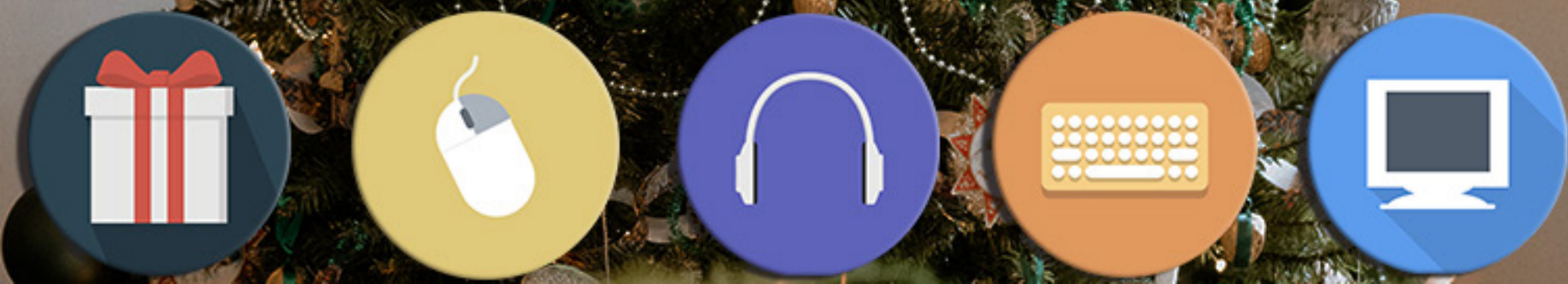


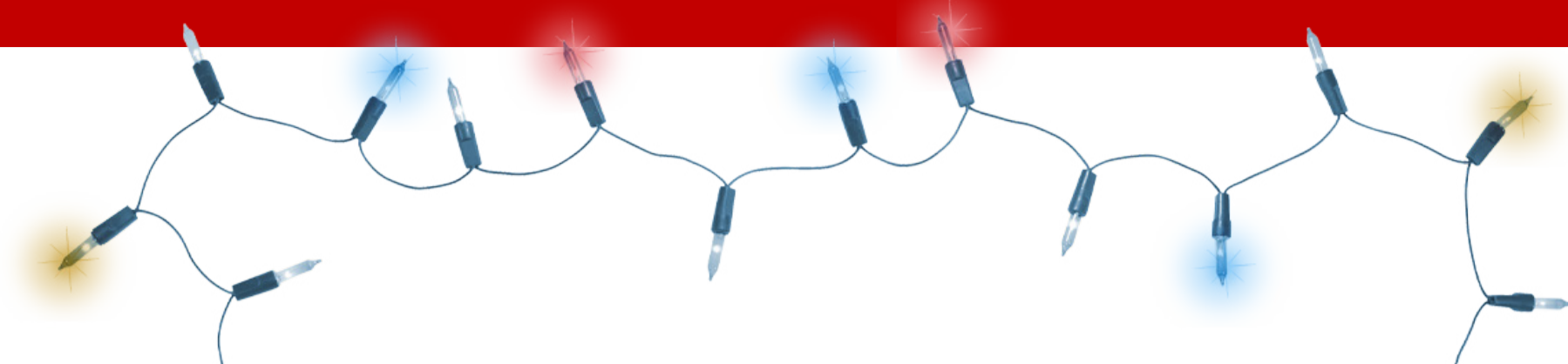
GameOn

GAMEONMAG.COM - GIFT GUIDE 2021

CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE







Welcome to The GameOn Christmas Gift Guide! We hope you'll find something to enjoy, whether it's for yourself, a friend, a co-worker, a special someone or a Secret Santa, there are plenty of options.

Having curated some of the hottest peripherals that have crossed our desks, from mice to controllers and beyond, these were rigorously tested and reviewed. Hopefully our reviews will let you get a feel for how these things work in a real-world setting, rather than some kind of lab. Anything we were particularly impressed by is accompanied by a star!

We've put in the recommended retail price

(RRP) next to each item to give you a guide on their pricing. Be sure to shop around to get the best deal for you, as with any purchase, especially with the "sale season" upon us.

Ultimately, we hope this guide goes a little way towards making that hectic festive time of year somewhat more manageable. Whatever you might be celebrating - Happy Holidays!

If you want to make sure you have the latest issue (updated regularly!) you can check at the following address:

<http://www.gameonmag.com/url/g2021v1>

- THE EDITOR

Contributors

Editor-in-Chief - Steve Greenfield
Editor - Andrew Duncan
Magazine Design by Jessica Greenfield
Magazine Creation - Andrew Duncan



Writer - Alan Wen
Writer - Andrew Duncan
Writer - Anna Duncan
Writer - Blake Hawthorn
Writer - Gary Sheppard
Writer - James Martin
Writer - Jamie Davies
Writer - Luke Greenfield
Writer - Mike Crewe
Writer - Nikki Koolonovich
Writer - Owen Chan
Writer - Richard Shivdarsan
Writer - Simon Brown
Writer - Steve Greenfield
Writer - Steven Dawson



EKSA AIR JOY PRO 7.1

I've managed to get away with not needing to upgrade any of my peripherals in quite a long time. But as lockdown hit us hard and I began using my computer more than ever, my equipment reached its breaking point, including my headphones. So, after batting my eyelashes at my superiors and discovering that we were recently contacted regarding a brand new pair of headphones, I was eager to take a look at them.

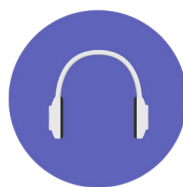
EKSA has a long history in developing and manufacturing headphones, so I knew what I was getting was going to be good quality. One of the major selling points of the Eksa Air Joy Pro, and one I was interested in, was its weight. The Air Joy Pro prides itself on the EKSA website as being less than half the weight of most gaming headsets on the market, and that really is no joke. As soon as I took them out of the box, the weight (or lack thereof) was instantly noticeable. When wearing, you can barely feel the Air Joy Pro, ringing true to their claim of comfort even after hours of use. Over gamescom weekend, I had to sit with the headphones on for 7-8 hours straight per day, and even on the final day, I wasn't experiencing any discomfort due to the headphones. The lightweight frame and sleek design make it so you can really keep these on for hours and hours at a time and not even feel it.

USB-C cable, and the box comes with phono and USB adapter cables, which allows you to use the Air Joy Pro with almost any device. Whether having a leisurely stroll and listening to music on your phone, or enjoying an intense gaming session on your computer, the Air Joy Pro has you covered. Its portable and lightweight design makes using it when out and travelling not only a viable option, but a convenient one; a rarity among gaming headphones.

Speaking of sound, how does the Air Joy Pro hold up in that regard? You'll be pleased to know, incredibly well. I was previously using the Hyper X Cloud Revolver S, and while they're definitely good, I've noticed my awareness in games in regards to sound has been a lot better since using the Air Joy Pro. From the sounds of a HAVOC revving up from the other side of the street in Apex Legends, to the sound of people running in the vents above me in Team Fortress 2, the Air Joy Pro has enabled me greater awareness of with what I can only describe as a flawless sound system. Coupled with how well the headset blocks out any sounds going on in the real world, there really is nothing but praise in this department.

There is one issue I do have, however; the microphone leaves much to be desired. Whilst incredibly easy to set up, the microphone is not of the best quality. It feels flimsy, like it could

The headset is connected via a detachable



snap at any given moment. As well as this, my friends reported my voice sounding distant and tinny, a detail I didn't believe until I heard my own voice in recordings I was making of my gameplay. Finally, the microphone is described as 'noise-cancelling', but this didn't ring as true as I was hoping. For the first time in roughly a year and a half, I had to increase my input sensitivity for voice activation on Discord because my microphone was picking up private conversations that were happening in the room; an issue that my previous microphones would not have. This detail isn't necessarily a deal-breaker for me, however, as the microphone can just be removed and I usually use a desk-clamp microphone, but the microphone issues may be enough to put some gamers off.

Overall, the EKSA Air Joy Pro is a solid headset. Its sound quality makes it great for both casual and competitive use. The lightweight design makes it a comfort to wear and carry no matter where you are; whether that be on the couch enjoying Xbox, playing Nintendo Switch on the bus, or watching YouTube videos on your phone in the comfort of your own bed. If you can supply your own microphone, the Air Joy Pro is a great pair of headphones at an affordable price and no skimps in quality.



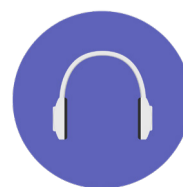
Suitable for:



PC



**RRP: £34.99
/ \$N/A**





GENESIS RADON 720 HEADSET

Working from home for the past year has been, if nothing else, an interesting experience. What was clear from the start however was that like many people my own setup was not up to the challenge. Now spending easily six hours a day on video calls I was in need of a headset that would be comfortable for prolonged hours of use while also offering clear audio. So, when I was introduced to the Radon 720 headset from Genesis and its glowing red earphones I was curious to see how it would go.

Right from the unboxing it was clear that the build quality of the Radon 720 headset is nothing short of superb and it is clear that no expense was spared in ensuring durability and comfort. Each material feels as though it can take a beating while still being lightweight enough not to cause discomfort. This is even more beneficial when you consider how you adjust the headset. Unlike others which include sliders on the earpads to conform to the shape and size of your head, the Radon 720 simply requires you to pull down on them as you place it on your head. This means you end up with a tighter, more secure fit, with the headset returning to a small form factor when you take it off. It does take a bit of getting used to but once you do it's a pleasant wearing experience.

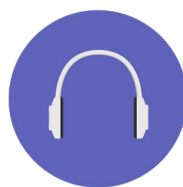
that most headsets push down on them, causing discomfort and even headaches. Thankfully the Radon 720 doesn't do this and sits with just the right amount of pressure to avoid any problems while remaining in place. As a matter of fact, the earpads are made from such a soft material and include a fair bit of padding that I actually found myself forgetting at times I was even wearing the headset. Not to mention they isolate background noise too it is no surprise that you can just feel like you are in your own little world at times.

The key selling point of the Radon 720 headset is that it features a built-in sound card capable of delivering 7.1 virtual surround sound. This not only means you experience professional quality sound but you are also able to identify the source and direction of sounds in supported games. To further enhance this, the headset also features 50mm transducers that result in an audio experience unlike any other. Be it for gaming, listening to music, or for those many work Zoom calls, the audio quality is top notch and crystal clear. As a matter of fact, the Radon 720 headset is the first 7.1 virtual surround sound headset I've used and I don't think I could use anything else now.

Something that did surprise me about the Radon 720 was the built in microphone, both in quality and formfactor. When I first unboxed the headset I didn't even notice the microphone

Speaking of comfort, as someone who has to wear glasses pretty much all the time I often find





and just assumed it did not come with one. It was only when I double checked the packaging that I realised that the small, and I mean small, bump on the left earphone is, in fact, said microphone. Even with such a small size however, the quality of the built-in microphone is truly impressive. Be it for gaming, work meetings, casual chats, or even recording a podcast, the Radon 720's built-in microphone has been perfect for each of these use cases.

To round everything off, the headset also comes with a 200cm long braided cable with a USB connector. This matches up with the build quality of the headset as a whole and is a nice addition that completes the package. Being able to take advantage of this length and the overall comfort of the headset, it means you can use it with consoles and feel at ease.



**RRP: €49.00
/ \$49.99**

As a matter of fact the Radon 720 is my go-to headset for gaming be it on desktop or console.

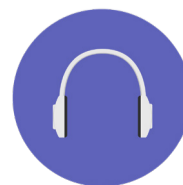
All in all, the Radon 720 headset is simply brilliant and an ideal choice regardless of your needs be it for work or gaming. With a lightweight but durable build the headset is able to take a beating while also being comfortable to wear for prolonged hours, even for those with glasses. Having never used a 7.1 virtual surround sound headset before, I don't think I can go back to anything else. If you need a new headset then make sure to consider the Radon 720.



Suitable for:



PC





TURTLE BEACH ATLAS THREE

It's been a while since I reviewed a headset, so when the opportunity arose to check out the Atlas Three from Turtle Beach, I jumped at the chance. It's a nice looking headset after all, and it's compatible with the PlayStation 4, Xbox One and Switch as well as the PC.

First off, I'll note that chat functionality on the Switch doesn't work with the headset, but it does work for the other two consoles and the PC. Also worth noting is that you have to charge it to use it for up to 40 hours.

In the box you get the headset, which has a cable ending in a 3.5mm jack. If your Xbox One controller doesn't have a 3.5mm port in it, then you need a Headset Audio Controller. The box also contains a PC splitter cable to plug it into your earphone/speaker and microphone ports. Finally, there's the micro USB charging cable, a quick start guide and a Turtle Beach sticker.

The headset's construction is very solid, though I did notice some creaking in the left earcup when I adjusted it on my head. The headband is adjustable, and is unlikely to shift around on your head as it is nice and stiff. The earcups and headband have a nice, soft cushion covering which is softer where spectacles might be, to make them comfier for glasses wearers.

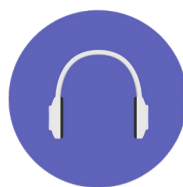
The right earcup has the volume control for both the earphones and the microphone (which is for you to hear yourself, not the output), as well as the flip-up microphone itself. The sturdy microphone moves to three points, with all the way back muting it. It's quite short, but nice and clear. There are also the power and audio preset buttons.

While the headset isn't uncomfortable to wear for long periods, I have noticed that it's not as comfortable as my previous headset. It's difficult to explain how it feels different, maybe it's because the material is felt instead of leatherette? I've still been able to wear it for hours at a time without discomfort.

One issue I do have, however, is that the headset turns itself off automatically. Of course, this is a power saving measure, but I'm not sure what it looks for before powering down. It's happened after a few minutes of not being used, but it's also happened several times despite there being sound playing. Whether music, the Twitch app or a game, and after different periods of time, it gives a tone and turns off. Even more curious, I had turned the volume dial on the headset only 30 seconds prior to one of the shutdowns.

The headset boasts some audio boosting options, such as being Windows Sonic Surround Sound Ready, and having the aforementioned Audio





Presets. These are audio equalisers, and pressing the button rotates between the three: Turtle Beach Signature Sound, Treble Boost, and Vocal Boost.

I'll admit that I'm not much of an audiophile, so the difference in the three wasn't very noticeable. Perhaps if I listened to music at a higher volume?

The Atlas Three had no problems with any audio I threw at it, whether songs, music, videos or games. All were perfectly clear and audible, though after my last headset they do seem quiet. My old headset required the PC to be set to volume two, or risk deafening me. The Atlas Three, even with the volume dial turned all the way up, I could comfortably

listen to things at volume 16 or above. That's not a negative, just an observation.

At £69.99, the Turtle Beach Atlas Three is a decent headset that works well with consoles and PC alike. If you're in the market for a non-USB headset, then you can do worse than this.

**RRP: £67.95
/ \$119.94**

Suitable for:



Switch



Smartphones



Tablets



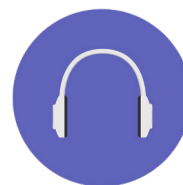
PC



PlayStation



Xbox





TURTLE BEACH RECON 500

I always enjoy getting a new headset to try out because over the years I've realised that you can just get used to what you have, and think that it's the best experience you can get. Turtle Beach are known as one of the leaders in audio technology, so I was eager to check out the Recon 500 headset.

It comes in the box with a detachable microphone, a quick start guide, a support leaflet and a Turtle Beach sticker. Most of the packaging is cardboard, which is always nice to see.

The build quality is decent, with very little wiggle when the headband is extended. The left ear cup has a hole for the detachable microphone, a mute button for the microphone, and a volume

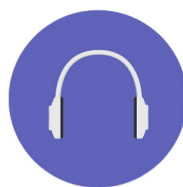
dial. The ear cups don't meet and are far enough from each other that you can turn them 90 degrees. That helps them to rest comfortably when they're around your neck and not in use.

Designed for use with consoles, but compatible with PC, I decided to plug the Recon 500 into my Xbox Series X. More specifically, the headphone port in the controller. The cable on the headset isn't very long, but since it's not USB it doesn't need to be. Audio quality was fantastic as I played through Saints Row: The Third Remastered, as the Recon 500 is compatible with the console's Windows Sonic for Headphones, which gives you a surround sound experience.

I also tested them out with my phone and PC, both giving brilliant and loud audio. The quality of the output was great all around, so clearly the 60mm Eclipse dual-drivers are worth the trademark.

My issue came with how the Recon 500 feels to wear. It's lightweight, and glasses friendly, but that results in the earcups not quite closing over my ears. I thought that perhaps it was my large ears being at fault, but I had my smaller-eared wife try them on and she confirmed that it doesn't sit properly at the bottom of the ear. Of course, the headband is expandable, but I tried it at multiple sizes and couldn't get it to fit comfortably. That means a lot of outside sound intrudes.





The padding on the ear cups is really soft, meaning that the claim of “glasses friendly” is entirely correct. It kills me that these don’t seem to fit properly at the bottom, because when everything is quiet they’re great. They don’t claim to be noise-cancelling by any means, but their ill-fitting nature makes it worse.

Turtle Beach’s Recon 500 headset is a great piece of kit with a fantastic sound. It’s unfortunate that it doesn’t fit very comfortably, resulting in quite a bit of sound bleed. If you’re going to be playing games in a quiet space, they’re going to be brilliant. Less so if you’re in a house with five other people.

**RRP: £69.99
/ \$79.95**



Suitable for:



Switch



Smartphones



Tablets



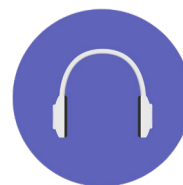
PC



PlayStation



Xbox





STEELSERIES ARCTIS 3 BLUETOOTH

The Arctis 3 Bluetooth headset gives you the easy freedom of choosing between wired, wireless, or both. I'm not one to actually care about driver details, balance of bass, or whether or not its audiophile rating is high. What I do care about is its utility, how well it performs, and if the form factor of the headset is a turn on or off. As a heads up, this was purchased for personal use through the SteelSeries website along with other accessories (shown below) which included in this review.

From go, the Arctis 3 is relatively light and can be used for prolonged sessions. The actual ear cups just hold it in place, the ski band being the main method to keep it sat comfortably on your head. Just don't expect to go running or head bop too energetically with them though, as I've had trouble where leaning too far forward or back can cause them to slide off. Although if you're playing a scary/horror game, the bluetooth function means you don't have to be tethered. And if you are wired into your system, the splitter cable provided is a nice hearty length that it shouldn't be a problem unless your audio jack is far away already.

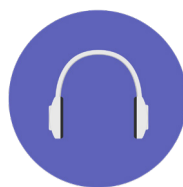
Going back to the cups, they're relatively easy to remove, although I did have to do some searching on how to do so. The process does require a bit more force than I expected, but that just shows how secure they are. On the

earcups you will find the bluetooth on/off switch on the right, and on the left is the audio dimmer, microphone on/off switch, socket for the Micro USB charging port, proprietary audio connector for the supplied 3.5mm headset cable, and the retractable microphone. Cables from left to right: micro USB, headset splitter, and proprietary 3.5mm connector.

The proprietary connector does take some time to learn to pop in and out, if you're not going to take it off your head to connect. The angle it's inserted in is slightly off kilter to where it's actually inserted. A criticism of the headset is the fact it uses a micro USB to charge, and the lack of a quick charge like system or use of a Type-C port does raise a few eyebrows. Given its reasonable price, I'll let it pass but it's worth mentioning. The velcro that holds the strap is solid and well made, but it's relatively finicky and when adjusting it's kinda hard to make it balanced.

The headset's battery is very capable of lasting an entire week without charging with bluetooth connection. When the headset is plugged in with a bluetooth connection audio is treated as equal for both inputs. However, the microphone will use bluetooth as a priority. So you will have to set your output audio to bluetooth and not stereo. If your mic isn't muted, it's very likely your OS or program isn't using the headset. As for the





microphone, it's good and is about the same as any standard headset microphone. If you do use it on voice channels, the compression isn't terrible going between wired and wireless. A problem I've been having recently is that my wired connection on desktop is worse than using bluetooth or when wire connected to my PlayStation 4.

The packaging is basic, but at least it's easy to open and doesn't require waiting for it to slide out.

The extra accessories that were bought as part of the bundle are nice, the fabric carry bag being

the best part. It only just fits though, so it's not the best if you're in a hurry packing. Personally, I'd have preferred a hard case but it is a simple solution to protect it from scratching or bumps. The leather cups are nice and plush, but aren't as comforting as the fabric ones or as easy to clean. They do act as great substitutes though if you stick the fabric ones into the wash.

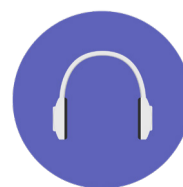
**RRP: £99.99
/ \$99.99**



Suitable for:



PC





THRUSTMASTER T.RACING SCUDERIA FERRARI EDITION-DTS

The Thrustmaster T.Racing Scuderia Ferrari Edition-DTS headset is rather striking on initial appearance, given it's official "Rosso Corsa" colour scheme, taken straight from Ferrari's branding books. It's an official tie in too, hence the somewhat lengthy name that this headset has been given. Out of the box, you get the headset, the boom microphone, a stub to block the microphone port when not in use, a cable that works both as an extension and a splitter, to allow you to plug into devices that have a split microphone and headphone jack. There's also a brief manual, and a code to give you a year's access to DTS HeadPhone:X, giving you virtualized 3D positional audio in the headset.

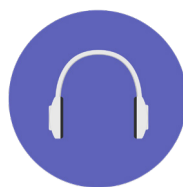


The headset utilises a set of 50mm drivers, allowing it to pour audio into your ear holes without distortion. There's also a volume control on the left earcup, and an inline control for the microphone portion, allowing you to set the volume of, and muting your microphone without needing to make any changes in software. The microphone is decidedly chunky, and the whole unit comes together to replicate the style of a headset that you'd see on the members of Ferrari's pit crews.

On your head, one of the first things you'll likely notice is that the memory foam earpads are very comfortable, and they stay comfortable on your head for multiple hours - which is great for those longer endurance races, though there doesn't appear to be any weaker memory foam along the top of the ear for those wearing glasses, the foam should mould around the arms of glasses fine, but may push them into your head a little more than you may be comfortable with.

