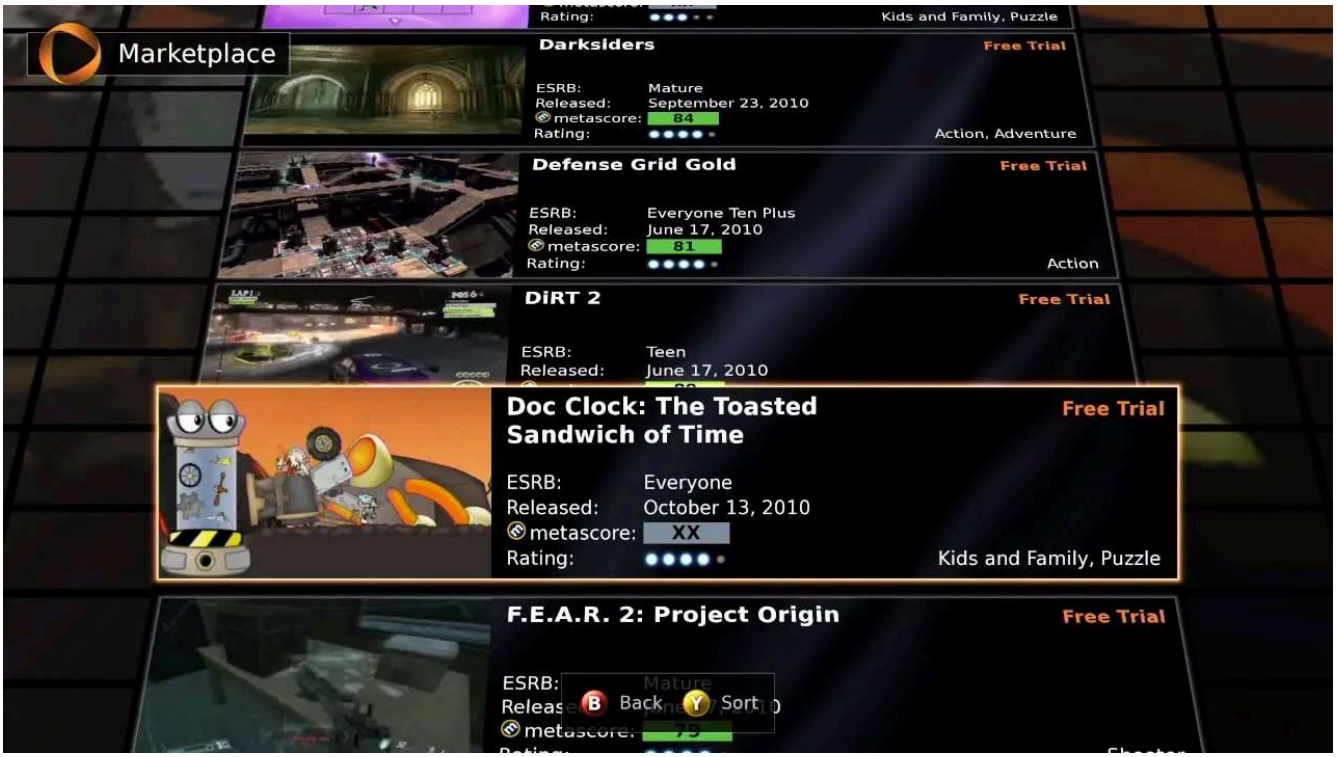
Review: OnLive -- The What, Why and Who of Gaming in the Cloud



OnLive Game System

You have two options: play on your television, on a PC or Mac (unfortunately, no Linux support at this time), iPad, and (soon) Android tablets. You will have to purchase an OnLive Game System through the OnLive Web Store. For those of you who don't have OnLive accounts, you'll have the opportunity to create a free account during purchase of the OnLive Game System. After you receive the OnLive Game System, plug it in and simply follow the on-screen instructions. I'll speak more on installation later. To play on a PC or Mac, you will have to sign up for a free OnLive account. After you register and setup your account, you will need to install the OnLive client locally. You have the option of connecting via an Ethernet cable or via a wireless network.

Photo: OnLive Inc.

So what is inside the shiny black box? The OnLive Game System comes bundled with the following components:

- OnLive MicroConsole™ TV adapter
- OnLive Wireless Controller
- Cables and accessories
- Power adapter
- HDMI cable
- Ethernet cable
- Rechargeable Controller battery
- USB play and charge cable
- 2 AA alkaline batteries

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[For the purposes of this review, I tested the OnLive Game System on a Panasonic 40" HDTV with an HDMI cable. Testing was completed post-beta on the OnLive platform. OnLive has worked hard to mitigate and improve the performance and quality of service issues that I have reported.]

Main Hardware Components

The OnLive MicroConsole TV adapter is a well-made adapter of heavy plastic composite that sits easily on top of your television. There are two USB ports on the front for charging the controller and pairing the system with the controller. Simply plug in the controller to the MicroConsole via the USB cable to have it registered in the system. You also have the option of connecting a USB keyboard for text input. Mini gaming keyboards are often worthwhile for saving your thumbs from game messaging hell, and can be purchased for as little as $35.00. The back of the box has an Ethernet port, an HDMI port and an optical audio connector and the power connector.

Photo: http://freethememob.wordpress.com