action

Of course, there are also the sports games. Ports from the last generation of consoles, they all look better than the versions that came before, but they all just feel as if some gloss was thrown over the graphics and that's it. There's no particular reason to rebuy these games if you've played out your PS2 or Xbox copies, and many of them are missing features. I know we have to have a Madden on every platform at launch day, but if it's this tired, why even bother?

The real news is that the acquisition of Rare finally paid off. Two of the best games at launch, Perfect Dark and Kameo, are Rare titles. Perfect Dark really shows off what the 360 can do, and the weapons and gadgets are just as fun as the original. Online play is a blast, and even split screen uses the power of the system to keep frame rates from dropping or a major loss of detail like we've previously been used to. Kameo is an interesting beast, the forms your character takes mixes up the gameplay, and the graphical style is interesting to watch. A really solid platform title.

AMD1318_0154170

ATI Ex. 2134
IPR2023-00922

The launch games all kind of feel like that, they're all beautiful in terms of graphics, and there are even some great games in there. There just isn't anything that really shows any new type of game play. We have versions of old genres and franchises with excellent graphics and perfect frame rates, but we're not actually being shown anything new.

Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Next →

READER COMMENTS SHARE THIS STORY

← PREVIOUS STORY NEXT STORY →

Related Stories

Sponsored Stories

Powered by

Make The Most Of Summer With Must-Have Styles From Macy's
Macys.com

Automate your data center workload balance with the latest version of vRealize Operations 6.6 from VMware.
VMware

These Are The Summer Treggings For Every Body
WhoWhatWear

Why So Many People Are Loving This Contact Lens
Hubble Contacts

The Safest Way to Ship Category A Substances: 4 Questions for Your Shipper
UPS on Logistics for the Life Sciences

How Older Men Are Looking Younger (Without Surgery)
Men's Health

Today on Ars

RSS FEEDS
VIEW MOBILE SITE
VISIT ARS TECHNICA UK
ABOUT US
CONTACT US
STAFF
ADVERTISE WITH US
REPRINTS

:tive 1/2/14) and Privacy Policy (effective 1/2/14), and Ars Technica Addendum (effective 5/17/2012) . Your California Privacy Rights . The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or other

TECH —

Xbox 360: the Ars Technica Review

The first of the next-generation consoles have arrived, although they're hard ...

BEN KUCHERA - 11/30/2005, 2:20 AM

Game reviews

Project Gotham Racing

Project Gotham Racing 3 is the newest version of what I consider to be a very underrated racing series. The new one is no different. This is perhaps the one game that really looks and plays like a next-generation title. The detail inherent in the backgrounds and cities you drive through is dense and almost distracting, I found myself swinging the camera around to look at the buildings in the Vegas races and crashing more often than not.

Tailgating has never been this much fun

Even more impressive than the graphics though is how well the online component is meshed with the game. Every time you finish a race you not only see your points and the money you earn but also how you stack up against everyone else online. Even if you have the gold, being number 1,295 against other racers is incentive to keep going back until you have each track mastered. The online play itself is perfect, and since anyone can design their own routes and races through an intuitive editor the game has damn near endless replay value online.

What happens on the 360, stays on the 360

AMD1318_0154172

More realistic than Burnout, having a smoother learning curve than Gran Turismo, this is a perfect mixture of both types of racing games. If you want to show off your new television and 360 this is the game to do it with. Perfect framerates, detailed cars, and lifelike locales. A solid stable of licensed cars rounds out the package.

This is probably the killer app for the 360 launch, and it has the graphics, gameplay, and online features to show what the next generation is capable of in the right hands.

Call of Duty 2

If you've played the PC version, you've played it. The only difference is that sometimes the frame rate dipped when I played it on PC, and the 360 version was rock solid, no frame rate dips at all.

This tree has seconds to live

In terms of WW2 games, this is pretty much the apex. The graphics are great, the game runs in 1080i and it uses every bit of your surround sound system. The game will blow you away the first time you play through; the scripting feels less forced than previous games, and your squad mates will actually help you out. Your allies will call out enemy positions, cover you from behind, and sometimes die if you aren't quick enough on the trigger. A quick, but intense tank level finds you dueling in the desert against the more-powerful, but less-spry German panzers. Intense.