The sound they produce when playing games has great stereo separation, and the virtualisation aspect of DTS Headphone:X works a treat but depending on content can present slightly muddy. This was much more prevalent in listening to music or content with voices such as watching





Netflix, though racing games fair well as it accentuates the tone of the engine more, which fits the demographic of this headset more. If you plan on using this headset for both, I recommend a 3-4db cut at 700Hz, and a small boost of 2-3db on 6000Hz and up, at least when you're not gaming. The microphone also seems similarly nuanced in terms of audio quality, having a slight mid-range punch that left the sound clear enough to be understandable, but it gives it a slightly weird vibe of being broadcast over a radio frequency, despite that not being the case.

Overall, the Thrustmaster T.Racing Scuderia Ferrari Edition-DTS is a very comfortable headset to use for long periods of time, and the DTS positional audio features can certainly heighten the immersion factor when it comes to gaming, it's just a shame that the code in the box is only for one year of access, but this is more DTS' problem than Thrustmaster. It certainly looks the part in its bright red Rosso Corsa colour scheme, but is marred by the overbearing mid-range that they deliver when not gaming, and the quality of the audio from the microphone almost feeling artificially compressed to get that sound of a pit crew headset.

As for their statement of "a major boost to achieve your best race times", at least for me, I've a feeling there's other factors at play keeping me from achieving those...



**RRP: £89.99
/ \$99.99**

Suitable for:



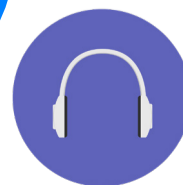
PC

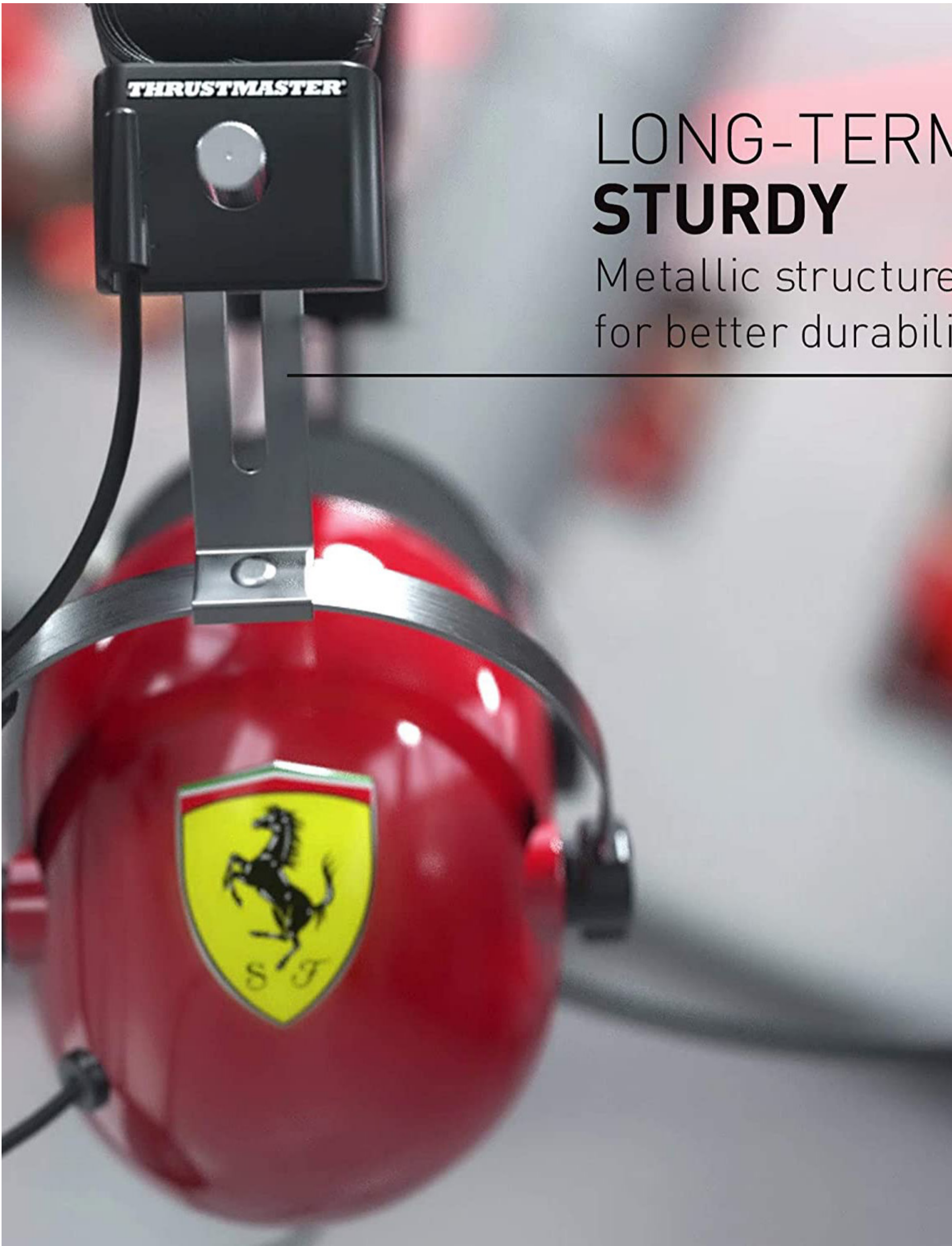


PlayStation



Xbox

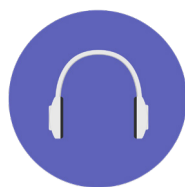




LONG-TERM
STURDY

Metallic structure
for better durability



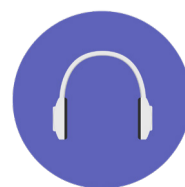


Inline mic controller included



PITS-STYLE ON EAR
VOLUME KNOB

CLEAR TRANSMISSION
Noise-cancelling, unidirectional mix





TURTLE BEACH STEALTH 700 GEN 2 WIRELESS HEADSET

There's nothing quite like that feeling of opening up a product—whether it be a toothbrush, a pair of shoes or, say, a wireless headset—and just knowing you've got something above-standard. Opening up the Turtle Beach Stealth 700 Gen 2 wireless headset elicited exactly that feeling in myself. Sat down with it in my lap, spying its chunky, sturdy frame; squeezing the faux leather ear-cushions and running a finger over its bold yet tasteful design; picking it up and feeling the device's reassuring weight; and finally placing it on my head to enjoy its secure fit sandwiching my skull had me slightly excited, giddy even. I couldn't resist letting a little smile creep up from the corners of my mouth.



I should probably explain. For financial reasons, I've grown accustomed to buying my tech on a budget: controllers, mice, keyboards and—yes—even my headsets are typically chosen by way of the “sort by price - low to high” function of most major online retailers. So when I was given the chance to review Turtle Beach's wireless Stealth 700 Gen 2 headset, I was eager to see what I'd been missing out on all these years. It may be classed as a mid-range product, but to me, it was sure to be a luxury, a perfect pairing for my shiny new Xbox Series S. On that note, it's worth highlighting that while the headset is designed for the Xbox Series S/X and Xbox One, it also works with Windows and Android (following my testing). Reports indicate that it's compatible with the PlayStation 4 too, albeit not wirelessly, but I wasn't able to verify that.

Enough rambling, it's time to find out: what had I been missing out on with my budget accessories all these years? Well, initially, it seemed the answer was “a spot of set-up”. After pulling out the headset and sorting through the rest of the box's contents (quick-start guide, USB-C charging cable, customer support information and a Turtle Beach logo sticker), I was directed to upgrade the headset's firmware through Turtle Beach's proprietary PC app. I downloaded it on my PC, opened it up, plugged in the headset,





pressed “go” (or something to that effect) and the program took care of the firmware upgrade from there. Great! I was all good to go. The firmware update was about as convenient and painless as possible; no complaints there.

The theme of convenience continues with Turtle Beach’s Audio Hub smartphone app. By connecting the headset via Bluetooth to my phone and opening up the app, I was able to adjust the audio settings to my liking. Here, I was given the choice to activate the headset’s (absurdly named) Superhuman Hearing setting, a function designed to enhance games’ audio, helping Turtle Beach users hear approaching footsteps and such to give them a “competitive edge” over their opponents. While I don’t think it improved my gaming performance—and trust me, there’s a lot of room for improvement on that front—it was still incredibly immersive being able to pinpoint the locations of sounds in games like Tom Clancy’s *The Division 2* (one of the titles I tested this headset with).

In fact, the headset’s performance, both in terms of audio quality and microphone clarity, was outstanding. I genuinely felt more invested in games, wandering around the idyllic woodland of Eastshade, for instance, listening to babbling brooks, chirping birds and my own in-game footsteps in a level of detail I’d never before noticed. Using it to communicate was a major success too; at least, nobody I spoke with complained about the quality of my voice (any more than they do in

real life). I later confirmed the microphone’s quality by connecting it to my phone and recording a little audio ramble—it sounded crystal clear to me. Oh, and as a side-note, if you see images of this headset which appear to be missing the microphone, that’s because it can be pulled out and tucked away neatly inside a gap found in the left earpiece. Gotta love those little touches!

I do admit that the headset felt tight on my head at first, almost like a clamp was trying to gently squeeze my brain out through my nose. I exaggerate of course; it wasn’t that bad, and I quickly got used to its clenching presence upon my head. Surprisingly, despite how bulky and





HEADSETS

tight it is, Turtle Beach claims that its headset is still glasses-friendly. As someone who's no stranger to glasses and headphone-inflicted injuries (another exaggeration), I was sceptical that the Stealth 700 would follow through on this bold claim. I was, however, pleasantly surprised to find that the headset and my glasses got on just fine. I was spared of that

familiar nuisance of my glasses frame digging into the side of my head and nose—hallelujah!

I could be wrong; this headset could be nothing special and I could be a figurative pauper displaying an inordinate reaction to his first taste of the good life. I don't think that's the case, though. From its sturdy and unobnoxious design





(with not a single glaring light in sight), to its easy setup and long battery life, this is one headset that looks good, sounds better and—if you can afford it—well deserves to be on your wishlist.



Suitable for:



Switch



Smartphones



Tablets



PC



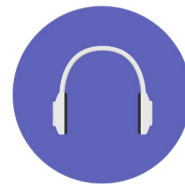
PlayStation



Xbox



**RRP: £129.99
/ \$149.95**



CHRISTMAS ALCOHOL PAIRINGS: FIRST PERSON SHOOTERS

It's almost Christmas once again, so what better way to spend it than with a nice drink and your favourite games? But, have you ever thought about marrying the two more than ever before, to choose the ultimate beverage to accompany your playtime? Read on, and in this first article we'll look at drinks to go with this years' most popular first person shooters.

Call of Duty: Black Ops III

Call of Duty: Black Ops III follows every other game in the franchise with fast paced, non-stop action. You don't want a mellow wine or harsh whisky with this; for your CoD playthrough, you need to go for a lager, such as Budweiser Budvar, brewed in the Czech Republic. It's not related to that fizzy piss you might be fond of – and I'm definitely judging you for it – instead, it actually has flavour, and isn't so strong that a couple of bottles is going to have you on your arse.

After all, you need to keep some semblance of alertness to you given the pace in CoD. Budvar sits in at 5% ABV (in the UK, strength may vary in other markets), but if you need something weaker you probably shouldn't bother. Pilsner Urquell comes in at 4.4%, again another Czech production.

If these are too cultural for you, just stick with the Carling and Carlsberg. After all, perhaps that's all CoD deserves.

Battlefield V

Whereas Black Ops III is pretty much non-stop action (exception is the Blackout mode), Battlefield V is much more laid back. Well, as laid back as World War 2 can be. Massive maps lend themselves to a tactical approach, particularly in Conquest. Grand Operations can still get pretty hairy. So you still need to keep your wits about you, but with the amount of diversity on show, you need something with a bit of diversity for your mouth.

What on Earth do I mean by that? Something like an IPA, of course! What did you think I meant? IPA's have been a pretty big rise over the past few years, so it's not just hipsters with tweed jackets supping them in their mansions whilst sons Alfred and Victory are off in boarding school. (Yes, that is an actual name.) Brewdog's Punk IPA is a personal favourite of mine, brewed with six different types of hops with a tropical fruit aroma. Goose Island IPA is another solid choice.

If you want to go even stronger, Belgium has you covered. La Chouffe offers an IPA variant,





with the Dobbelen IPA Tripel a tasty 9% ABV. Might be quite difficult to find in the UK – if you take a trip over to France, or Belgium itself, you'll find it easier to acquire. You won't need many before you start hysterically shooting at houses instead of playing the objective.

Counter-Strike: Global Offensive

You could probably take most of what I said earlier for Black Ops III and apply it to CS:GO, but I think that would be wrong. With CS:GO, you should go an extra mile and ditch beer and go for something heavier, but play a game with yourself.

Get onto Demolition, and every time you die, have a shot of vodka / Sambuca / whatever other strong alcohol you've got. If you're really, really shit, you'll soon be too plastered to care. So this will give you some motivation to git gud.

If you don't want to play these kinds of drinking games, then that's okay. Stick to mixing with Coke or lemonade, so you don't even realise you're slowly moving from semi-competent to "oh fuck I've thrown a flash and it's bounced back to me-".

Remember, GameOn only endorses responsible drinking. Be safe, have fun, and look after each other.





TRUST GXT 830 RW AVONN GAMING

The Trust brand is well known for producing low cost budget accessories and the Trust GXT 830 RW Avonn Gaming Keyboard

(which is a mouthful) is a cheap and cheerful gaming keyboard. As such, it's a relatively straightforward membrane design rather than using mechanical switches. That being said, it does have a nice solid response with a short travel distance that feels nice to type with.

The design has that slightly futuristic angular design popular with gaming peripheral manufacturers and it houses a full-size layout complete with multimedia and extra functions mapped onto the function keys,

which are accessed via an "FN" button that has been fit in next to the right AltGr key.

This key is also used to enable "Gaming Mode" which just means that the Windows key is disabled so you can't accidentally pop yourself out of a fullscreen game or accidentally open the start menu. Pressing "FN" and the Windows key toggles this but there is no LED or other indicator to let you know it's on.

Alongside "Gaming Mode" the main advertised feature is the anti-ghosting support, which allows up to six buttons to be pressed without losing the input. This works as advertised and





I had no issues combining the important keys around the WASD cluster whilst getting murdered in Fortnite and as I struggled against demonic hordes in DOOM (2016).

As a budget keyboard it doesn't house USB ports and the plastic doesn't really have a premium feel to it, because of that it is also pretty lightweight, coming in at just shy of 700g. The rainbow illumination is fixed and can't be toggled to a single colour so if you don't like the rainbow effect you are out of luck. It can be set to phase in and out as well as to be toggled off completely and it can also be set to three levels of brightness.

For what it's worth, the illumination is visible quite clearly around all key edges and does a good job of leaking through the lettering on the keys. It's definitely an effect you either love or hate however.

All in all the GXT 830 RW Avonn Gaming Keyboard does exactly what you'd expect for a budget gaming keyboard. It won't win any awards but it works as advertised and feels fine to use.



**RRP: £29.99
/ \$N/A**





TRUST GXT 856 TORAC GAMING

Regular readers will likely already know that I'm a sucker for brightly coloured things. Even my unnecessarily oversized mouse mat and desk fan have RGB in them. It's like Christmas all year round in my household, except there's no jolly fat man with a beard. I mean, I am a fat man with a beard but I'm actually quite grumpy. The important takeaway is that I really like RGB, and this keyboard from Trust is a brilliant example of bright shiny lights on a budget.

It used to be that if you wanted a keyboard that was optimised for gaming and also looked nice, you'd pay a premium. With advances in technology and LED lighting getting cheaper all

the time, we're now starting to see some nice designs come to the budget side of the market too, and that is what Trust is going for with the GXT 856 Torac. Retailing at £34.99, it's not the cheapest keyboard money can buy, but it's certainly cheaper than most gaming keyboards.

For your money, you get an anti-ghosting feature that allows for up to eight keypresses, less than you'd get with a more comprehensive piece of hardware, but it's enough for most people. It isn't mechanical, but at this price that is to be expected. The keys have a nice amount of travel to them, although they are a little on the soft side for my liking. This is something that's very much down to





personal preference of course, so if you prefer a less clicky keyboard then it'll probably be right up your alley. My partner, who prefers her input devices to be quiet, found it to be perfect for her.

The lighting isn't fully customisable, and remains in a graduated rainbow pattern at all times. You can adjust to one of three brightness levels, and also set it to a "breathing" pattern as well. You can also turn them off if required. There are no macro keys and no dedicated multimedia keys, but there's an "FN" button that you can use to amend the functions of the F1-F12 keys into media and volume controls or open common applications like calculator or your email client. There's also a "gaming mode" button that disables the Windows key so you don't accidentally press it and exit your game.

One thing that is immediately obvious with the GTX 856 is that it's a particularly well-

built piece of hardware. Whilst the base of the keyboard is plastic, there's a sturdy aluminium top plate that, like most gaming keyboards, extends probably a fair bit further out than it needs to in order to look more "gaming-like". It does give a premium feel, although the visible screws on the outside are an odd choice that will probably gain polarising views. I quite liked them as they give a kind of industrial look.

I've been using this as a daily driver for a week now and it's comfortable for both gaming and typing. My usual keyboard is a much more expensive mechanical affair and it's safe to say that I will be returning to that, but to compare the two would be unfair. If you're on a budget, this is a solid choice. There aren't too many bells and whistles, but it feels well built, it's comfortable and (in my opinion at least) it looks very nice.

**RRP: £34.99
/ \$N/A**





KEYBOARDS







GENESIS THOR 300 KEYBOARD

I often find when you are looking for new peripherals that you can quickly become lost in a bizarre world of buzzwords, oddly shaped devices, and bright neon colours. That's why when I saw the Thor 300 keyboard from Genesis I was quite surprised that, outside of the backlighting, its foam factor and marketing were quite straightforward, somewhat of a change to the usual affair. With that in mind, I was keen to get hands-on with it and see just how the user experience would and if it would live up to my expectations.

This is another product from Genesis that from the moment you open the box you become aware of just how good the build quality is. The Thor 300 has a full-size aluminium body which ensures it is impact-resistant and solid, without compromising the overall weight of the keyboard. On the bottom of the keyboard, you will find non-slip rubber feet for extra stability, a braided USB cable for connectivity, and even a built-in cable organiser.

As for the keys themselves, being a full mechanical keyboard the Thor 300 features universal switches in the form of outemu blue switches. These are known for their distinctive click and clearly noticeable activation point which ensures a smooth typing experience, be it for work or gaming. Thanks to the anti-ghosting feature across all of the keys, you can also rest easy

knowing that no matter how many keys you press on the keyboard it will read each one correctly.

Having been using the Thor 300 for both work and gaming over the last few weeks, the experience of using it has not diminished over that time. Sitting down with the keyboard for the first time was a joy as it was easy to both feel and hear when a key was being pressed. Not only that, but the form factor of the Thor 300 ensures your fingers can move across the keys with ease and, if anything, I think my typing speed has actually increased because of this.

This is the same for gaming as well, where the anti-ghosting feature really starts to shine. No matter how intense the game would get, the Thor 300 remained solid throughout both for not shifting its position from the impact or allowing any mistakes to occur. It's somewhat reassuring to know that if the wrong key is pressed, it's because of your own fault and not that of the keyboard. Of course, the click sound would sometimes get picked up by my microphone but a simple adjustment to audio settings ensured this never became a problem.

Now, while the Thor 300 is a backlit keyboard it is worth noting that this model only has green backlighting which, while a tad a shame at first, never dampened my experience with the





keyboard. You can customize the backlight to fit your taste with it supporting twenty different lighting modes, including eight which have been set up for use with some of the more popular game genres. Of course, you can also program your own along with adjusting the animation, speed, and brightness of these as well.

The Thor 300 may very well be the best mechanical keyboard I've used to date. Honestly, you would be hard-pressed to find any negatives with this model as everything it does it does so exceptionally well. Sure, the limited colour on the backlight might be a deal-breaker for some but that really shouldn't put you off this keyboard.

**RRP: €49.99
/ \$49.99**





ROCCAT MAGMA

Over the past few months, I found myself getting back into Dead by Daylight. The struggling mechanic became taxing on my keyboard because this essentially meant jackhammering my spacebar to try and stay alive as long as possible when you were on the second hook stage. This feature was recently changed to regular skill checks, but not before I managed to actually break my spacebar. Thankfully, ROCCAT must have heard my plight and not soon after launched the ROCCAT Magma, the most recent edition in its ever-growing roster of industry-defining peripherals.

My previous keyboard was the ROCCAT Horde AIM0, and my current mouse is a ROCCAT Kone Pure Ultra. So, it's safe to say I'm a huge fan of its equipment, and the Magma yet again aims to please. While it's on the cheaper side

of its equipment, the cheapest of its keyboards on sale in fact, it's far from bad quality.

The Magma is a membrane keyboard that, at first glance, might look quite simplistic, but underneath hides an intuitive and enjoyable piece of hardware. Despite membrane keyboards typically sporting lesser responsiveness, the Magma seems to suffer no setbacks in this regard. The keys themselves feel satisfying to use and there was never a feeling of unresponsiveness from them.

Like all ROCCAT products, the Magma can be linked to your ROCCAT account and customised through its Swarm software. This software allows you to tinker with the RGB illuminations and modify certain key bindings using the EasyShift feature, allowing you to create alternate and



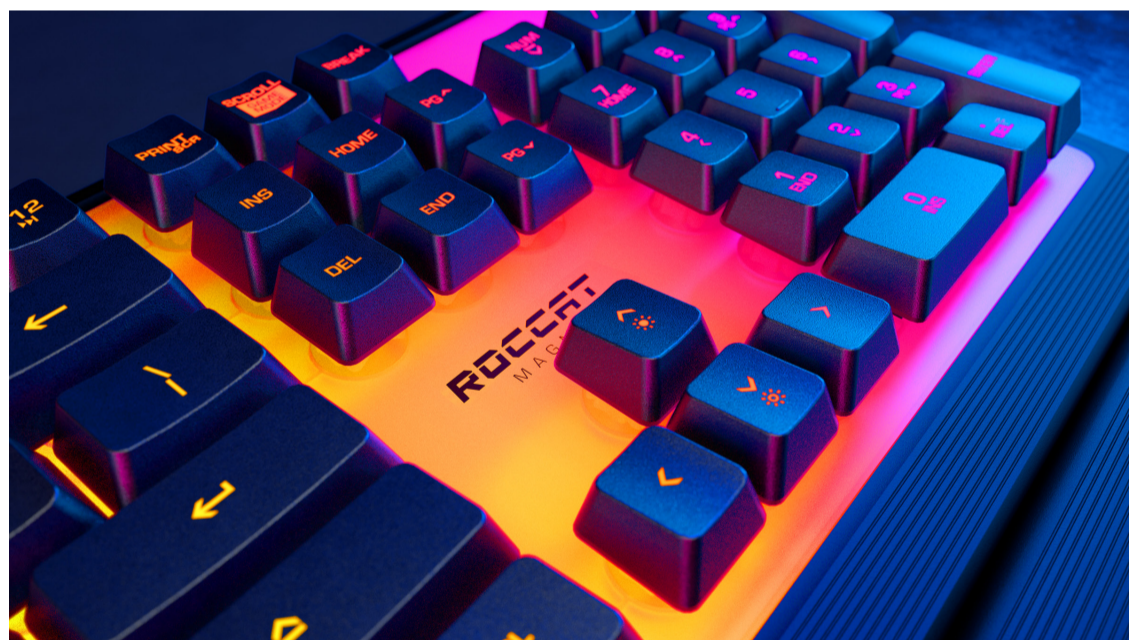


custom bindings bound to an 'EasyShift' key akin to a 'Function' key found on most keyboards. Additionally, the Magma also has a 'Game Mode', which can easily switch bindings and disables the Windows key. All through my gaming history, I've had too many situations where I've accidentally palmed the Windows key when trying to play, so this was a very welcome addition for me.

The Magma is the cheapest of the ROCCAT keyboards. As someone who has used ROCCAT's equipment before, it's easy to see why as it lacks some of the more advanced features that ROCCAT's other peripherals have. Do not let that cloud your judgement into thinking this keyboard is bad — sitting at a third of the price of its more high-end keyboards, the Magma holds perfectly fine on its own, and is a fine addition to anyone looking for a quality gaming keyboard without breaking their wallet too hard.



**RRP: £49.99
/ \$59.99**





ROCCAT HORDE AIMO

With gaming capabilities and requirements constantly evolving and advancing, tech companies are forced to adapt and design better hardware to stay on top of the competition, and German manufacturer ROCCAT have stepped up with the Horde AIMO, sporting everything and more that you could look for in a keyboard.

Starting with the basics, the keyboard itself was very simple to set up - simply plug it in and for the most part, it does everything on its own. The keyboard is very comfortable to use, with a detachable palm rest for extra convenience. The keys just feel right, even if my muscle memory meant that for the first week or so, I would occasionally miss keys when pressed reflexively under pressure.

One of my favourite features of the keyboard is the tuning wheel. Whilst most keyboard wheels are stuck to changing the volume, the wheel on the Horde AIMO offers precise control over multiple functions besides volume, ranging from keyboard brightness, microphone volume, and even a task switcher, that allows you to cycle through all open applications, which is useful when you're working with multiple programs.

Keyboards are either membrane or mechanical. Membrane keyboards are those cheap ones with the rubber that get all sorts of crap inside them and stop working. Mechanical keyboards are all the rage nowadays, especially in the gaming community. The annoying loud clicking they generate is made up for in the amazing responsiveness of the keys, and the tears of





everyone that you ever go on voice-activated comms with. But for some, the obnoxious sound is enough to put them off ever getting one, which is where ROCCAT have come in to save the day.

Coining the term 'Membranical', the Horde AIMO manages to combine the technology to give you the soft, quiet touch of a membrane keyboard, with the responsiveness and longevity of a mechanical. Sporting what is being described by many as the best membrane-based keyboard on the market, ROCCAT have certainly outdone themselves with the creation. ROCCAT have kept many details regarding the membranical design close to their chest, but have stated the keys have a 'fast midway travel actuation point', achieving an actuation speed of 7.8ms, when compared to the standard membrane keyboard of 9.0ms actuation speed.

As with any gaming keyboard, macros are generally included as a must-have feature.

The keyboard has five programmable macro keys. The keys can be easily assigned by use of the ROCCAT Swarm software, which can also be used to further customise things like key bindings and illumination. I was a bit worried

about how responsive they'd be due to being membrane and macros often being needed on the moment they're pressed, but ROCCAT tackled this worry in an amusing yet practical manner: by sinking the macro keys deeper into the keyboard so they have less distance to go before registering as a press. To test the macro keys themselves, I made one for the 'struggle' function for when you're on the hook in Dead By Daylight that repeatedly 'pressed' the spacebar with a delay of 0.05 seconds and continued for as long as it was held down. The longest amount of time you can 'struggle' for before dying is 44 seconds, and the macro managed to hit this almost every time (with the almost being down to human error of pressing too early/late).

Overall, ROCCAT's latest keyboard is definitely one that any gamer is going to want to get their hands on. With a current pricing of £89.99 on their website at time of writing, it's certainly worth the investment if you put a lot of time into gaming, whether casual or competitive. Simple to set up, easy to use and effective at what it sets out to do, there's not much that could be done to improve the Horde AIMO.

**RRP: £89.99
/ \$99.99**





ROCCAT VULCAN 121 AIMO

The ROCCAT VULCAN 121 AIMO keyboard is a pretty number, when I was shown the picture I just had to have it. As my last one was the HyperX keyboard that I reviewed three years ago, I thought it was time to get something new.

Inside the box it had the keyboard with the cable attached, palm rest, the quick-installation guide, disposal information and some stickers. As I unplugged my HyperX I took the ROCCAT VULCAN 121 AIMO keyboard out of the box and I sized them up against each other. The VULCAN is slightly bigger than my previous one, so I thought it might take up more room on my small desk, turns out it fit nicely once it was plugged in.

I loaded up my PC and went straight to the ROCCAT site to download a program called ROCCAT Swarm, that lets you customise the keyboard. As this was the first time I ever came across the program, I checked it out. At the bottom there are Gamer Profiles, so I went to Micro Manager and it has profiles already added for games like Borderlands 2, Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege, Fortnite and many others. Although I don't use a keyboard for playing games as my hands are too

small to do many things on it, so I use a controller, so I didn't use any of the profiles.

As I was looking through the program and learning to understand it, I looked through all the options under Key Illumination and noticed you can change the patterns from Wave, Snake, Ripple FX and a few more. Choosing Snake, Ripple FX or any other pattern you can change the colours to your desire, but on Wave it is rainbow colours only. Once you have chosen your pattern you can choose how fast or slow you would like the colours to run through your keys as well as how bright you would like it. I decided to go for Wave as it lit up my keyboard in rainbow colours, and I turned the brightness up all the way.





Since the palm rest is magnetic, it really helps to clear up some space. I like to do crafty bits now and then, so it's a really handy feature, as it means I can just take it off whenever I want, instead of taking the entire keyboard off of my desk.

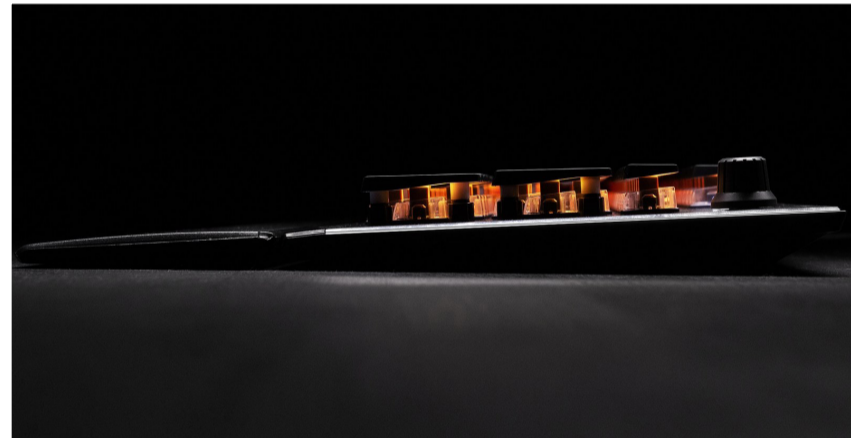
When it started to get dark, my two youngest children pointed out that my keyboard made a rainbow pattern on the ceiling and wall nearby. I found that even with the brightness down you can still see the pattern, so if you like to light up your room without an actual light, this keyboard is a must-have.

When playing games I like to have easy

access to the volume, I do have a thing that can turn the volume up and down on my headset, but I do like that the VULCAN has a little dial to turn the volume up and down. I have used this a lot since having the keyboard and rarely touch the one on my headset.

My VULCAN doesn't seem to be a UK keyboard so some of the symbols are not the same as a UK keyboard. I have lost myself many times in trying to work out what the symbols are and how to get them to show up in Google Docs. Your mileage may vary, though.

**RRP: £149.99
/ \$159.99**



CHRISTMAS ALCOHOL PAIRINGS: OPEN WORLD GAMES

It's almost Christmas once again, so what better way to spend it than with a nice drink and your favourite games? But, have you ever thought about marrying the two more than ever before, to choose the ultimate beverage to accompany your playtime? Read on, and in this article we'll look at drinks to go with this year's most popular sprawling open world games.

Red Dead Redemption 2

The sprawling open world of Red Dead Redemption 2 is possibly one of the greatest ever, which I said in my review. It's slow, methodical, and perhaps too realistic in some places, but it's an enjoyable universe to lose yourself in over Christmas.

Leave the beer in the fridge for this one, and join the cowboys with their good old fashioned whiskey. If you have some moonshine brewing in your bath, that could work too, but I'd rather stick to some Kentucky bourbon. There's a few quality choices to choose from that are available in your local supermarket, even Amazon has a decent selection. Buffalo Trace is a personal favourite, but you can't go far wrong with Four Roses either, particularly their small batch and private selection offerings. You have to drink it neat, though. No ice, no watering down. It'll put some hairs on your chest – both men and women.

The whiskey that was actually available in the Wild West was a lot different from what he can buy today, mind. Tobacco juice was a popular ingredient, and in some, gunpowder. I wouldn't recommend trying to produce this concoction at home, though; I don't want to be cited as the reason you've blown your brand new kitchen up.

Marvel's Spider-Man

This is a tough one because Spider-Man tends to refrain from drinking. After all, pissed whilst taking down The Green Goblin isn't going to go well. He's not exactly Deadpool.

After a bit of digging (read: furious Googling), I found that there is actually an issue where Peter Parker gets a bit tipsy. Web of Spider-Man #38, 1988. Peter Parker attends a party and gets drunk on punch, and then runs off to fight the Hobgoblin, almost injuring some innocent civilians in the process. So I'm taking that and running with it.

A decent fruit punch doesn't take a lot of effort to make, and is fairly cheap too. The quick and easy way is to buy a few bottles of fruit juice from the supermarket – orange, pineapple, and other exotic fruits always go well together – along with a few strawberries chucked in and some orange or tangerine slices. As for alcohol, you could lump for vodka, or get some spiced rum to spice





things up a bit. Make sure you're liberal with it too, unless you're letting your kids sample some. But hey, it's Christmas, don't be a scrooge.

Assassin's Creed Odyssey

Do you know what the most popular drink was in ancient Greece? How all those great thinkers got their ideas?

Wine! Yes, glorified grape juice is the source of much of today's intelligence. Mead was also popular, which is slightly different – this is fermented honey, usually with other added flavourings. But for that true old timey feeling, get out a decent bottle of wine and

put away a couple of bottles as you fight in the battle between Athens and Sparta.

I have to be honest though and admit that exactly which wine you should be choosing is lost on me. Don't they all taste the same? Regardless, red wine is definitely what you should be aiming for (I do know that there are different colours, obviously...), and to make it truly in line with our Greek friends, get a period Kylix or Kantharos. Glasses are soooo 14th Century.

**Remember, GameOn only endorses responsible drinking.
Be safe, have fun, and look after each other.**





ROCCAT KONE PURE ULTRA

Efficient simplicity” are the words to describe ROCCAT’s Kone Pure Ultra gaming mouse. Where many hardware manufacturers wave their flags atop the ‘bigger and brighter is better’ mountain, ROCCAT has instead opted for the minimalist approach with an ultra-lightweight mouse that eschews the ‘alien technology’ aesthetic—with all those flashing lights, switches and doodads—for refreshing and stylish simplicity. The Kone Pure Ultra is a mouse that, above all, does a job and does it well with no fuss.

66 grams—about the same weight as a tennis ball—sounds too light for a ‘proper’ mouse. Any piece of equipment that lightweight runs the risk of feeling cheap and hollow: less like a piece of high-end tech, more like bargain bin junk. Fortunately, the Kone Pure Ultra avoids this with a reassuringly high build quality in all aspects other than its airiness. Each input (left/right-click, thumb buttons, sensitivity buttons and scroll wheel) feels sturdy without being stiff; there’s certainly none of the springiness that cheaper mouse buttons suffer from. Its smooth matt finish and perfectly ergonomic design is irresistible too—almost silky to the touch. My only complaint, and this is completely down to preference, comes as a result of the colour-changing LED ‘ROCCAT’ logo that sits about where a user’s palm would be. I feel that the garish light detracts from the effortlessly pure qualities of the mouse, although this is hardly a deal-breaker;

in fact, I’d wager that most people would regard a little flashiness as a positive. Regardless, with some fiddling around in the ‘ROCCAT Swarm’ utility, this light can—mercifully—be switched off.

The Kone Pure Ultra comes packing an “Owl-Eye 16,000dpi optical sensor” with “50G acceleration” and “adjustable lift-off distance”. At least, that’s what it says on the box. I’m not able—or particularly willing—to verify those claims, but I can rattle off a few layman-friendly words on how damn good this mouse feels in action. After several days of regular usage, including one or two lengthy work/play sessions, my hand felt none the worse for wear: no cramping or discomfort at all. In comparison to the cheap and not-so cheerful mice I was used to, this was like a gift from the heavens; a glimpse at what mice were meant to be. Imagine going your whole life wearing each shoe on the wrong foot, before finally, after decades, getting it right and basking in the comfort that everyone else must have been taking for granted all along. Okay, maybe this is an exaggeration, but don’t let it distract from my point: the Kone Pure Ultra feels good and performs marvellously.

Considering how this is a piece of tech that champions simple functionality over excessive features, it’d be inappropriate to endlessly prattle on about the subtle curves and contours of the Kone Pure Ultra for much longer. ROCCAT has





created a mouse that does a single job incredibly well in a world full of mice that try—and fail—to do several. For that, it gets my approval. If you have £60 to spend on a mouse and, like me,



prefer gaming tech to be relatively discrete, you can't go too far wrong with the Kone Pure Ultra.



**RRP: £59.99
/ \$69.99**



ROCCAT KAIN 200 AIMO

By now you'll have read enough of my hardware reviews to know that I stick with something until it's worn out or broken. So, despite my previous mouse only being eight months old, I didn't feel that it needed replacing. Still, I agreed to review the ROCCAT Kain 200 AIMO for a change of pace. And quickly forgot about my old mouse.

The Kain is a wireless mouse with a rechargeable battery boasting up to 50 hours of life. It comes in a box with a quick installation guide, a charging cable, a wireless dongle and a USB-to-micro-USB dongle. I think the idea is to plug the wireless dongle into the USB dongle, then connect it to your computer with the micro-USB cable - and swap the Kain with the USB dongle when your mouse needs a recharge. However, I just plugged in the wireless dongle and kept the rest aside for when I do need to charge it.

The build quality of the Kain is fantastic, with the unit feeling nice and solid in your hand. The buttons are responsive and not too loud - with the usual left, right, and two side buttons. There's also a DPI button behind the scroll wheel, in case you need the mouse to move at a different speed in a snap. The scroll wheel feels a little stiffer than my previous mouse, but it's by no means stiff. I think the old mouse scroll was too loose.

My only issue is where the micro-USB plugs in, underneath the body of the mouse. Since there's no way to cover the hole when not in use, I can imagine it will become full of dust over time, depending on the material of your mouse mat. For reference, I'm using a ROCCAT Kanga mouse pad, so I imagine the exact environment it was designed for - but after a few days I'm already wiping dust off of the area around the micro-USB port.

Also on the underside of the Kain, there is a button to sync the mouse with the wireless dongle - I have not had to use it as yet. There is also a slider to turn the mouse on and off. If you forget to turn it off, the mouse will go into standby mode after a short while. It's 10-15 minutes, I haven't actually timed it, but it's never gone to sleep unless I've left it alone for a period of time.

Being a ROCCAT product, it's compatible with the Swarm app, which keeps it up to date - and lets you control the lights. Obviously, I made it pulse in a "breathing" configuration with two tones of purple, because 3rd Street represent.

The Kain 200 is a great mouse, feeling very nicely put together and responsive. I would have liked some way of knowing when the battery is getting low so I could plug it in - it just turns off - but other than that and the expected upcoming dust



issue, I recommend it. If you're in the market for a new mouse and it fits your price range, go for it!



**RRP: £89.99
/ \$99.99**



LOGITECH G PRO WIRELESS

Across my twenty-or-so years of playing games of various forms I've used a fair few different mice. Ranging from ones with a plethora of extra buttons, to standard simple ones that didn't even have side buttons for going to the previous page in your browser.

However, across that span of history, I only ever had one which was wireless. And that put me off wireless mice for gaming as it introduced a weird delay between the movement of the mouse and the cursor on screen, small enough that it was fine for desktop work, big enough that it was a pain for gaming. Though it did give me an appreciation for heavier mice, as having the batteries added quite some heft, which I liked.

How will the Logitech G PRO Wireless fair then, coming up against a stalwart supporter of wired devices with all of the weights added?

First off, let's talk about what's in the box. There's the mouse itself, with a small wireless dongle. A micro USB cable for charging the mouse, some replacement side-buttons so you can switch between left and right-handed setup and the usage instructions. For all of its portability, like having a removable base plate on the mouse that can be used to store the dongle when it's in transport, the omission of some kind of carry bag for it to ensure it doesn't get scuffed up with

your other bits and bobs in your bag just feels like a bit of a missed opportunity. Especially for a mouse at this price point. But we're not here to talk about what's not in the box.

The Logitech G PRO Wireless, when you first pick it out of the box, almost comes across feeling cheap mostly due to its ultra-light weight. Coming in at only 80 grams, it feels not too dissimilar to the kind of mice you used to be able to pick up for a few quid at the local computer fair. However, when you start taking into account what's inside the mouse - from a technical standpoint - then that 80 gram figure really becomes even more impressive. With their top notch sensor in there, the HERO 16K not only tracks well, but also uses much less power to do so than its predecessors. Because of that, Logitech was able to fit the G PRO Wireless with a Lithium Polymer battery, instead of requiring more weighty rechargeables to further keep the weight down. From a full charge, even with the lighting going I've been able to use it for nearly two weeks of office desktop usage, without even so much as a blip that the battery was getting low.

Charging is a cinch, just pop the supplied micro USB cable in the front of the mouse, and then hook it up to a power supply. When connected via USB to a computer, it uses that for a data connection. So if you're really worried that





the wireless connection might let you down, you have a backup option available. You can also use your own micro USB cable, despite the one in the box looking like it has come from the Bat Cave. The design of the included cable just adds some additional support to the wire so it doesn't move about in use.

And for the wireless aspect, well, for all of my concerns about the technology, the G PRO Wireless might have just assuaged those fears. In multiple rounds of Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, I was just as competitive as if I were using a wired device. It's hard to even tell you're using a wireless mouse at times, as there seems to be no delay at all introduced by the technology. I also partook in some World Of Warcraft where accurate clicking can be the make or break of some of the tougher content, but the G PRO

Wireless held up to that with aplomb. The only real difference for me here is that some of the aspects I'd normally use with additional mouse buttons became difficult to hit, having the additional buttons on the outside of the mouse leading them to need the ring or pinky finger to hit, rather than the index or thumb as I've become accustomed to.

Ultimately, between the difficulty to hit and the amount of accidental actuation I'd racked up on the outside buttons, I reverted back to the setup as it came out of the box. But having those options available means that this is a truly ambidextrous mouse. It's shaped symmetrically, so pop the left hand buttons off and add the right ones, and you've got a mouse that's perfect for southpaws, too.

**RRP: £129.99
/ \$129.99**



CHRISTMAS ALCOHOL PAIRINGS: PLATFORMERS

It's almost Christmas once again, so what better way to spend it than with a nice drink and your favourite games? But, have you ever thought about marrying the two more than ever before, to choose the ultimate beverage to accompany your playtime? Read on, and in this article we'll look at drinks to enjoy responsibly with this year's most popular platform games.

Tanglewood

Tanglewood is an old-school game, so it deserves a real old-school drink. None of these new-fangled micro brewery gubbins or fizzy pop masquerading as cider. No, a game needs something warm and brown with little twigs floating in it. To wit: it needs a real ale.

There are a few options here, and one that springs to mind immediately is Tanglewood Branch IPA. This didn't make the cut however due to the aforementioned ruling out of microbreweries, and also the fact that it ceased production a few years ago. The similarly named Tangle Foot brewery do a few lovely ales that are worth considering too, including Fursty Ferret, a nice malty number, and The Legendary Tangle Foot, which is a lovely refreshing golden ale.

game, is Fuller's Red Fox. This deep ruby ale is a deep and mellow sipping ale which works well with the more considered approach to platforming that Tanglewood provides.

Unravel 2

This cute-as-a-button sequel from EA adds multiplayer into the mix. With a game that is best played with a friend, it seemed like a good idea to find a drink best enjoyed with a friend. And what better drink to enjoy with someone else than a cocktail.

As much as I try to make out that I'm a manly man, I'm really not, so from time to time I do like to sip something with a lurid colour and more sugar than Kim Tate and Jeremy Lyle put together. The perfect cocktail to go with this title would have to incorporate the colours of our two woolen heroes. If you remember back to primary school you'll know that red and blue combine into purple, so what better than a purple people eater. This Grenadine-based cocktail incorporates Blue Curacao and Cranberry juice for a sweet but dry hit. If that's not your jam though, perhaps a Purple Haze; a classic mix of Vodka, Chambord and Sprite.