Shoot not lest ye be shot

The downside to all this action is that the second play through is kind of a let down. You know when the buildings are going to blow up, when the tanks will show up to save the day, and the scripting is transparent when you go back and replay the missions.

That first time though—when you have no clue what's going to happen—is golden. While the game is over fairly quickly and the online play is strictly by the numbers, some of the sequences in this game are almost awe inspiring. This is a great FPS for consoles, and the control mechanism of the left trigger auto-aim is a clever way to get around the problem of not having a mouse and keyboard.

AMD1318_0154173

ATI Ex. 2134
IPR2023-00922
Page 19 of 24

There are certainly worse ways to launch a system than this competent and often inspired title.

Need for Speed: Most Wanted

This is kind of an odd duck. Of course the racing is much more arcade than simulation, but there is a lot to do. The cops will chase you, you'll have to make yourself known by climbing up the ladder of street racing, and there is actually a compelling (if amusingly over done) story mode.

In terms of launch games though, this one falls a little short. I'm in love with the gameplay, but the frame rate chugs throughout the game, and the AI of the racers is pretty stupid. Winning is just too easy. After playing PGR3 for hours, the frame rate issues are unforgivable, PGR both looks and runs better. This smells like a rushed port.

Still, if you stick with it and get used to the slightly lackluster visuals, there's some intense racing. Running from the pork products and busting through roadblocks never really gets old. I can only hope for a sequel that is truly next-gen, and not just a high definition port.

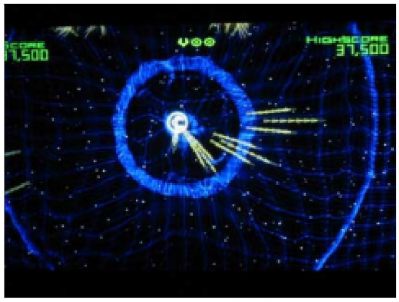
Condemned

I was hyping this game for a while on Opposable Thumbs, and now that it's out I can say I'm pretty disappointed. The game looks and plays great at first blush, but after a few hours it becomes clear just how repetitious the gameplay and environments are.

It's a shame, the game looks incredible. The light effects and hand-to-hand fighting system are well done, and in short bursts the game is great. The intensity is built up well, but after the fifth corridor that looks exactly alike you'll begin to wonder why you're subjecting yourself to it. The forensic pieces of gameplay are likewise a let down, they tell you what to use and when, and then the game holds your hand by telling you exactly where to go before you take a sample or a picture. If you can follow directions you'll be fine playing this game.

There is some fun here, and the game often reminded me of Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay. Overall though, your time and money are better spent elsewhere.

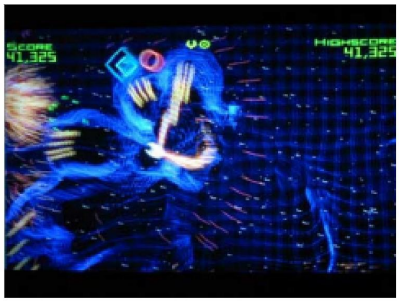
Geometry Wars



My God, it's full of stars

The first big Arcade game on the service, this is the first game you should download when you receive your system. At its heart nothing but a Robotron clone, but the high definition graphics, particle effects, and bright flourishes of color and sound makes the game hard to put down. Each round begins and ends pretty quickly until you get good, but the "one more time" syndrome will make sure you waste hours on this. This is the kind of game that will make the Arcade a success. This is a great time waster and for US$5 it's a heckuva bargain. This is one of the must have games for the 360.

AMD1318_0154174



You don't have to be on drugs, but it helps

Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Next →

READER COMMENTS SHARE THIS STORY

← PREVIOUS STORY NEXT STORY →

Related Stories

Sponsored Stories

Powered by

Macy's Has Everything You Need To Stay On-Trend This Summer
Macys.com

Learn why VMware's vRealize Operations is ranked the No. 1 virtualization management solution.
VMware

Elizabeth Shue Was Gorgeous in the 90s.. But What She Looks Like Today is Incredible
OMG!