The winner for me though, with its fruity autumnal notes that complement the aesthetics of the



Sonic Mania Plus

Sonic Mania's success was a surprise to literally nobody except Sega. Fans of the series had been crying out for a classic 2D game like the 16-bit days and finally, thanks to a collaboration with Christian Whitehead, it came in 2017. Off the back of that, 2018 saw the breakout hit get a physical release with a bunch of new bells and whistles in the form of Sonic Mania Plus.

It would be easy to just say that Blue Curacao or WKD would be the way to go here, but we've already used colour for our inspiration earlier. Instead I'm taking my cue from the blistering speed that is Sonic's other trademark.

The obvious choice for drinks that people who gotta go fast love to consume is the classic Jägerbomb, made by dropping a shot of Jägermeister into a glass of energy drink (usually Red Bull). This gets you drunk quickly, and gives you energy, because everyone likes an energetic drunk.

There's an ever more potent alternative though which is less famous. Buckfast Tonic Wine, known to Glaswegian clubbers in need of a vitality boost as "Buckies", is an even more lethal mix. Made by the monks of Buckfast Abbey in Devonshire, you'd think this would be a pretty posh drink. It turns out though that this caffeine-fortified wine is just as popular amongst the riff-raff. In 2010, an investigation by the BBC found that the drink had been mentioned by name in an average of 3 crime reports a day in the Strathclyde area alone between 2006 and 2009. If you decide to engage in a tippie of this speedy intoxicant, do so in moderation and please don't break any laws. Except those of physics as you zoom through Sonic Mania Plus's loops, ramps and rolling hills.

Remember, GameOn only endorses responsible drinking.

Be safe, have fun, and look after each other.





VENOM PRO GAMER CASE FOR SWITCH LITE

Since I bought a Switch Lite I knew it would need some sort of protection from my four children. So when I got offered to review a Venom Pro Gamer Case I jumped at the chance. In the box you get the Pro Gamer Case and a screen protector. There were no instructions but it was easy to work out how to attach the case to the Switch Lite.

The Pro Gamer Case is a soft rubber on the outside and a hard plastic in the middle which has a compartment for you to store your Game Cards. At first I found it hard to slot them in, before I worked out you have to put the left side of the Game Card in first then it will fit easier. However, taking the Game Cards out I find to be hard.

My six year old daughter found it easy to open the compartment and take a Game Card out and put it back in. However, my 14 year old autistic son found it hard to open and insert a Game Card, though he found it much easier to take one out.

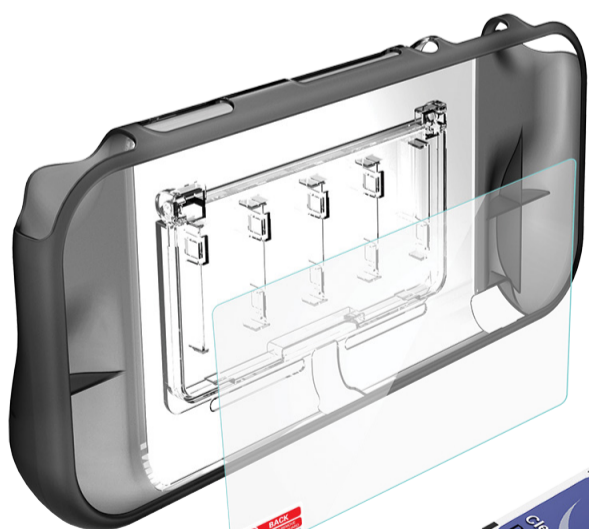
After only having the case a few days and hardly opening the back to retrieve a Game Card the flap has now on one side started to get loose. Also the lid/flap is scratched from putting it in my handbag so it is easy to scratch, because I don't even have keys in there.

The Game Card slot on the Switch Lite itself is hard to get to if you don't have nails while the Pro Gamer Case is attached. You have to lift up the rubber to access it, but if you need to get to the micro-SD card slot it has a little notch to make it easier.

I've found that the Case is more for making the Switch Lite easier to hold, rather than to protect your Switch Lite, as it doesn't protect the sticks/buttons. As I mentioned it comes with a screen protector, but the Case does leave a lot uncovered. However, it does help you grip a lot better than just the plain Switch Lite.

**RRP: £9.99
/ \$N/A**







SNAKEBYTE TWIN:CHARGE 5

The dawn of a new generation of consoles usually brings about a sudden realisation when you open the boxes to your new peripherals – oh, damn, that cable or charging unit I’ve been using for the past seven years doesn’t work anymore! Whatever will I do...

For PlayStation 5 owners out there with Sony’s brand spanking new DualSense controllers, snakebyte has the solution: the TWIN:CHARGE 5, allowing two controllers to sit atop its PS5-esque design, complete with fins matching the console itself. It comes with these side panels in white or black, so to match the console as closely as possible I would recommend the white. However, the black will probably blend into an entertainment unit a little more easily.

In the box is the unit itself along with a 1 metre USB type-C cable. It is a USB type-A end though, so you can use one of the rear type-A ports on the PS5 to keep the cabling a little more discreet. On the front of the unit there are two lights to indicate the charging progress of each controller – more on that later though. The rubber grip on the bottom of the charging block is also excellent at keeping it in place on flat surfaces; I tried shoving it and without quite a bit of force, it did not move. Simply placing and taking the controllers off won’t move it around annoyingly.

Which is a good thing, because one of the things I noticed instantly is the controllers can be a little finicky to get in. There are grooves for the controllers to sit on so they can charge through the COM-port at the bottom next to the headphone jack, however, to get the connection absolutely perfect can take a bit of jiggling. I just hope I don’t mark the plastic on the controllers in the process.

If you are charging two controllers simultaneously, charging time will obviously be longer than plugging each one singularly into the console, or simply sticking one on the unit. Sony says each controller takes roughly three hours for a complete charge, so when you have two attached, you will be looking at around six hours for both to complete – providing the source is 5V 1.5A anyway. I tried with a 5V 1A Apple USB iPhone charger, which does still work, but only appears to charge one controller at a time.

To be honest, I’m not sure why this charging station really needs the LEDs on the front at all. I left both controllers attached overnight to charge, and when leaving, I noticed one LED was blue and the other was orange, but both DualSense controllers were lighting up yellow to indicate they were filling up. And that’s the thing; the controllers already have a way of letting you know that they are charging, so these buggy LEDs should just go.





In all though, if you just want a neat and tidy charging station to match your brand new PS5, the snakebyte TWIN:CHARGE 5 will do the job admirably. There are some shortcomings there, but to be honest they are nit-picks; they go in, they charge, you play. Done.



**RRP: £31.99
/ \$N/A**





WHO ARE YOU?: NINTENDO'S GAME BOY ADVANCE PLATFORM

2021 marks the 20th anniversary of the last device in the Game Boy range. This makes it officially “retro” in more people’s eyes, and means that now is a great time to acquaint or reacquaint ourselves with Nintendo’s “portable SNES” device. I didn’t have one at the time, so it doesn’t hold the nostalgia for me that it does for others. Reading this book by Alex Custodio, part of MIT’s “platform studies” series, it’s interesting to note that the nostalgia was there from day one, with Nintendo making sure that its history of gaming was utilised from the outset. Now the device is old enough to evoke nostalgia in its own right, the history of the device is fascinating to learn.

Each chapter of Who Are You?: Nintendo’s Game Boy Advance Platform looks at a different aspect of the machine, from the hardware and technical tricks used, to the homebrew developers and modders who are keeping it alive to this day. This is looked at from both sides, with Nintendo’s views considered and its official emulation stance put in contrast with the interest in the GBA that has been fostered by its aftermarket community. I found this to be the most interesting part of the book, as it shows the life that the GBA has acquired outside of its creators control (much to Nintendo’s chagrin).

One chapter takes an extended look at the environments in which the GBA was used, and how its use in public spaces helped to create a private space despite the setting. It looks at the kinds of games that are played in different environments and also focuses on games that demand a specific environment such as Boktai: The Sun Is in Your Hands which forces players to take their handheld outside in the sun to power their weapons. The limitations of the hardware are analysed alongside the creative ways that games were created around them.

The history of videogames can be a history of our culture and the GBA came at a time when culture was shifting immensely. This is reflected in the evolution of the hardware and software, and Custodio does a great job of capturing that cultural change and charting it in relation to the changes inherent in the direction of the console.

This book is not just a coffee table history, but an in-depth academic work that analyses the Game Boy Advance in its historical context as well as looking at the technology in detail. It’s primarily aimed at students, but that doesn’t make it inaccessible as the necessary information is explained within. There’s a lot of detail here that





you won't necessarily find in similar guides. This does mean that it can be heavy-going in sections. It's not an idle read and does require a bit of attention, but the reward is certainly worth it.

**RRP: £19.54
/ \$18.99**



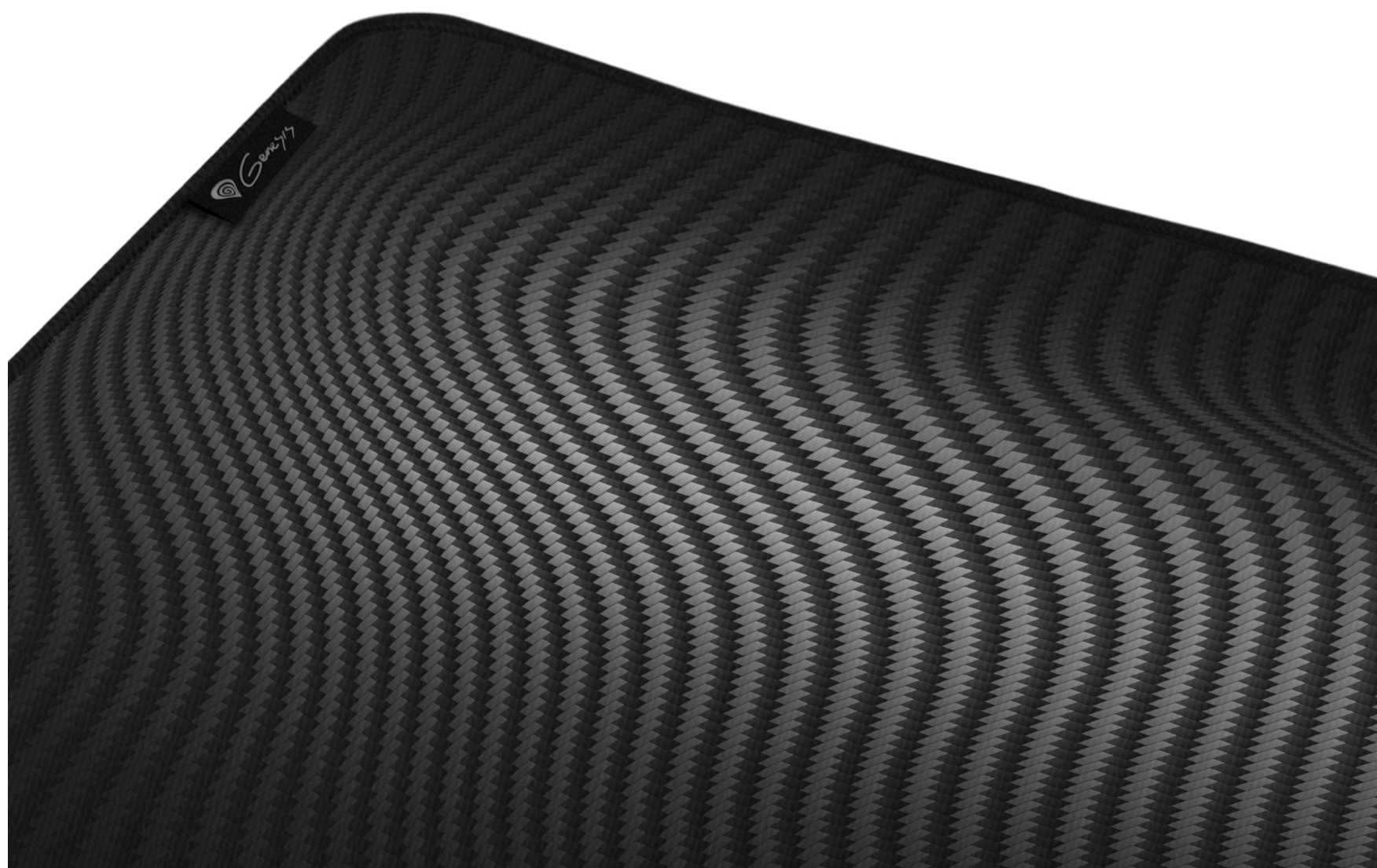


GENESIS CARBON 500 ULTRA WAVE MOUSEPAD

When it comes to picking a mousepad I can't say I've ever given much thought to them besides the size and image that is printed on them. Over the years I've tried a number of different ones, including those with built in wrist supports and even some of those notoriety anime ones (you know the ones), but always just end up with a simple one for my mouse. So when I opened up the Carbon 500 Ultra Wave mousepad from Genesis I was surprised by both the size and quality of it right out of the box. After spending a few weeks with it I'm

happy to say that I've now come to appreciate the difference a good mousepad can make.

With a width of 450mm and a length of 1100mm, the Carbon 500 mousepad is massive with plenty of room for both a mouse and a full sized keyboard. As a matter of fact it covered my desk from edge-to-edge which did surprise me, but in a good way. This size isn't just for show however, as the mousepad is made from high quality materials that are both durable and flexible.





The top surface, for example, is smooth to the touch but also able to take quite a beating with no wear or tear showing over the weeks I've been using it. The bottom is then made from a non-slip rubber that ensures the mousepad holds in place even when under a lot of pressure, leading to no mishaps while gaming. On top of all this, the Carbon 500 mousepad has also been made to withstand accidental spillages, making it even more reliable and easier to maintain.

In practical use, you will find your mouse is able to flow across the surface of the mousepad with ease allowing for even more precision. At the same time, you won't find any drifting when you leave the mouse alone and the same applies to the keyboard as well. No matter how hard you type, the mousepad will hold the keyboard in place allowing for a comfortable user experience. Having only ever used mousepads for just the mouse, now

having space for the keyboard to sit as well was definitely a welcome change to my setup.

My experience of using the Carbon 500 Ultra Wave mousepad has been a very positive one. The durability and comfort it provides is second to none and I don't think I can go back to a smaller, lesser quality mousepad in the future. By far the only real negative there is with this mousepad would be the size which might be a problem for some, depending on your desk. Otherwise, it's a solid choice that comes at an affordable price point which everyone should consider when looking for a new mousepad.

**RRP: €19.99
/ \$19.99**





SNAKEBYTE GAMES:TOWER 5

Let's be honest, there are a large portion of gamers who are careless with their gadgets. Controllers casually tossed aside; under sofas, beds, in the path of desk chairs. Discs scattered about the room, some in cases, some in the wrong case, others stacked on top of the console with faint scratch marks appearing across the surface. Will they still play? Who knows, there's a copy of FIFA 15 there. Not played it for four years now. Don't want to move it.

If that rings any bells, snakebyte has produced a potential solution for you – so long as you are disciplined enough to actually use it – the GAMES:TOWER 5. This nifty plastic accessory allows four controllers to be placed upon hooks, of which there are two on each side. They don't only hold DualSense controllers, but I've tried with a DualShock 4 and the Series X | S controllers, which all fit perfectly.

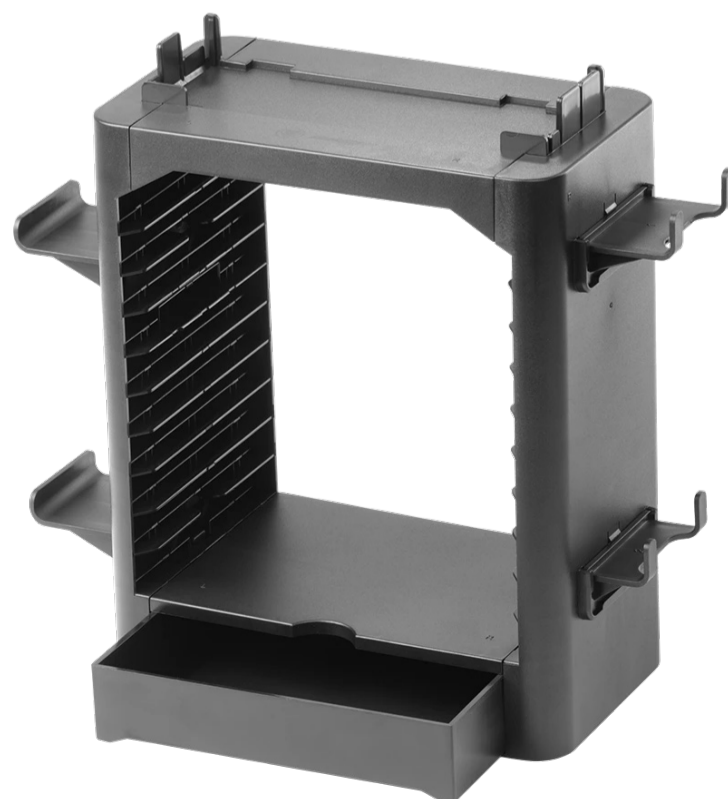
The tower itself has space for 10 games to fit no matter the platform, with a drawer at the bottom which the promotional material shows the PS5 media remote residing in. In reality, you could put cables in there or anything like that. It's not that big though so you won't fit anything more substantial than that.

In fact, the whole tower isn't terribly large. It comes in at 20.5cm tall, and 30cm wide.

You could take the hooks off the side if you have no intent on using them, shaving off 5cm either side for a 20cm width instead.

Construction is easy enough with the basic steps listed on the side of the box. Though you do need to make sure that you take note of the little left and right letters marked on the plastic, or you'll end up putting it up back to front like I did, wondering why the games were going in backwards...at any rate, once that was corrected, everything just worked like it was supposed to.

The only thing I can criticise is the quality of the plastic is not great, but it holds everything that it's supposed to and doesn't topple over when you only put controllers on one side of the tower. In truth, once it has been constructed, you're never likely to notice that again. I'm also thankful that the logo





is kept in black at the top rather than some loud overly gamer aesthetic you often get with this kind of product. There's also a curious rectangular ridge at the top, perhaps there was going to be something to stand headphones on? I'm not sure.

Could I recommend it? Yes, certainly, if you want something to quickly dump your controllers onto and stack your games nice and neatly. I'm sure there are plenty of messy

bedrooms or perhaps even living rooms that would benefit from the organisation that the snakebyte GAMES:TOWER brings.

RRP: £19.99
/ N/A





GIOTECK WX-4 WIRELESS SWITCH CONTROLLER

I've personally been pretty happy with my Switch Pro Controller, but at an RRP of £59, it's also a pricey gamepad, especially when compared to the PS4 and Xbox One. This is of course an opportunity for third party manufacturers to swoop in with cheaper alternatives, and in this case, Giteck has kindly provided me with one of its latest controllers to try out.

The WX-4 controller is available in both wired and wireless ranges, with the former costing less but also with fewer features. For the purposes of this review, I was supplied with the wireless one, which is priced around £24.99. Note that this is compatible with not only Switch but also PC and PS3, though this is based purely on my experience with the Switch.

The WX-4 certainly looks the part with matte surfaces (except for the grips) and a traditional layout with regard to face buttons and non-symmetrical analogue sticks, much like the style of both the Xbox controller and the official Switch Pro Controller. The colour of the letters of the face buttons might make the WX-4 look a bit too much like an Xbox controller. Fortunately, the AB and XY buttons are still in the reverse order that Nintendo has always used. You'll also find the home and capture buttons

placed in the centre, which seem convenient. Compared to the Switch Pro Controller, where I often forget where those buttons are.

It's when you pick up the WX-4 that you notice that it feels a bit too light. While we generally prefer our electronics to feel lighter, a good controller also needs to feel weighty otherwise it just feels cheaply made. This extends to the feel of the buttons, specifically the sticks and d-pad. They make very audible clickity-clack noises, which again accentuates that cheap feel. Not quite a premium product then. That said, everything still works like it should, including the built-in rumble and motion/gyro controls. I also had to test the d-pad out with Tetris 99, and am happy to say it passed the test of not accidentally making me hard-drop any blocks.

Also of note are the triggers, which appear to be analogue even though the Switch by default doesn't use analogue triggers, though it should be useable on PS3 and PC, which do support that function. Nonetheless, as a controller intended for the Switch, it is a little annoying that the shoulder buttons are named L1/L2 and R1/R2, which are actually the naming conventions for the PlayStation's DualShock, rather than the Switch's L/ZL and R/ZR.





As for pairing the controller to your Switch, connection is made with a USB to micro-USB cable, which is included. Once paired, a blue light is displayed on the front of the controller, the number of lights indicating whether it's player 1-4. The downside is that you have to manually pair it with a cable each time, meaning you can't use it to turn on your docked Switch. Leave it idle for a few minutes and the controller also switches itself off so you'll need to reconnect it again. Nonetheless, if you're planning to go for an intense gaming session, you should be able to manage with a fully charged controller for up to 10 hours.

I don't see the WX-4 replacing my official Pro Controller anytime soon, but despite my niggles with it, it's a perfectly functional controller at a lower price, which still beats making someone play with the Joy-Cons in a grip.



**RRP: £19.99
/ \$N/A**





SNAKEBYTE BATTERY:KIT SX

Anyone that ever asks me: “What is a good thing to go alongside a new console?”, I will undoubtedly respond with “Rechargeable batteries for the controllers”. There’s a couple of reasons for this, first and foremost, using standard AA batteries is costly, especially when something is new and shiny and getting a lot of playtime. Secondly, disposing of used batteries is something that should be done properly and not just dumped in a bin. Lastly, rechargeable batteries like those in the Snakebyte BATTERY:KIT SX means that the gaming need not stop even when the juice is running low.

Inside the box, you’ll get two rechargeable 800 mAh batteries, a dual headed USB-C cable for charging them both at the same time with, and a manual on how to use them properly. These particular batteries will only fit newer Xbox controllers that come with the Series S or X. Or, the controllers that have the share button in the middle. This is because a slight redesign of the controller has meant that the battery cover shape is ever so slightly different.

What’s nice about these particular batteries is that they’re also compatible with Snakebyte’s controller stands that also charge the batteries, as they have the two contact patches on the rear. Pair this kit up with a stand, and you should never have to worry about running out of battery

power again. 800 mAh may be a little on the shorter side in terms of charge length, getting you somewhere in the region of three to four hours per charge, but, when you consider that you can hook up the included USB-C cable to an external battery pack, you can still maintain some semblance of wireless control, without having to tether yourself back to the console.





**RRP: £19.99
/ \$N/A**





SNAKEBYTE DUAL CHARGE:BASE S

As it was the school holidays here in the UK, as is our family tradition we planned a jaunt out to the beach. I decided that I needed to look into getting a power bank for my Switch Lite, as my daughter has one and I guessed she would be taking it with us so I purchased the Gulikit Detachable Back Mount Power Bank.

The back of the box shows how to attach the power bank to your Switch Lite. The box contained: a Power Bank, Back Mount Clip, Padding Plate and USB-C cable. Once I charged the power bank and attached the back mount clip I picked up my Switch Lite, and I ran it down to 26%.

The short USB-C cable is already attached to the power bank, and is the ideal length to keep plugged in while you play. With the power bank attached to the back of the Switch Lite, it does make it slightly heavier, but not too heavy. After 45 minutes my console was charged to 63% and just over two hours it was fully charged.

On the box it does say that the charge can last 4-8 hours. As it charged to 100% within two hours, then the charge of the power bank would probably last for a good two or three more times. On one side of the power bank there are four little dots that show you how much life is left in the power bank itself.

What I did notice after using it is that the short cable doesn't sit flat against the power block the way it was when it first came out of the box. After time and use this could get a little worrying, because it will stick out if you keep it attached to the back of your Switch Lite and if you keep it in a bag you might catch the cable and pull it. However, at the moment it does sit somewhat close to the power bank as it should be.

If you are looking to keep your Switch Lite charged on the go, then the Gulikit Detachable Back Mount Power Bank is an ideal item to buy, just remember to keep it charged up after use.





**Charging function for
Nintendo Pro Controller**



**Charging function for
two joy controllers**

**RRP: £27.99
/ \$N/A**



**All-in-One
Organiser**



**1.2m type C cable &
type C adapter included**





SNAKEBYTE TWIN:CHARGE SX

A charging station is a must-have piece of kit for any console. snakebyte has, of course, made one for the Xbox Series X|S. You know that, you're reading this review. Do note, the battery compartment on the new controllers is very slightly different, so previous battery packs & chargers will not work with them!

The TWIN:CHARGE SX comes in a box with a 2m long USB-C cable and two battery packs (also available separately). In an effort to cut down on plastic waste, the box has very little of it inside. Weirdly, however, the box is about 5cm too long, with a cardboard insert keeping the TWIN:CHARGE from touching the bottom. I wouldn't point it out, if not for how curious it is to have so much wasted space in a box labeled with text about reducing waste.

The design of the unit is made to look like the top of the Xbox Series X|S, with a pitted texture on parts of it. The two controller cradles have connectors for the battery packs to connect to charge. The cable is long enough so that you can pretty much plug it in anywhere, though I just rest it next to the Xbox Series X, plugged into the USB on the front.

Placing the controllers down can be a bit touchy, occasionally needing a bit of a jiggle to get them to sit properly. The light on the

front of the unit is also quite small and dull, so it's not always obvious if you're successful.

One worry I had is that the controller once got quite warm after charging. However, I've put that down to having the controller turned on the whole time it was on the TWIN:CHARGE SX, so that it could be used for scrolling menus & Netflix.

The battery packs last for a good few gaming sessions before needing to be charged, and charging doesn't take very long. Admittedly, I haven't timed it because I usually charge the controller overnight, but when I've popped it on for a quick boost it's certainly helped it last much longer.

The snakebyte TWIN:CHARGE SX is a decent piece of kit, though I do wish it was easier to ensure the controller was sitting correctly. It's well made, and since it comes with two battery packs it's perfect for if you have a second controller - of just want to ensure you always have a full battery ready.

**RRP: £31.99
/ \$N/A**





**2 batteries with
800 mAh each included**





LOOT CRATE

If you've been around the internet, you've at least seen an advert for Loot Crate. If not, then you're one of the few people left who hasn't been tempted by stuff! That's the draw of Loot Crate - you get stuff sent to your house every single month, and you don't know what it will be. A magnetic Katamari? A statuette of Sonic the Hedgehog? A Borderlands 2 mousepad? Fallout-themed notebooks? A plushy Alduin? Who knows?! Previous Gaming Crates, for instance, have included Five Nights at Freddy's wearable bunny ears, a PAC-MAN bottle opener, a Street Fighter vinyl figure, a Big Daddy plushy and much, much more!

You'll get a t-shirt in every crate, but if you subscribe to one crate, you will get stuff like that every four weeks. Heck, you could subscribe to multiple crates if you wanted to. Loot Crate gives you multiple tiers, and there are multiple types of crates to suit anyone's mood.

Maybe the Gaming Crate isn't for you, and you're after something more niche than the regular Loot Crate. There's a ton of themed crates to choose from: anime, sci-fi - heck, there's even the Apparel Crate if you're just after a t-shirt or pair of socks once a month. If you're interested in checking out the swag,

or setting up a subscription, tap on the big images and they will take you straight to them.

You can pick a crate, choose between one and 12 crates, and set it up, with delivery starting from the next crate available.





RRP: from £23.99
/ from \$29.99

LOOTGAMING™
NOVEMBER'S THEME IS

**SWORDS
AND
SOULS**

The Elder Scrolls V
SKYRIM

DARK SOULS III

SOULCALIBUR VI

Dark Souls™III&©BANDAI NAMCO Entertainment Inc./
©FromSoftware, Inc.

©2021 Bethesda Softworks LLC, a ZeniMax Media company.
All Rights Reserved.

SOULCALIBUR™VI&©BANDAI NAMCO Entertainment Inc.

IN THIS CRATE

EXCLUSIVE ALDUIN PLUSH





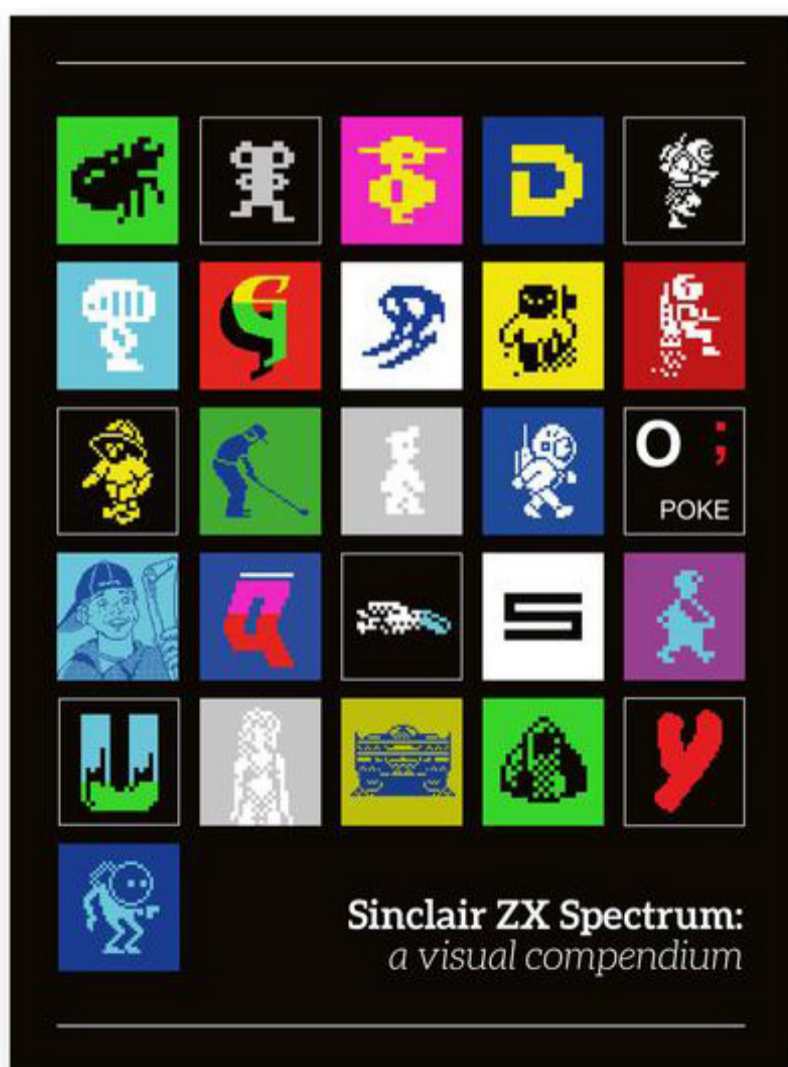
SINCLAIR ZX SPECTRUM: A VISUAL COMPENDIUM

The early 1980s were a unique time for computers and gaming and the ZX Spectrum had a massive hand in forming the fledgling industry in its early years, at least in the UK and Europe. Bitmap Books' Sinclair ZX Spectrum: A Visual Compendium takes us back to those exciting days of colour clash in a celebration of the little black box.

The book takes you on a historical jaunt through the iconic systems life with full-page screenshots for each game covered along with a brief paragraph or two from a variety of people ranging from industry veterans, developers and artists who worked on or are connected to the game in some way.

It gives you insight into the significance and importance of a variety of titles ranging from Sandy White's isometric marvel, Ant Attack, through to Rare's heritage with Ultimate Play The Game's Jet Pac and Sabre Wulf. Each and every game in the book has a story to tell and there were a number of games I hadn't thought about in years that came flooding back to me as soon as I saw their art.

The bold, chunky art that the Spectrum is known for looks fantastic when blown up to fill the page and the garish colours help the whole thing pop, which makes for an inviting and engaging coffee table book. For those with nostalgia for the black box with rubber keys it's a lovely trip down memory lane, but it's also quite informative with sections devoted to Durell, Beyond and Vortex, to name a few. It even finds room to briefly touch on the Russian scene, that kept the humble "Speccy" alive well into the 90s.





The book is clearly made with love and there is a reverence to the machine and the games that graced it that shines from every page. The Spectrum is an important cornerstone in the industry, a machine that despite all odds became a gaming heavyweight, especially in Europe. This compendium manages to visually condense that into a lovely volume that anyone can pick up and get enjoyment from.

Bitmap Books have created a quality book that feels premium, looks wonderful and filled my old, haggard body with nostalgia for my younger years where I'd spend hours typing in code listings from magazines and looking forward to spending my pocket money on the next Dizzy game.

If you have an interest in the Spectrum at all or just want an interesting, enticing coffee table book, you can do a lot worse than the Sinclair ZX Spectrum: A Visual Compendium. Oh, it also has Spectrum coloured fabric bookmarks too, so there is that in its favour!

**RRP: £29.99
/ \$38.28**





SNAKEBYTE MULTI:PLAYCON SWITCH CONTROLLER

With the amount of multiplayer games available on Switch, it's not always economical to get Joy-Cons. Luckily, snakebyte has a solution in their MULTI:PLAYCON controllers. You might wonder why I said controllers, when everyone knows that two halves make one Joy-Con - that's because two PLAYCONs make two controllers.

In the box you get the manual, a micro-USB cable and the two controllers. They're available in orange & blue-grey or black & white. They're well put together, and the design of them looks like a smile, with the Mode button (used to connect them to the Switch) as the nose. Since it's October, of course it's quite reminiscent of a pumpkin. Admittedly, the very stylised look of the letters on the face buttons is very weird and chunky, but it works. The micro-USB is used to charge, as well as update, the controllers.

It's a weird decision that snakebyte put the Home and Snapshot buttons on separate controllers, but this was likely because the Joy-Con has them like that. Still, since each PLAYCON is intended to be used separately, it's weird. They also lack motion control, an NFC chip for amiibos and HD rumble, so will feel different to a Joy-Con in more ways than just the outside would suggest.

Once the MULTI:PLAYCON is connected to your Switch or Switch Lite, they work as you might expect. If they disconnect from inactivity (it's quite a short window), it's simple enough to reconnect them.

Playing with the PLAYCON feels better than a Joy-Con, because it's a bit bigger, and contoured to fit your hand. Again, each one is for use separately, which is a good thing as they would be a bit difficult to hold sideways, and have no way to connect onto the sides of the Switch.

The only thing you might notice is that the lights on the front of each PLAYCON can be bright if you're playing in the dark. But in a pitched race of Mario Kart 8 Deluxe you won't notice them.

There's not really much else that I can say about snakebyte's MULTI:PLAYCON. It's aiming to replace both sides of the Joy-Con, but not





the Joy-Con itself. After all, one box contains enough controllers for two players, but not a single-player controller. If you need a new Joy-Con, then this isn't it. However, if you need some controllers for Player 2, Player 3 and more, then they're definitely worth checking out.



**RRP: £39.99
/ \$39.99**





TURTLE BEACH RECON CONTROLLER

I've always liked the look of third-party controllers, but it's not like I have a ton of experience with them. Suffice to say, I've never used an unofficial Xbox controller before. However, I knew Turtle Beach as a company that produces reliable peripherals, so when we were offered the wired Recon controller, I was more than happy to take a look at it.

The Turtle Beach Recon comes with a long USB-C cable, a quick-start guide, support card and a sticker. It also has a nifty reference card, in case you need to quickly refer to which mode it's currently in. It's designed for use with Xbox X|S, but fully compatible with Xbox One and PC. As such, you can plug a headset into the controller and use all of the functions.

The build quality of the Recon is nice and firm, with all of the buttons, triggers and sticks feeling exactly as they should. The triggers have a textured surface to them that's much bumpier than the official ones. Similarly, the analog sticks are also textured. Presumably along the same non-slip lines, the parts of the controller which sit in your palms have a rubber surface on them.

As well as the expected buttons, and the screenshot button, there are two buttons on the underside of the controller which you can reassign to use as other buttons. By default

one of them does nothing, while the other is the Pro-Aim button - holding it will slow down the motion of the right analog stick. Ideal for getting headshots and the like.

There are also controls for the headset, if and when one is plugged in. These are used for microphone and headphone volume, but that's where the aforementioned reference card comes into play. You can choose one of several preferences and modes, but most interesting is the Superhuman Hearing mode. Okay, it's just an audio boost, but it sounds cool, right? It does increase the volume or bass or something - someone who is more of an audiophile could probably put it into better words, but it's a decent feature.





Using the Recon controller itself, however, shows it to be a decent alternative to the wireless official controllers. I tried it with several games across the Xbox Series X and PC, and it worked a treat. Of course, the length of the cable means that it was more suitable for sitting away from the console, rather than at the desk with the PC, but the cable has a velcro strap attached to keep it tidy.

I should probably mention that I did use the Recon controller with the Turtle Beach Recon

500 headset, which I previously reviewed. I would assume that Turtle Beach wants you to use them together, but I did try out another headset and it worked absolutely fine.

If you're in the market for a new controller, then I can definitely recommend the Turtle Beach Recon controller. Whether you're using it with one of the Xbox platforms or a PC, it's ideal.





THRUSTMASTER T.FLIGHT HOTAS X JOYSTICK

I haven't used a massive amount of joysticks in the past and at times have struggled using them, so when STAR WARS: Squadrons was announced I thought it was about time I invested in picking up a joystick. Not wanting to spend a fortune on a joystick, I had a look around to see what was on the marketplace, I was trying to budget around the £70/\$70 range, but the truth is I had no idea what I was looking for.

When looking around, I could see that having a larger throttle would be beneficial and my attention got drawn toward the Thrustmaster T.Flight HOTAS range. So when Thrustmaster got in touch and offered the one of the T.Flight HOTAS models, I thought this would be a perfect opportunity to try it out. Another thing which really appealed to me was that you could separate the throttle from the joystick (there is still a wire between the two) and I liked the idea of having these either side of the keyboard. With some games requiring you to use a keyboard as well as the joystick a fair amount, I felt this would definitely be beneficial for me.

Just to clear up a small detail and to make sure you have the correct model that you require for your type of device - T.Flight HOTAS is available as one of three different models:

T.Flight HOTAS X - (For PlayStation 3 or PC)

T.Flight HOTAS 4 - (For PlayStation 4 or PC)

T.Flight HOTAS One - (For Xbox One or PC)

These are all compatible with the PC, and since I didn't need it for any console use, I picked the T.Flight X as it would have suited the budget I was looking at in the first place. There is a little switch on the back of the joystick which allows you to select which platform you are using. Make sure you remember to switch it to the right platform beforehand!

Upon opening the Thrustmaster T.Flight HOTAS X I was pleasantly surprised with the quality and weight of the product, especially with its price range being what I'd consider as a budget





joystick. It really feels like you are getting much more value than you are paying for.

There were some of the assumptions I made which were incorrect. The first being when I separated the joystick and throttle, I was a little disappointed with the length of the cable, initially thinking it didn't reach either side of the keyboard. However, after a couple of games I investigated this further to find the cable was wrapped around the underside of the base. Once I undid the cable, the length was more than enough for what I required.

My second wrong assumption was with the stability of clipping the joystick and throttle together. To begin with, I found it very unstable and wobbly, however, after remembering my first mistake, I took a look underneath the base to find

there was an Allen key/hex key attached to the bottom of the base. Removing this allowed me to tighten and lock the joystick and throttle together, stopping all of the wobbling I was getting.

Lesson learnt from this point onwards: always read the manual.

When using the T.Flight HOTAS X on Windows 10, it required no drivers or installation - I just got it out the box and it worked! It is worth checking the calibration within Windows itself, nevertheless, but this is very easy to do.

In my previous experiences with using a joystick, they always felt very unstable on the desk. I encountered issues with previous joysticks sliding and slightly tipping over when you pull backwards too hard on the joystick itself,





but I have not had this happen to me with the T.Flight HOTAS X at all, which in return I have felt has helped improve my gameplay.

Just to test my theory I have swapped multiple times to keyboard and mouse in Star Wars: Squadrons and found that my gameplay was as bad as I expected. Whilst keyboard and mouse can be used for a lot of flight games, I found the T.Flight HOTAS X made the maneuverability of any ship a lot smoother for me.

On the underside of the base there is an adjustable tension control for the joystick itself which I found very handy during set up to mess around with this control dial. There is a very convenient button on the top of the base for switching between the four or five axis control, and the button lights up red or green to let you know which one you are using.

The joystick has a total of 12 buttons and it has a nice feature which allows you to remap the buttons to your liking. Whilst I did not have a use for this, the instructions for remapping are in the manual (see, I am learning).

My gameplay has changed for the better using the Thrustmaster T.Flight HOTAS X. Even down to simple things like using the rocker button for adjusting shields from front to rear really quickly mid-battle was very useful.

As a disclaimer, I am by no means an experienced or decent player in flying contraptions, so when I say has made me better, this does not

make me an elite god while gaming. It just means I can fly without crashing every two seconds... My future plans are also to use this in games such as Elite Dangerous and War Thunder. I mean, it's not like my gameplay could get any worse in these types of games.



**RRP: £63.99
/ \$N/A**



GameOn

CHECK OUT THE GAMEON MAGAZINE
FOR OVER 100 PAGES PACKED FULL
OF GAMING REVIEWS, INTERVIEWS
AND ARTICLES

FOR ONLY 1.99 PER ISSUE



CLICK HERE FOR
THE UK STORE

CLICK HERE FOR THE
WORLDWIDE STORE





GAMESIR X2 BLUETOOTH MOBILE GAMING CONTROLLER

In recent months I'd been eyeing up Bluetooth controllers in order to play Game Pass titles on my phone when, as luck would have it, GameSir announced two new mobile controllers! This one, the X2, is an updated version of the controller, which is bluetooth rather than wired. It's designed to hold your phone, making the whole thing look enough like a Switch to confuse my kids.

The box contains the X2, a case for it, a short USB-C charging cable, four rubber replacement pads for the analog sticks, a manual, an information leaflet, and a GameSir sticker. The case impressed me because it was unexpected, and it's nice and solid, with a pouch to put small items such as the cable.

The X2 itself is solidly built, with two analog sticks, a d-pad, and the same buttons you would expect to find on any controller this generation. Yes, even a screenshot button, which takes a screenshot of whatever is on your phone screen, rather than specifically a game being played. On the underside is a charging port next to the power button. The rear has two textured rubber grips.

Inserting your handset really is the hardest part of using the X2. It stretches to handsets

of 173mm, so a little bigger than the Samsung S10+, which is the biggest handset I have. It's not a difficult process by any means, so long as you have your phone in position when you begin to stretch the X2 open. If you don't, then it will snap closed and give you a fright.

Connecting via bluetooth is simple and easy, and once connected all you have to do is turn on the X2 and it will connect automatically. Similarly, it works perfectly out of the box. To test how well it worked, I played several Game Pass titles, and when that worked better than I had hoped, I gave an emulator a try. Neither even required a moment's worth of setting up, either.

The analog sticks have a nice movement, and the buttons have a solid click - even the shoulder buttons. I was a little concerned by the small size of the shoulder buttons, but they were absolutely fine while I was playing.

The battery charges really quickly, and claims about 20 hours of use on a two-hour charge. The only downside to the X2 is the lack of a rumble feature, but then that's not something you get if using touchscreen controls either.





If you're in the market for a controller to play games on your phone, then you can't go wrong with the GameSir X2. It retails for £69.99, so if that's in your budget then I highly recommend it.