5 Windows Antivirus Product. You Won't Believe Who's Number 1.
myantivirusreview.com

These Slimming Treggings Are $69 and "Flatter Every Body Type"
WhoWhatWear

Discover The Different Signs of Rheumatoid Arthritis
Yahoo! Search

Today on Ars

RSS FEEDS
VIEW MOBILE SITE
VISIT ARS TECHNICA UK
ABOUT US
CONTACT US
STAFF
ADVERTISE WITH US
REPRINTS

:tive 1/2/14) and Privacy Policy (effective 1/2/14), and Ars Technica Addendum (effective 5/17/2012) . Your California Privacy Rights . The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or other

TECH —

Xbox 360: the Ars Technica Review

The first of the next-generation consoles have arrived, although they're hard ...

BEN KUCHERA - 11/30/2005, 2:20 AM

Backwards compatibility

A lot of us were surprised when MS released the list of the 200 games that would be backwards compatible at launch. They had never really made that big of a deal about backwards compatibility, and this is the sort thing you'd think they would have hyped earlier if they knew they would have time to do it. The question is, as a feature is it really that much of an upgrade?

I put in Halo 2 to see just how well the game looked and played upscaled into 720p and the jaggies smoothed out a bit. It's not bad—the cut scenes are a lot clearer—but during most of the gameplay I didn't see that big of an improvement. I was kind of let down, but hey, at least I was playing Halo 2 on the 360.

The 200 games that are backwards compatible is a nice bonus, but there are going to be so many games in your collection left out and the value of the first generation of Xboxes is going to drop so quickly that most people will probably decide to keep their systems. Again, as a free feature backwards compatibility is always welcome, but the graphical improvements aren't that impressive, and the 200 games aren't exactly the definitive list of games you'll want to play.

Summing it up

Xbox 360 Premium System

I've been playing on the 360 basically nonstop since I've received the system, taking only short breaks to work and/or sleep. There's a lot to like about the system, from the generational leap in graphical quality to the flexibility and choice that the Marketplace gets you. Downloading and playing Arcade games and demos is something that should have been part of the console experience years ago, and the implementation is almost flawless here. The integration of features using your network connection really is a step forward for console gaming as a whole, if you're not playing with an Internet connection you're missing half of what makes the 360 such a compelling system.

The lack of a truly great killer app is a little unsettling though, and the heat issues need to be addressed quickly. There's no reason a system that gets that hot that quickly should be released without an upgraded cooling solution.

AMD1318_0154176

Xbox 360 Core System

Overall the 360 does just about everything right, and feels like a step ahead for console gaming in general. Having the Marketplace to sell independent games and classics is a great feature, and making those games playable on Xbox Live is the icing on the cake. Everything about the interface is well thought out, it's easy to spend hours just ripping CDs and seeing what the system can do other than game. I give the Xbox 360 a 9, but the Core System gets dropped down to a 6 because it's not nearly as compelling.

The bar has been raised in terms of console graphics and features. If this is the first shot in the next generation, Sony and Nintendo are going to have a lot to live up to.

The Good:

- High resolution graphics with rock solid frame rates and full surround sound
- Classic games on demand
- Perfect online integration with every title
- Xbox Live just keeps getting better and better
- Wireless controllers as a standard

The Bad:

- The heat!
- Strong but unspectacular launch library
- Try buying one; watch the clerk laugh at you
- Confusion over the two versions of the system
- Without an Internet connection and hard drive you won't get all the features
- A lot noisier than we're used to with consoles

The Ugly:

- Being able to use the power brick as a heater for your house. The thing barely fits under my bed, and it keeps me warm all night

Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

READER COMMENTS SHARE THIS STORY

← PREVIOUS STORY NEXT STORY →

Related Stories

Sponsored Stories
Powered by

Soup Up Your Home This Summer With Must-Have Items From Macy's

The new version of VMware's vRealize Operations 6.6 helps with

A Flat-Earther Challenged A NASA Scientist And The Scientist Responded

21 Facts About Early Humans That Are So Strange, Scientists Can't

This Man-Made Private Island Might Be The Most Luxurious Thing On Earth

Get Glucose Readings Right on Your Smart Phone

Today on Ars

RSS FEEDS
VIEW MOBILE SITE
VISIT ARS TECHNICA UK
ABOUT US
CONTACT US
STAFF
ADVERTISE WITH US
REPRINTS

tive 1/2/14) and Privacy Policy (effective 1/2/14), and Ars Technica Addendum (effective 5/17/2012) . Your California Privacy Rights . The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or other