**RRP: £69.99
/ \$59.99**





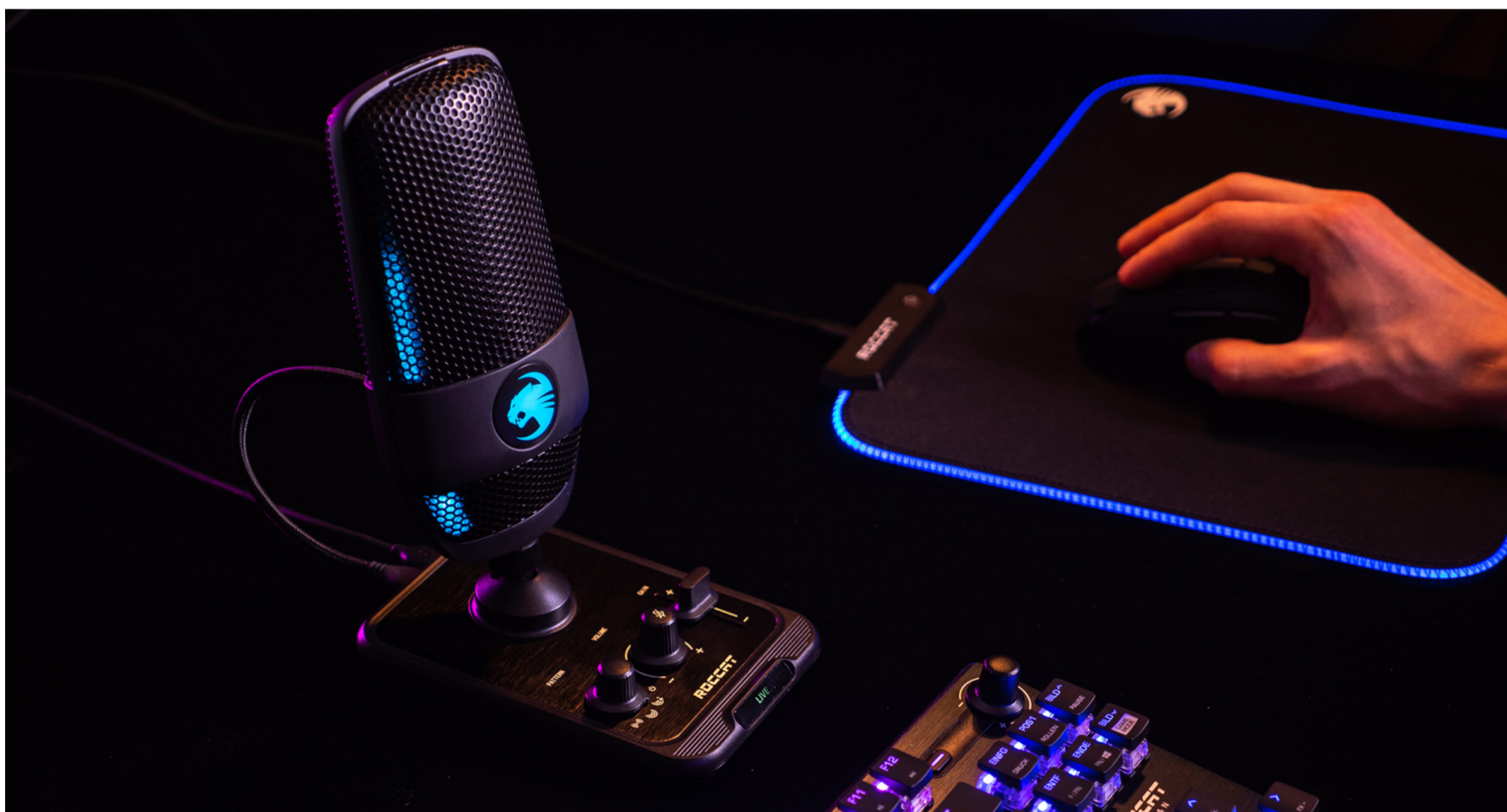
ROCCAT TORCH MICROPHONE

As a podcaster, gamer, video creator, and someone who just uses the internet to communicate with friends, a good quality microphone is a must. Heck, if I was only one of those it would be a must! The USB cable on my old microphone had been playing up for a while, so I was eager to check out the ROCCAT Torch microphone when it was announced. I've been using a ROCCAT wireless mouse for almost two years now, so I'm a fan of the brand.

In the box, you get the ROCCAT Torch, the mixer stand, two USB-C to USB-C cables, one USB-C to USB-A cable, and a quick start guide. The two C-to-C cables are different lengths, as they're required to connect the microphone to

the mixer, which connects to your PC. If you've got the microphone attached to a boom arm, you need the longer cable. When just standing on your desk you use the shorter one.

Everything is solidly built, with the mixer's two dials and gain slider securely attached and moving without issue. The dial in the middle controls your system volume, and can mute the microphone if pressed. The dial on the left turns on the microphone, and selects which mode you want to put it in - Stereo, Cardioid or Whisper, all of which adjust how much of your surroundings it picks up. My favourite feature is the motion sensor on the top of the microphone, which mutes the microphone without using the noisy click of the





dial. The distance for this sensor can be adjusted with a switch on the rear of the mixer, which also has a button to adjust the microphone's LED brightness, and has a 3.5mm headphone jack.

According to the box, the ROCCAT Torch has 24-bit audio, zero latency output, and dual condenser capsules. Unfortunately, that all is meaningless to me, so don't expect me to go in-depth and provide comparison graphs. All above my paygrade, I'm afraid, as is the fact that it's compatible with a Turtle Beach Audio Hub. I figured I'd mention that stuff for audiophiles interested in knowing it, though.

What I can tell you about this microphone, however, is that it sounds superb. My old microphone was decent, but I'm betting that ROCCAT's claim of "studio quality" isn't just bluster. It has an integrated pop filter - though I do still use a third-party one as well - and nobody has ever complained about peaks and pops.

I haven't told you everything that the ROCCAT Torch mixer base does, yet. It claims to be anti-vibration, and as someone who's usually fidgeting while talking, or moving the mouse to click on things, I believe it. My old microphone was attached to a boom arm, and I'd constantly hear when I was moving the desk. The Torch sitting attached to the ball joint on the mixer, however,

doesn't detect any of it. What's more, it has a light on the front to tell you when you're being picked up by a program. Of course, it doesn't detect when you're using push-to-talk, that'd be a big ask, but if you forget to leave a call on Discord, for instance, the little "Live" light will clue you in.

I use the ROCCAT Torch primarily in Whisper mode. The microphone is about 40cm away from my face, and having it in either of the other modes will pick up noises in the house. I have four kids, so the house can be very noisy. Whisper mode, however, will only pick them up if they're being super noisy, and I love it for that.

The ROCCAT Torch is fairly priced, especially for the quality, and a strong recommendation from me. It's cheaper than my old one, better quality, and has more features. If you're a gamer, podcaster or video creator, it's definitely worth considering.



**RRP: £89.99
/ \$99.99**





GENESIS RADIUM 600 MICROPHONE

With audio quality being such a fundamental part of any good setup it's important to find the right equipment that won't break your bank. Enter the Radium 600 from Genesis, a high-quality condenser microphone mainly aimed at streamers but also suitable for everyday use. Having only really used headset microphones up until now, getting set up with the Radium 600 was something I couldn't wait to do and see just how much of a difference it would have on my audio quality.

Given how important first impressions are, Genesis made sure to knock it out of the park with the Radium 600, so much so as to pack the microphone and accompanying extras in a metal hard case. Packed neatly inside you will find the microphone, a stand, pop-filter, a foam cover, and cables. This is great because it means you have both a handy place to store the Radium 600 but also a secure way to transport it should you need to move the microphone long distance.

With the main target audience of the Radium 600 being streamers, it's no surprise that Genesis has opted to make getting set up as convenient as possible. The microphone is USB powered meaning you only need to plug it into your machine to be ready to use in minutes. On the side of the microphone are easily accessible dial controls for volume and gain for quick audio level adjustments, along with a mute button as

well. You will also find a 3.5 mm jack input on the side of the microphone as well, should you need to connect headphones for any reason.

The build quality of the Radium 600 is quite impressive and is something you will notice even when first unboxing the microphone. The construction is solid and there is a fair bit of weight to it which is sure to see it survive the odd bump or drop during use, as well as any knocks during transportation. The extras such as the pop filter and foam cover are about what you would expect but they are by no means bad.

Focusing on the included stand for a moment, this is unfortunately one of the only parts of the Radium 600 package where I found myself disappointed. While the stand does a fine job of holding the microphone in place and is likely to fit the needs of most people, it's not the most durable of things.

For starters, the max height that the stand can extend to was not ideal for me and my setup, and after only a few uses the adjustable section of the stand became stuck in place. While this is likely a fault caused by my own hands, it is a shame it was so quick to occur. That said, I had always planned to get a boom arm for the microphone as it better suited my setup and given the quality of the stand, I'd recommend you do as well.





Moving onto sound quality, the Radium 600 is a cardioid condenser microphone capable of handling a wide range of frequencies with sound quality that is simply exceptional. Most of my usage of the microphone was for streaming and podcast recording, along with some work meetings as well. Through all of these, the audio quality was superb and not once did I find myself struggling to find the right audio balance.

Other than the stand, the Radium 600 is a fantastic microphone that is sure to fulfill the needs of most regardless of your intended use. If you are looking to upgrade your audio setup for a reasonable price then you wouldn't do wrong with the Radium 600, though I'd suggest considering a better stand depending on your need and setup.



**RRP: €90.00
/ \$109.00**





BLUE MICROPHONES YETI NANO

A while ago, I had a cheap condenser microphone running off of a phantom power block. It was a mess of cables, but it sounded great. Unfortunately, the operative word there is 'cheap', so it lasted about 18 months, then stopped working for no apparent reason. So, I defaulted to the microphone on my headset. It sounded fine, so I was in no rush to get a new standalone microphone.

Until Blue Microphones got in touch, and offered me a Yeti Nano. Of course, I had heard of the company, and over the years had read that their microphones were the go-to for people doing voice acting as a hobby. So, of course, I jumped at the chance to try it out.

The Yeti Nano from Blue Microphones comes with: the microphone, a desk stand, a micro-USB cable, a stand adapter, a quick start guide in seven languages, a registration reminder and a card which tells you where to download the Sherpa software. On the microphone itself, there are two buttons, the micro USB socket and an earphone socket so that you can listen to yourself in real time.

The button on the front (where the Blue logo is) mutes and unmutes, as well as controls the earphone volume if you've got something plugged into it. The button on the rear toggles between

cardioid and omnidirectional modes - the first one is for a single speaker, the second is for a group. It's pretty cool that it can switch between the two modes with just a push of a button, in case you get into a surprise podcast, or need to let someone in the room join you in a Discord call.

However, even in cardioid mode the microphone is sensitive enough to pick up other things that are happening in the room. It's even sensitive enough to pick up things that you cannot hear yourself. When I was first setting the Yeti Nano up, I was listening to the audio to check levels and such. I then realised that, despite the house being silent apart from my PC fans, I could hear two people having a conversation. I couldn't make out the words, and when I took off my headset I couldn't hear anything. I had a window open, so I can only assume that it was picking up one of the neighbours, judging by the clattering during the conversation, in their kitchen. Not counting the unoccupied house next door, there wasn't a kitchen within 100 metres of the microphone.

So yes, it's sensitive, but how does it sound? The answer, of course, is pretty great. I haven't had the opportunity to try it out with multiple people, but streaming and recording podcasts sound good. I haven't tried any voice acting yet, but certainly intend to.





Honestly, I didn't use it very much with the stand, as I found that it would attach to the boom arm that I used for my old microphone. It has a thread in the bottom, and will easily screw onto a standard mount. Of course, they recommend the Blue Microphones-created boom and mount, but it's up to you.

If you're looking for a new microphone, then definitely consider the Yeti Nano. It's 21.1cm tall (in the stand) and weighs 0.63kg, so is quite portable. Being powered by USB means that it's suitable for use on the fly, without having to plug in loads of other things first. It's a great little microphone that's really sensitive and very clear.



**RRP: £99.99
/ \$99.99**





COUCHMASTER CYBOT

There are a few options when it comes to “things that hold a laptop”, whether it’s a table, the floor or your own lap.

Luckily, there’s also the Couchmaster line of lapboards, which sit above your lap.

In the case of the Couchmaster CYBOT, the bamboo board sits on top of two rectangular cushions covered in Kevlar. The idea is that you put the cushions on either side of your person whilst sitting on the couch or sofa - whichever word you prefer to call it - and place the laptop or netbook on it the board which straddles it.

The board has a ventilation grille on the left which you (hopefully) place your laptop fans over, and it’s quite large so distributes a lot of the heat nicely. On the right is a large mouse mat and a slot to stand your tablet or phone. The tablet slot even has a hole in it, so you can plug it in if the tablet charges from beneath.

The CYBOT also has two pouches for the laptop power supply or accessories, and a

detachable mouse pocket. I honestly haven’t gotten much use out of them, but that’s due to how I store the lapboard when not in use - not with items in the pockets.

Using the board is painless, and it assembles easily. It doesn’t clip onto the cushions, so you’re free to balance it however you like, though when it’s balanced properly it feels nice and sturdy. Of course, as it is three large parts it is cumbersome to get up if you have to answer the door in a hurry...

Where the board meets the cushions (ideally) it slopes up into two wrist rests. As a result I was always comfortable while using the CYBOT for work or gaming. I’ve never had much use for the tablet slot, but your mileage will vary depending on how often you use your tablet. I mainly use mine for the occasional game and for reading, so it’s not really required for an extended work or game session.

The mouse mat was loose in the box, and had an adhesive underneath, so it’s stuck on there





very well. The material that the top is covered in is easy on the mouse, it glides smoothly and has enough room to give you lots of motion.

Before the lapboard I was just using my lap for the laptop, which obviously made gaming tricky as I'd have to angle things away from the hot areas. The Couchmaster CYBOT means a cool lap and a laptop with better heat distribution. Just mind out for the colour, as the Kevlar is "military sports" camouflage and you might misplace it.



RRP: €139.00

Suitable for:



Switch



PC



PlayStation



Xbox





COUCHMASTER CYCON

For quite some time, the main gripe I've had when playing games from the comfort of my sofa is that, for FPS games at least, I haven't been afforded the accuracy that comes with using a mouse and keyboard for input. Nerdytec have, however, come up with an elegant solution to that problem.

Enter the Couchmaster. The model we have here is the Cycon, which is their all-singing, all-dancing version that comes with all of the gadgetry you'll need for comfortable couch based gaming. Out of the box, you'll get the two armrest pieces, the support case (which houses the USB3 hub), a 5 meter active USB3 extension cable, mousemat and a pocket

for your mouse to go in when not in use.

The two armrest pieces are fairly simple, comprising of a foam inner and faux leather outer (other fabrics are available) that are fairly sturdy, but still allow your arms to rest on them without causing discomfort. Before use, I had worried that the armrests may have ended up pushing my shoulders up, however, in use it became apparent that this wasn't the case.

The real meat of the Cycon is in the support case. In order to set this up, you need to remove two panels from the back of the case, and wire in your mouse and keyboard to the internal USB3 hub. Take note, that you'll also need to connect the USB3 hub extension wire that allows it to be





connected to the longer 5m extension at this point. Something I'd forgotten to do and had to re-open the back of the support case to solve...

Once the keyboard and mouse is in place, you can hook up the Cycon's USB3 hub to your PC using the supplied 5m cable, and then get yourself comfortable for some gaming. Sitting at the Couchmaster feels a little weird at first, as you adapt to the more outward placement of your arms and hands. Initially, it's a little difficult moving your hands to the keyboard to type, but this is likely caused by years worth of muscle conditioning from sitting at a desk. It becomes second nature quickly enough, and you'll be using your mouse and keyboard as naturally as if you were at a more standard setting of a desk. Getting in and out of a seated position is relatively easy too, as you can slide the support case over one of the arm rests to facilitate movement. Since the pieces are separate, you could also use the support case on it's own over a chair that has armrests already. Nerdytec do sell the support case solo - should

you already have a single-seater chair that means the armrest pieces would go unused.

A major plus point is that the unit can be used for more than just a keyboard and mouse combo, with the addition of a USB port on the top of the support case, you could quite easily connect a joystick or gamepad to your PC such that you could control games like *Elite: Dangerous* whilst retaining the full command set afforded to you by having a keyboard at hand. Alternatively, you can pop your laptop on top of the support case and use it from the comfort of your sofa too. Though, if you've wired in a keyboard and mouse, you'll need to find somewhere to "hang" them whilst using a laptop - or unwire them from the base completely.

I've since spent a couple of our Theme Nights here at GameOn using the Couchmaster Cycon, playing games such as *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* and *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*, interspersed with time spent playing single player outings. Sitting in front of a home-theatre system and large screen had me wanting to relive some

of the experiences of games gone by, to see them in a new light. So with that, I fired up *Half-Life 2* and got to work saving City 17 (again). Sat on the sofa, with the Couchmaster in place, watching *Gordon Freeman*





get ported to the other side of the office on a large TV with full surround sound brought new life to the game, instead of being hunched over a small 22 inch screen with only a stereo headset for audio, and that's part of what makes the Couchmaster Cycon such a great addition to the gamers set piece. I also figured that a good test of the stability of the Cycon would be to play some strategy games, like an old favourite Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2, constant mouse shifting and keyboard presses meant nothing to the Cycon, which sat there and ate them up like it was a fully fledged desk. To wind down from all that, I moved onto some Factorio and well, 5 hours later I was still sat as comfy as ever laying waste to hordes of biters and placing transport belts, which speaks volumes for the comfort and usability of the Cycon.

Lastly, there's some additional gadgets available for the Couchmaster; an ash-tray, phone holder and a tablet holder round out the selection of what's available as optional extras. I quite like the idea of mounting a tablet to the Cycon, for those times you need to look up crafting recipes in Minecraft or where that last damn flag is in Assassin's Creed.

RRP: €139





Suitable for:



Switch



PC



PlayStation



Xbox





BRAZEN SERPENT GAMING CHAIR

When I was first asked to review the BraZen Serpent Gaming Chair, I was initially skeptical. Being a PC gamer basically all my life, I've never had much thought for pedestal-style gaming chairs, with their smaller, stationary design being more suited for console gameplay. In spite of this, I decided that the new experience would give me a way to entertain myself over the Christmas period, and I took in the Serpent with little to no expectations for it outside of 'a small comfy chair'.

When I first obtained the chair, the first thing I noticed was its weight. Whilst it was quite heavy and I had a hard time maneuvering the box through the house, the BraZen Serpent is notably lighter when compared to other gaming chairs on the market, clocking in at approximately 20kg or 44lbs. Despite its low weight, the chair itself still offers ample support, being able to support a (recommended) max weight of 125-150kg, or 20-24st.

Upon unpacking the chair, it came in six pieces, plus a set of screws with an Allen key and instructions. Considering I can be a bit non-technical when it comes to constructing just about anything, I was able to fully construct the chair with no difficulty from the instructions. Parts are clearly labelled in the diagram, and the given steps are logical and easy to follow.

Getting the chair powered on and hooked up to various devices also showed to be light work, and I was able to hook the chair up to my phone, TV and laptop. Through this time I was able to watch TV shows, listen to music, and play videogames, all from the comfort of the BraZen Serpent. The audio quality was astoundingly good, the option to boost the bass and volume were easily accessible, and the surround sound worked very effectively when sat in the chair.

Most importantly for a gaming chair, it was comfortable to sit in for extended periods of time. I was sat in the BraZen Serpent for the better part of roughly three hours without any discomfort. The chair can rotate a full 360 degrees and can recline into a comfortable leaning back





position with ease. The arms at the side can also be folded up out of the way if one so wishes. My only gripe with the chair was the inability to adjust the height, which wasn't a personal problem for me, but someone who is shorter/taller than me (roughly 180cm/5'11") may find the chair uncomfortable for long periods of time.

**RRP: £229.95
/ \$N/A**

The BraZen Serpent has been on the market for over a year now and still sits as one of the more expensive chairs available, but given its high-quality comfort and sound, it's more than worth the price tag. With the only downside really being difficulty in adjusting the chair, this would make a fantastic choice for those looking for high-quality comfort as they game.





ANDASEAT DARK DEMON GAMING CHAIR

Having had to struggle with a cheap chair for months, I was eager to change it as soon as I could. Then AndaSeat sent over the Dark Demon gaming chair for me to try out and review, which was more than welcome.

Assembling the chair once it arrived was very simple, and the instructions were clear. I've had chairs in the past that gave me issues attaching the back to the base, but the Dark Demon was nice and easy. Once assembled, the construction is nice and solid, though the arms have a little bit of sideways movement whilst locked in place. It's covered in PVC leather which does a nice job of not sticking to your skin too much - I like to sit on my left leg, so while in shorts it's not painful to get up.

It comes with two cushions, one for the lumbar region and one for your head, and both are covered in PVC leather. Both are comfortable, with the lumbar one giving some nice support and the head one being quite soft to lean your head back against.

The turning motion is really smooth, and with only a little force it will spin you around fully a couple of times. Similarly, the five wheels on the base move smoothly over short carpet.

Once you have the Dark Demon set up at the right height, and the armrests in position to provide a relatively straight angle, the last thing you need to

do is pull the side handle to adjust the backrest. AndaSeat suggests remaining fairly straight while working, angling back a little while gaming, and being more relaxed if just watching something. It can also lay almost flat, though you should only do that if the bottom part is locked in position.

Beneath the chair is the lever which raises and lowers the chair. It also pushes in, allowing you to prevent the chair from rocking. However, if allowed to rock, the motion is nice and smooth. I found it quite relaxing to rock myself back and forth while thinking of what to write, or how to reword





things. Of course, the straighter the backrest, the harder it is to rock, so you're unlikely to need to lock it if you're sitting up straight to work.

As I mentioned, I like to sit with my leg beneath me, and I was glad that the Dark Demon allows me to do that. My old chair had a metal bar beneath where my thigh would go, so while I could sit like that, it wasn't for long. The entire Dark Demon seat is thick cushion, allowing me to sit however I want for as long as I want.

If height is an issue the Dark Demon can go down quite low. If you're around the seven feet tall (185cm) mark, then good news as it goes up quite high. At its highest elevation, I can put my feet on the ground, but it's a little too high for me to be ideal at 183cm tall. My ideal height is as tall as it goes, then down just a smidge.

The last thing I want to mention is the backrest, which has a nice cushion to it, rather than being a

solid piece of foam like other chairs tend to have. It's a comfortable addition that has some give to it, rather than just moving the entire backrest.

AndaSeat's Dark Demon gaming chair is comfortable, and a welcome addition to my office space.



**RRP: £349.99
/ \$429.99**





ANDASEAT KAISER 2 GAMING CHAIR

If there is one thing I have always struggled with it is finding a good chair that is not only able to provide plenty of support but is also comfortable for long periods of use. Traditional office chairs never tick the comfort box and most other chairs tend to fall apart faster than it took to build them. As someone who works from home and has a shared work home office setup, I was in dire need of a new sitting solution. So when I had the opportunity to try the AndaSeat Kaiser 2 premium gaming chair, I was excited to see how it would fare and if it would correct my office woes.

Being the first chair of it's kind that I had ever put together, the process of assembling it was something I was quite keen to experience. Right away it became clear that, while the instructions were clear and everything I needed was included, it was going to be a challenge. For starters, the Kaiser 2 in its packaging weighs quite a bit and even some of the single elements are surprisingly heavy. While it was not impossible to put together, if you can get help with the assembly I would recommend it. That said, once the Kaiser 2 is constructed it is a sturdy and solid chair which feels like it can support more weight than I can realistically put on it.

The Kaiser 2 is made from scratch and stain resistant PVC leather which not only allows it to withstand quite the battering, but also easy to clear. It's actually quite a nice material to

touch and it has never been uncomfortable to sit on with the chair providing plenty of padding. Additionally, two pillows are included which can be used for supporting your head and neck along with your lower back. These are detachable meaning you can adjust their position to best fit your needs and posture.

You won't be hard pressed to find the right position to fit your needs by any means, as the Kaiser 2 comes with a generous amount of adjustable parts with a wide degree of movement. The back of the chair, for example, can recline between a 90 degree and 160 degree angle with strong locking in any position. You can easily switch from an upright position to a near complete laying down one with ease while feeling safe and secure that the chair will support you.





On top of this you can adjust the arm rests in four directions along with their height to once again find the ideal position to support you while you work or game. Doing so it made easy thanks to conveniently placed buttons on each arm ensuring it's quick to make any changes. You can of course also change the height of the whole chair and the rocking distance with ease thanks to levers under the seat that are within easy reach. All of these parts work together to ensure you have a super adjustable chair to maximise comfort and support ensuring you are not causing any unnecessary damage to your body during long periods of sitting.

As someone who tends to sit cross legged and often fidget quite a bit, it was a pleasant surprise just how sturdy the Kaiser 2 is. While I'm by no means the heaviest of people it is reassuring to know that I can put my whole body on the chair and it doesn't even budge. Plus, the side of the seat itself means I can sit with both legs on the chair and not feel any discomfort.

In truth, during all my time using the Kaiser 2 both for working from home and casual use, I have been hard pressed to find any real faults with it. As mentioned, the weight was a bit of an issue when building it but in actual use the chair is simply amazing. Its ergonomic design and outstanding build quality ensure that it can provide you with

plenty of support and withstand prolonged use. The Kaiser 2 is comfortable, durable, and definitely one you should consider as an option for your next addition to your office or gaming space.



**RRP: £399.99
/ \$549.99**





NETGEAR ORBI RBK752

It's a tale as old as time. There's that one spot in your house that just cannot get a good Wi-Fi signal, and for a while, there were solutions like adding access points or Powerline networking to the mix. And both of those came with their own technical challenges that meant you might still have problems with Wi-Fi signals. Powerline, for instance, is very dependent on the quality of the wiring in your home and could leave you with worse performance than the spotty signal. Enter mesh Wi-Fi. Via a series of devices in various points of the home, you can get a strong wireless signal wherever you are in the house. If you find a blackspot, you can always add another satellite to make up the deficit.

Out of the box, the Netgear Orbi RBK752 looks very muted in contrast to other routers you may have used previously. It has styling more in line with some abstract pieces you'd pick up in your local department store, than looking like a traditional router, with aerials popping out all over the place. All this means that the Orbi kit looks and feels smart and sophisticated, along with which it forgoes the usual flashing lights all over, meaning it's less like Blackpool Illuminations in your living room.

Feature-wise, you get a Wi-Fi 6 capable setup, enabling up to 4.2Gbps of bandwidth to your devices, which at this point in time is more than enough for the majority of speeds you'd get with a UK ISP. Between the router and the

satellite, you're also getting up to 4,000 square feet of coverage which is what most people would consider a "mansion". That said, there's an increase in the popularity of houses with loft conversions as the younger generation find it harder to get on the ladder, and for me, this is where the Orbi really started to shine.

I have recently moved to a new abode, which has a bedroom at the very top of the house, a room with which my ISP provided router meant that the signal at the top was weak and spotty. However, with strategic placement of the satellite on the second floor all of the house was covered by a strong signal, even out into the garden, which also had a few weaker spots.

It was an absolute cinch to set up too. Turn the device on, open the app on my phone and scan the QR code that's on the main unit. From there, it's a case of following the in-app wizard, which takes you through connecting it to your modem, as well as connecting the satellite. I was up and running within ten minutes, including plugging in the satellite in another room.

Which brings us to the one stickler of the Orbi system. The price. Right now, you can pick up the Orbi RBK752 on review here for around £450 in most electronics retailers which is quite a step up from the more consumer-level routers available. However, when you factor in that one of the additional satellites cost £250, that price suddenly





appears more reasonable in the fact you're getting both the router and a satellite here in the bundle. What it comes down to is whether you're prepared to put down the cash needed, or have a life of consistent complaints that the Wi-Fi isn't strong enough to watch Netflix from the other half/teenager/child (delete as appropriate). I know which option I'd be choosing. The Orbi, every time.

Overall then, the Orbi is a solid solution for whole home Wi-Fi coverage, with an easy setup procedure and great coverage if you can get over the pricey looking hurdle at the gate.

**RRP: £449.99
/ \$349.99**





THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONSOLES

Trying to decide which console to buy isn't being made any easier, with upgraded versions of consoles, and the brand new ones released last year. Do you need an Xbox One S or a Series X? Will a PlayStation 5 Digital Edition meet your needs? And what about the Switch; where does that fit into the whole equation? Hopefully this guide will help you pick out which one you're looking for.

PlayStation 4 £229.99

The "slim" is now the standard PS4 model and is 30% smaller, 16% lighter and 28% better at power consumption, but with no optical audio output. If you understood what all that means, you'll also be glad to know it houses the exact same innards as the original PS4, so your games won't look any different. Unlike the original, the Slim comes with both 500GB and 1TB options, with prices starting from around £230. In a nutshell, it's more of the same, in a better looking and smaller body.



PlayStation 5 £449.99

This is the best that PlayStation gets in 2021. It plays PlayStation 5 games and the majority of PlayStation 4 games. Discs? Digital? It doesn't matter what form your games take, this machine will accept them. Additionally, it also plays 4K Ultra HD Blu-rays, regular Blu-rays and your old-fashioned DVDs (if you've still got some laying around). With 825GB of solid-state storage (667.2GB usable), you shouldn't need to worry about running out of space immediately after launch, but don't be surprised if those gigabytes get used up quicker than an F1 car uses fuel. Thankfully, you can now buy additional internal storage for those of you who like lots of games installed at once. Oh, and while the PlayStation 5 can play games in 4K resolutions, you don't need a 4K TV to use the console; your regular old 1080p TV will do just fine.



PlayStation 5 Digital Edition £359.99

Did you read that last paragraph? Well all of it still applies here, except for anything regarding discs. While this model is cheaper (plus a touch lighter and thinner) than its subtitle-less older





sibling, it comes at the cost of a reliance on digital goods. Your only choices for accessing content for this machine comes from the PlayStation Store or any other content provider Sony gives the “go ahead” to. For many consumers, this won’t be an issue; for some however, it’ll be a major turn-off. In terms of performance and storage though, this is identical to its costlier counterpart.



Xbox One S £249.99

The older of the Microsoft consoles on this list features a 4K Blu-ray player, HDR content, and is slightly more powerful than the original Xbox One. 40% smaller than the original iteration of the console, the Xbox One S can be positioned vertically and the internal power supply avoids the blocky object attached to the cable, allowing better fitting into more confined areas. With built-in storage available up to 1TB as well as HDMI 2.0 (which allows 4K and 60FPS), IR (InfraRed), TV controller compatibility, and a more updated controller, the Xbox One S is ideal for gamers on a budget.



Xbox Series X £449.99

No, it’s not a sleek modern fridge; it’s an Xbox Series X. This is Microsoft’s top-tier console going into this generation, and by all accounts, it’s the most powerful one of the lot. You’re not here for specs, but just know that this is capable of running games in native 4K at 120FPS with variable refresh rates and ray tracing. It’s a beast. In terms of storage, you’ll have a 1TB SSD packed into the box (802GB usable), with convenient—albeit not cheap—expansion options available via a proprietary expansion card from Seagate. If you don’t fancy shelling out £219.99 for the aforementioned storage, you can invest in a cheaper external hard drive, although you’ll still have to transfer most games over to the console’s main storage pool to play them. Just like the higher-end PlayStation 5 model, the Series X plays all your discs—DVDs, Blu-rays, 4K Ultra HD Blu-rays—as well as many games from every previous generation of Xbox. The list of old games which are compatible with the Series X sadly shrinks the further back you go; almost every single Xbox One game is supported, but the number of compatible original Xbox games doesn’t quite reach 50. At least not yet.





Xbox Series S £249.99

Unlike the PlayStation 5 Digital Edition, there's more (or rather, less) to this cheaper model than the mere removal of a disc drive, although that is indeed absent here too. The Series S is noticeably less powerful than the Series X, topping out at a native 1440p resolution reaching up to 120FPS (with upscaling to 4K, so it'll look fine on your 4K TV). Additionally, this model doesn't apply all of the same retroactive upgrades to previous-gen games as the Series X. While your Xbox One and Xbox 360 games will still look better on the Series S, they won't look quite as good as they would on the Series X. A lack of storage also serves as a blow to this console's appeal: it only offers a 512 GB SSD (with 364 GB usable). No matter how you look at it, that's not a lot of storage. Microsoft assures fans that the Series S versions of games can be optimised and cut down in terms of GB in comparison to their Series X equivalents, but so far there have been very few developers that have taken advantage of this. It's less powerful, it's got worse specs and it doesn't have all the goodies present in the Series X (including the lack of a disc drive), but at such a low price and with such a sleek profile in comparison to the chunky Series X, it's still a tempting purchase.



Nintendo Switch OLED £309.99

Nintendo's latest member of the Switch family features a vibrant 7-inch OLED screen (compared to the original's 6.7-inch screen), an increased internal storage of 64GB (57.9GB usable), and some other—albeit smaller—quality of life changes. The main draw here is the screen; it provides better colour accuracy, higher contrast, and a wider viewing angle to give it a cleaner, crisper-looking image. Of course none of that matters if you plan to play whilst hooked up to your TV; however, the dock used now offers a LAN port for those with potentially unstable Wi-Fi connections. Is the OLED model worth the extra £50? If your answer to the question "Will you mainly play your Switch in handheld mode?" is no, then I would suggest sticking with the original Nintendo Switch.



Nintendo Switch £259.99

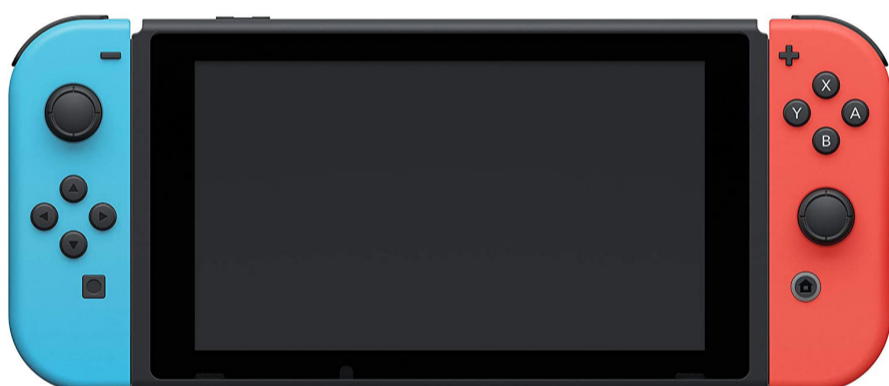
Nintendo's mega-popular console hit the market with one compelling gimmick: "What if your main console could be played like a handheld?" The answer: it would sell like gangbusters! The





Switch is the must-have for playing Nintendo's line-up of superb titles (plus a plethora of other outstanding games). If you want to make use of it as a home console (i.e. you want to plug it into your TV with that handy little dock and those detachable controllers), you'll need to grab yourself the more expensive version, or the newer OLED version described above. With 32GB of inbuilt storage (25.9GB available to use), you'll probably also need to consider picking up a micro SD card to expand it. It accepts cards up to 2TB, but you hopefully won't be needing that; a sizable micro SD card can be picked up for next to nothing nowadays. It's also worth noting that any new Nintendo Switch now boasts an improved battery life, perfect for those gamers on the go.

the key points above, the Switch Lite is slightly smaller with a marginally reduced screen size to match, although not drastically so on either front. Storage availability is the same too: 32GB (25.9 usable) with micro SD expansion options.



Nintendo Switch Lite £199.99

What's a Switch without its gimmick? The Switch Lite! This is a slightly cheaper version of the Switch that—technically—still plays all the same games, only exclusively in handheld mode. With no detachable controllers or motion controls, there are a handful of games that'll present you with issues on the Switch Lite (most notably Super Mario Party and the Just Dance series). There are workarounds that involve connecting a separate pair of Joy-con to your Switch Lite, but... well, who wants to do that? Other than

Buyer beware:

Prices will vary depending on a variety of factors such as location, stock availability and the amount of items bundled with the console. Bundled items may include games and controllers, depending on which retailer you buy from.

The prices on these pages are the recommended retail price in the UK. Beware ordering from websites you are unfamiliar with, or from private sellers.





NINTENDO SWITCH LITE

When the Nintendo Switch Lite was first announced I wanted to pre-order it right away. Yes, I did, and got it on launch day.

In the box was the Switch Lite, charging plug and instructions, which covers both the original and Lite consoles. Not a lot, but since you can only play games in handheld mode, there's not a lot that they could put in.

The flaps to insert the Game Card and micro-SD card are stiff and hard to open, but in time I'm sure they will loosen up. The buttons/sticks are easy to press and the sticks are easy to move with no stiffness. I have to say it was the best feeling as the Joy-Cons on our original Switch have started to drift, and it was getting very irritating. The buttons are just like having the Nintendo Switch but it's slightly smaller and you can't feel the sides like on the Switch itself where the Joy-Cons connect. Because it doesn't actually have Joy-Cons, it's all fixed together.

The first game I tried out was Pokémon Let's go Pikachu. The screen is perfect for that game, and the quality is just like the original Switch itself. It is a little bit brighter though, even at lower settings.

The Switch Lite is easy to hold and not too heavy. While playing it doesn't get hot in the hands. It does get slightly warm, but

that is normal for the original Switch too. It all depends on the game you play.

I decided to test the battery, especially since the Switch Lite is designed to be played away from a plug socket. After one hour with low brightness and a full battery, it dropped down to 79%. With the brightness all the way up, the battery went down to 73%. It also got warmer, which is worth noting.

As an update to the original, the Switch Lite is quite good. As a handheld console it's fantastic. I really like being able to play Dead By Daylight wherever I am, and recommend the Switch Lite to anyone wanting to break free from their TV.





Nintendo Switch Lite

Zacian & Zamazenta Edition



RRP: £199.99
/\$199.99





XBOX SERIES X

There are some consoles that go for a flashy exterior but that can't be said about the Xbox Series X, which actually looks like a black box. That's not a bad thing, as when it's in use I usually forget it's there, unlike my white Xbox One S - but this is to talk about the new, not the old.

The size of the cardboard box belies how heavy the Series X is, as it's quite a hefty beast. You get the power cable, HDMI cable and one controller, as well as a leaflet that tells you how to set up your new device; which basically amounts to "Download the Xbox app and follow the instructions".

I won't go into the technical stuff for two reasons. Firstly, there are plenty of places that have been going over that kind of thing since before the consoles came out. Secondly, I just don't understand a lot of it - teraflop? Utter nonsense.

I thought that it was a nice touch that the Xbox Series X will download updates while you're setting things up using your mobile device. It means you're not sitting twiddling your thumbs, depending on the speed of your connection, and are ready to go quicker. Another great touch was being able to transfer games

from your Xbox One to the Series X, rather than download them completely. Some games will require a patch, if they're designed to look better on Xbox Series X, but it's still hours saved.

Loading up the console is noticeably faster than the Xbox One. When you get into the menu screens, they will look familiar if you had a previous-gen console. In fact, it will look exactly the same, because it's supposed to. You can even import the settings from your old console, if you like.

Loading games is nice and quick, with Watch_Dogs 2 and Dauntless being two games where I noticed the loading times being much faster. I keep fast travelling in San Francisco and





reaching for my phone, forgetting that I'll barely have time to pick it up, let alone tap on Twitter.

Unfortunately, installing doesn't seem to be any faster than the Xbox One. Sure, the Xbox Series X can't do anything about my download speed, but installing from the disc should have been faster than the previous generation, surely.

I've previously explained why I was planning on buying this rather than the competitor, and a part of that was Xbox Game Pass. It's kind of annoying that Microsoft didn't push a bunch more titles onto the service to celebrate the new launch. Yes, there are a

load of games there already, and I've not played them all, but it would have been nicer to have some new stuff, rather than mostly games I could have played a week earlier.

However, those are really the only negative things I can think to say about the console, and one of

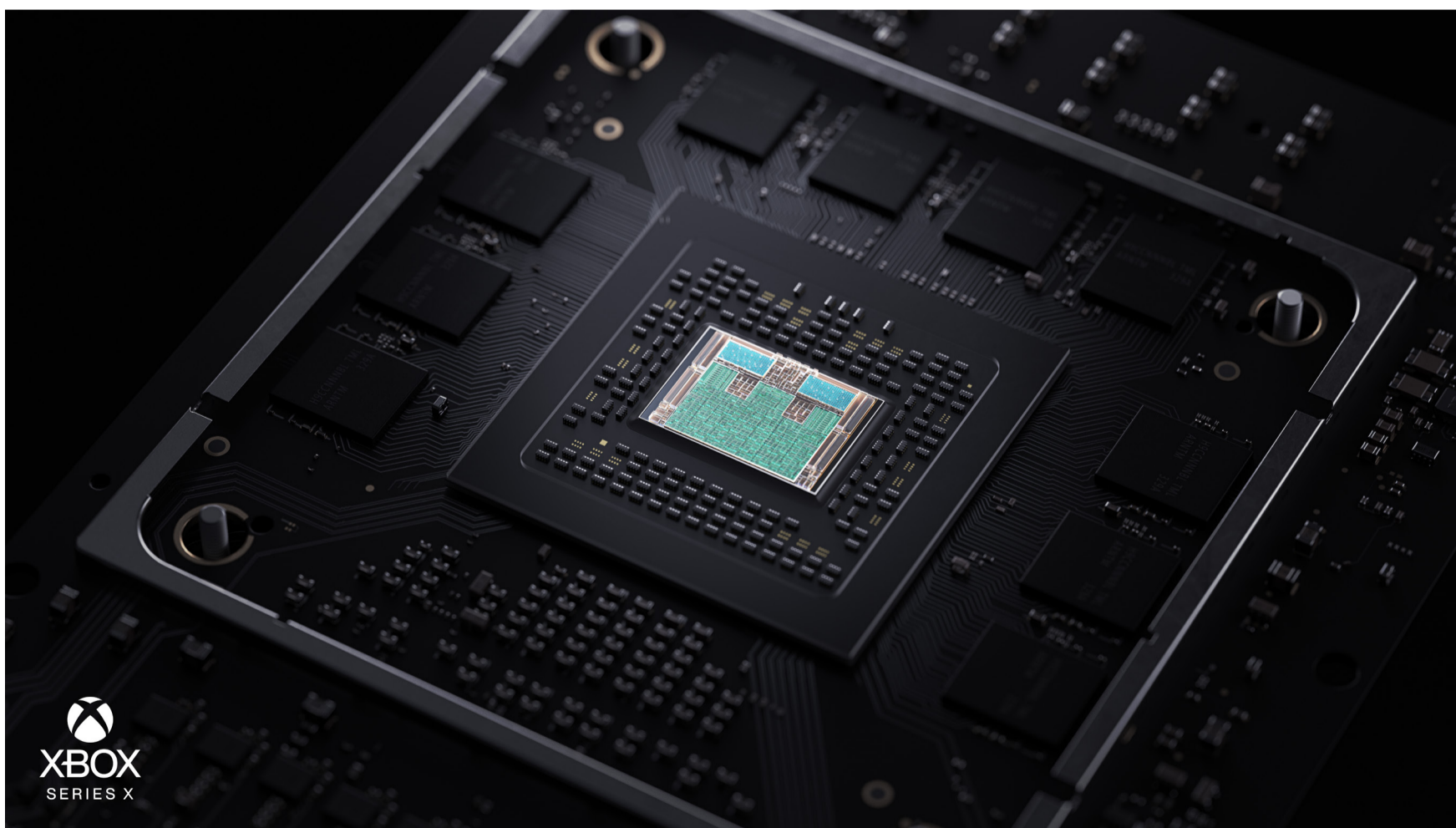




those isn't even about the Series X. It's nice and quiet during use and even quieter when it's not reading from the disc. With the old console, I couldn't leave it in quick start mode as the fan was too loud whilst "off". With it being in the bedroom, it wasn't conducive towards a good night's sleep. Thankfully, the Xbox Series X is nice and quiet in quick start mode, and it's downloaded a whole bunch without disturbing my night.

Hopefully this has convinced you one way or the other about which console you want to buy this generation. If you have a bunch of Xbox One and Xbox 360 game discs (and a few Xbox discs) hanging around, then this is a worthy upgrade that will keep you playing for the generation ahead. But even if you don't have them, it might still be worth a look.

**RRP: £449.99
/ \$499.99**







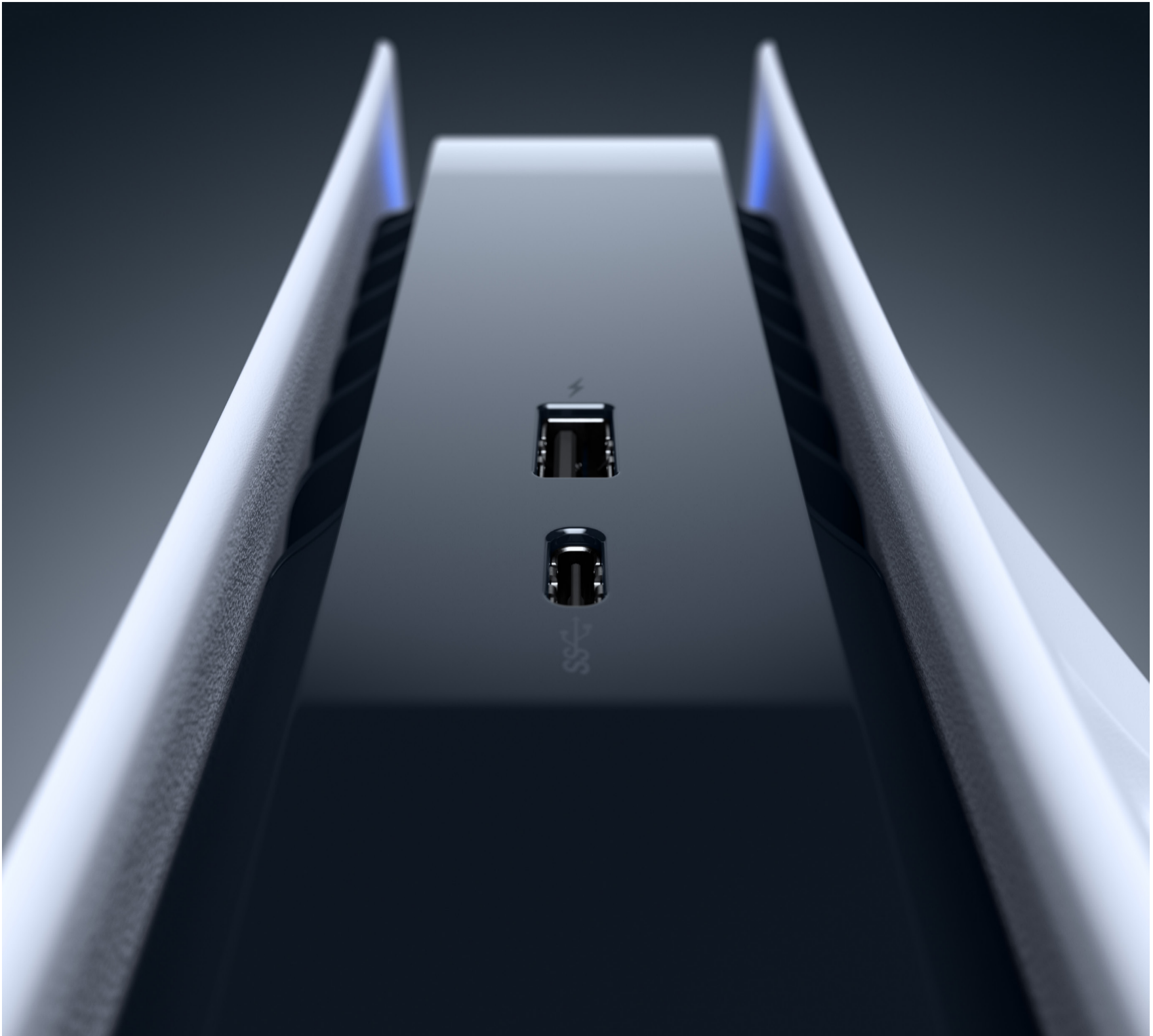
PLAYSTATION 5

The PlayStation 5 is the 5th console that Sony has produced (it's the 7th overall, but the 5th non-handheld) and possibly the biggest leap in technology and graphic fidelity for a console launch since the original PlayStation. Let's start off by talking about the specs of this beefy console shall we? The CPU is based on Ryzen's Zen 2 with 8 cores and 16 threads at a 3.5GHz frequency which is variable, with power shared with the GPU when one is required more than the other. It is coupled with an AMD RDNA2 GPU that is able to pump out gorgeous visuals and maintain steady FPS whilst doing ray tracing. There's 16GB of GDDR6 RAM, and an incredible SSD that is able to load you into games in a matter of seconds. The exact speed of the SSD is 9 GBs / sec which is very hard to even find for a PC at the moment without paying at least half of what the console is worth.

Ok so let's talk about one of the things that makes the PlayStation 5 stand out when compared to its Microsoft; the controller. The DualSense controller is different to the DualShock 4. Instead of going down the route that Xbox took, by making all Xbox One controllers compatible; Sony actually made a next-gen controller and damn does it feel good. One of the stand out features that really shows the difference

between the DualShock 4 and the DualSense controller is the new haptic triggers. This may sound like a tiny feature whilst reading this review but in fact, it plays a major part in games that take advantage of it. Take Call of Duty Black Ops: Cold War for example, whilst on PlayStation 4 you get the standard vibration that you are used to. On the PS5 however, you really feel the bullets coming out of your gun thanks to the haptic feedback, this isn't just a gimmick though, it actually changes gameplay. As you are firing bullets your gun's





recoil pattern will be felt through the controller. This feature really is hard to explain in writing but it definitely makes the controller feel next level.

Another new feature of the DualSense controller is the haptic feedback. This is very similar to the Nintendo Switch's controllers, where you can actually feel different things based on the environments you are walking through or the things that you are doing. This is showcased well by Astro's Playroom, which takes all of the new controller features and showcases them in

different levels throughout the game. It is worth noting that Astro's Playroom is free and is pre-installed on every PlayStation 5 and is definitely worth a try. The rumbles are certainly felt towards the start of the game by showing how even little steps that your character takes can really be felt in the controller. You can also feel the difference between walking on a surface like glass and walking over a giant block of ice for example.

The PlayStation 5 launches with two major games that are worth looking at with other





major titles in the works like Horizon Zero Dawn: Forbidden West, God of War: Ragnarok and Ratchet and Clank: Rift Apart. All of these games have had trailers shown and are definitely worth keeping an eye on in the future.

The console does have launch games including titles like Demon's Souls, Astro's Playroom and Spider-Man: Miles Morales. With my console I picked up Demon's Souls and I am enjoying my time with it, (check out our review to read our impressions of that title). So whether you want to play great PlayStation 4 games like Uncharted 4 or Bloodborne through the PlayStation Plus Collection, or enjoy the new games that are coming to the platform like Cyberpunk 2077, this collection of launch titles show that Sony's latest console can fight off the competition.

The PlayStation 5 is deadly quiet. Throughout my time spent with the console I haven't heard a peep, even when playing games that were very demanding on the PlayStation 4. The Last Of Us: Part 2 is a very loud game when running on PlayStation 4. However, when playing on PlayStation 5 through backwards compatibility, I heard nothing. This could be due to Sony making the consoles ventilation better or due to the better hardware meaning the games are less demanding, but either way it is definitely an achievement.

**RRP: £449.99
/ \$499.99**







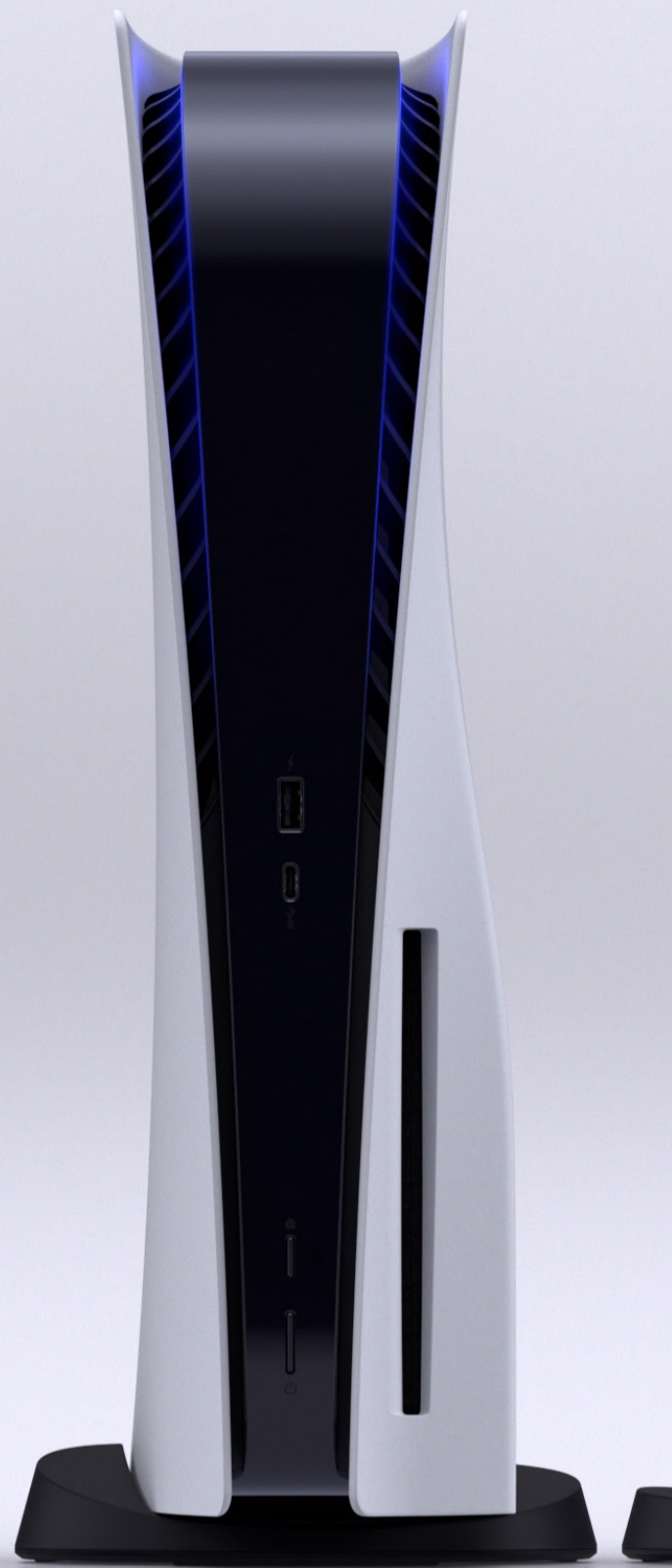
PlayStation®5

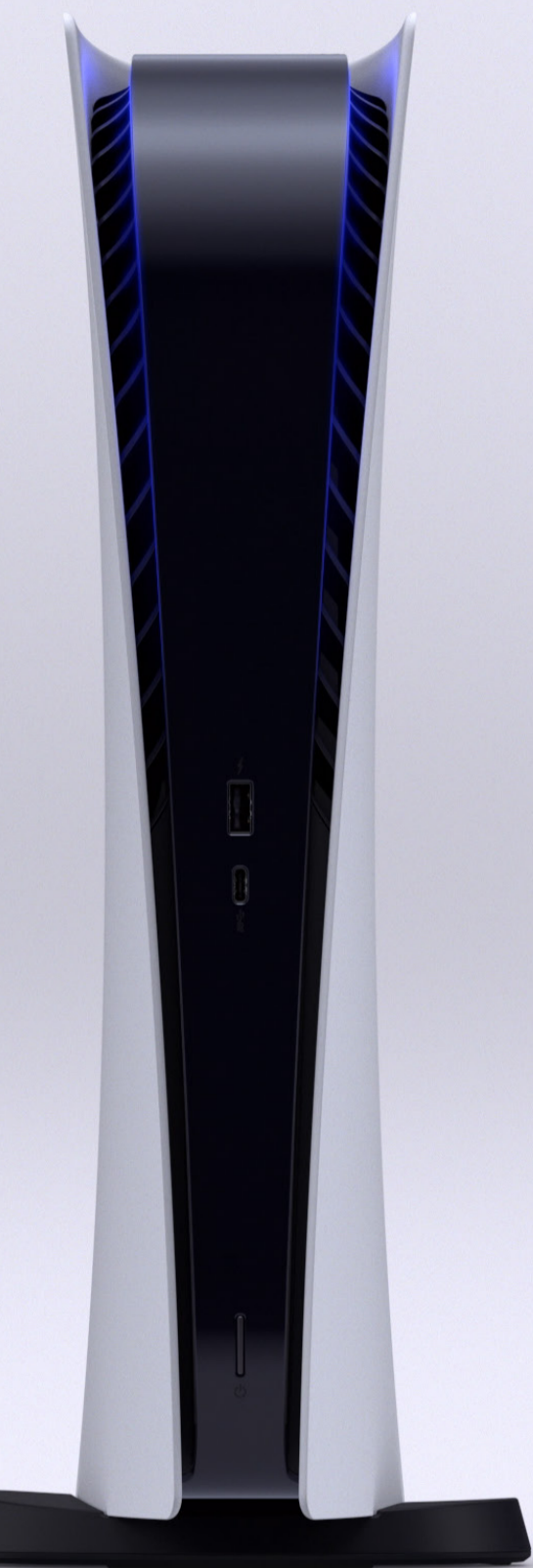
\$499.99

€499.99

£449.99

¥49,980





PlayStation®5 Digital Edition

\$399.99

€399.99

£359.99

¥39,980



TOP FIVE GAMES YOU SHOULD GET FOR SWITCH

The Nintendo Switch has been around for a while, and a great many games have come to the system, with even more on the way. It should only be natural that a console that can shift between three forms has a wide array of games to go with it, so here's five games that, if you have the Switch or plan on getting it, should definitely find room on your shelf.

5. *Minecraft*

Minecraft is on pretty much every system, and for good reason. The addictive wide-open sandbox shines even better on Switch, since you no longer have to wait until you get home to work on the building idea you have in your

head: you can make it happen anywhere. With constant updates and plenty of add-ons, DLC, and hundreds upon hundreds of items to craft, the only limit in Minecraft is your own imagination.

4. *Xenoblade Chronicles 2*

Don't let the name fool you: it has no direct connection to the previous game, but it definitely shares its charm, style, intricacies, and gorgeous landscaping. With an excellent story, a memorable cast of characters, and action-RPG elements that'll keep you on your toes in the heat of battle, it's definitely one to pick up and play. Just keep in mind you'll be playing for quite a while.





3. Mario Kart 8 Deluxe

Even if you're not a fan of the racing genre, Mario Kart 8 Deluxe is sure to make you one. With simple to learn and easy to master controls, and stunning graphics you can lose yourself in, what the game lacks in story it more than makes up for in the hours of fun you'll have blazing through tracks old and new. With plenty of characters and parts to choose from, you can pick out your ultimate ride and aim for that winner's circle in style, and portability.

2. The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild

GOTY isn't an award given lightly, and Breath of Wild earned it and then some. Travel across a ruined yet breathtaking Hyrule to battle, forage, explore, and uncover the mystery of Link's century-long slumber as you fight the Calamity and win the war that started so long ago. Breath of the Wild shines in its storytelling, and can leave an impression long after the Switch has been shut off.

1. Super Smash Bros. Ultimate

Surprising no one, Super Smash Bros. Ultimate makes the list. Whether you're a die-hard veteran anxious to take your skills to the next level, a casual fan happy to see the new characters, or even the most neophyte of neophytes, if you love tossing around your friends and family with your favorite video game characters, look no further than the latest iteration of the party fighter that's taken the world by storm. The title's not for show, with plenty of third-party characters joining the fray. There's faces old and new, and with everyone from the previous games making their way in, it truly is Ultimate.



TOP FIVE GAMES YOU SHOULD GET FOR XBOX

The Xbox One is in a weird place right now because it just doesn't have anything to offer during the end of its lifecycle that is blowing many peoples skirts up like PlayStation 4 at the moment, but it used to, just many people don't know or remember. It used to be the opposite in the earlier years of these two consoles; PlayStation 4 wasn't pumping out hits like they are now and Xbox One was, but, since PlayStation was dominating the market in console sales, many people don't know about most of Xbox One's best games. So, without further ado, here is a list of the best games on Xbox One!

5. Forza Horizon 4

When it comes to racing games there is only one franchise that continues to pump out hits what seems like every year and that's Forza. I'm more of a Need for Speed player myself, which is why I prefer the Horizon series to the Motorsport games because they feels more arcade-like, but they are both equally good in quality. I loved the crazy missions that the Horizon series brought like epic races against helicopters or boats and every Horizon game just seems to keep getting better, plus, every Forza game is just stunning to look at.

4. Sunset Overdrive

I feel like not many people have played Sunset Overdrive due to it coming out early in Xbox One's

lifecycle and many people not owning an Xbox One in the early years, but I think it's a mistake people should correct immediately. I loved everything about Sunset Overdrive; the bizarre story, the iconically crazy Insomniac weapons, the fast movement, everything just worked together so well and is a huge reason I knew that Insomniac Games were the perfect developers for Marvel's Spider-Man. My only worry is if it holds up nowadays because the comedy might be dated.

3. Halo: The Master Chief Collection

Of course, it wouldn't be a top Xbox games list without Halo, but this is more than a Halo game, this is the ultimate Halo experience. Despite being probably one of the rockiest launches we have ever seen for a game, Halo: The Master Chief Collection (Halo: MCC) is a must-own for any Halo or Xbox fan now that it's all up and running. Those Blur Studio cutscenes for Halo 2 Anniversary are excellent and the ability to swap graphics/music with a press of a button is very impressive, but the Halo multiplayer for each game should be reason enough. It's going to be very exciting when PC players finally get a chance to experience Halo: MCC later this year!

2. Ori and the Blind Forest

Ori and the Blind Forest is definitely one of my favourite metroidvania games that has come out



in a long time. It's such a beautiful game in terms of story, visuals, and music plus the gameplay and level design are excellent while challenging. I can't wait for the sequel – Ori and the Will of the Wisps – to finally release February 2020 after being teased for years and I hope it's equally as good, if not better than its predecessor.

1. *Quantum Break*

Remedy Games' Quantum Break is definitely my favourite Xbox One game and one of my favourite games this generation. I'm just a huge fan of Remedy Games and almost everything they have done in the past and this game just speaks to me. I love well-done stories about time travel, feeling like a badass, great characters and when developers try something new and Quantum Break has all of this. The most unique thing Quantum Break does is having an episode of their

own TV show after every chapter with scenes that are impacted by your decisions from the game, which I personally loved. Unfortunately, Quantum Break suffered the same fate as Sunset Overdrive, even though it was critically acclaimed as well, so play it if you haven't!



TOP FIVE GAMES YOU SHOULD GET FOR PLAYSTATION

No one can argue that the PlayStation 4 is the undeniable “winner” this generation as it continues to move up the list of best-selling consoles of all time. In the earlier years, the PS4 didn’t have many system sellers like it does today, it was mostly selling so well because of how awful the Xbox team handled the marketing for the Xbox One. Now, at the end of the console’s life, there are some truly incredible experiences to be had on the PS4 and I’m here to tell you all about them.

5. *The Last of Us Remastered*

This kind of feels like cheating but since this Naughty Dog masterpiece came out so late in the PlayStation 3’s life, I thought there might be many people who haven’t had a chance to play this incredible game. The Last of Us is a game that many people – like myself – might say is one of the greatest games of all time because of its masterful story-telling and stellar characters/performances. It coming to PS4 makes it the definitive edition bringing 4K support for the PlayStation 4 Pro along with a 60FPS for the base console. Now would be the perfect time to play as well since The Last of Us Part II will be out next year, and from what we’ve seen, it’s bound to be another hit from Naughty Dog.

4. *Horizon: Zero Dawn*

Horizon: Zero Dawn shocked many people because who would have thought that the next game from the people that worked on the Killzone series was an action RPG and an amazing one at that. Horizon is still one of the best looking PS4 games to date and it’s great combat system, superb story and fascinating world are all reason enough to check this game out. I’ve heard great things about its DLC, The Frozen Wilds, as well and I hope they are working on a sequel for the PlayStation 5 which seems likely based on the game’s success.

3. *Marvel’s Spider-Man*

I’ve been a huge Spider-Man fan for as long as I can remember, but it’s been years since we’ve got a great Spider-Man game. Then, unexpectedly at Sony’s E3 2016 conference, they announced Marvel’s Spider-Man being developed by Insomniac Games, which I immediately knew was the right developer for the job thinking back to Sunset Overdrive. Marvel’s Spider-Man is everything I could have wanted from a Spider-Man game; the swinging felt perfect, the story was epic and emotional, and the performances were fantastic. There are a few very minor hiccups when it comes to side content, but none of them takes away from what makes this an amazing Spider-Man game.





2. *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End*

It's no surprise that Naughty Dog would be on the list twice since they are some of the best developers in the business right now. *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End* is the first time we got to see the developer taking advantage of the new hardware from the ground up and the results are, unsurprisingly, incredible. With *Uncharted 4* being the end of Nathan Drake's journey, it's only natural that Naughty Dog would want this to be his biggest and best adventure yet and it absolutely is. The gameplay in *Uncharted 4* is a massive improvement over its predecessors and its set pieces are some of the best in the series. It's a perfect end to one of PlayStation's best exclusives and a must-play for everyone, but if you're not familiar with the series, *The Nathan Drake Collection* is available on PS4 as well.

1. *God of War (2018)*

God of War (2018) is reason enough to own a PS4. It's one of those games you immediately want to talk to everyone about because it's just that damn

good. As someone who wasn't really a huge fan of the previous *God of War* games, I was completely blown away by how much I loved this game. *God of War (2018)* is a generation-defining game that sets a new precedent for all videogames in terms of cinematic visuals, attention to detail, characters, story-pacing, and gameplay. I'll never forget how amazing it felt to throw and catch the Leviathan axe as the DualShock 4 rumbles when it returns to your hand. *God of War (2018)* is definitely up there for game of the generation, if not one of the greatest games of all time.



TOP FIVE GAMES YOU SHOULD GET FOR VR

While a number of fantastic VR games that are available today released a couple of years ago, I've put together our top five VR games of to raise awareness of the awesome experiences you may have missed.

5. *Astro Bot Rescue Mission*

Astro Bot Rescue Mission is a PSVR game, and probably one of the best VR games available on the system. Developed by Japan Studio, the game is one of the few to give the player a presence in the world, in addition to needing to control the main character, Captain Astro. Levels can span 360 degrees, requiring players to look and move around in order to complete them, while others have physical barriers that players need to headbutt so that Captain Astro can move forward.

4. *No Man's Sky Beyond*

In August 2019 Hello Games launched their biggest update to *No Man's Sky* yet, *Beyond*. Among a plethora of other features, the update added VR for players on a number of different platforms. Everyone should understand the game's premise by now, a space exploration game within a procedurally generated universe. Players are free to follow the story and missions, or just fly off and create a home for themselves on an alien world. VR is an eye-opener for *No Man's Sky*, and it's undeniably the best way to play it. VR makes you feel closer to the action, whether

you're mining for resources, bartering on a space station, or creating something spectacular with friends thanks to the addition of multiplayer.

3. *Borderlands 2 VR*

The *Borderlands* games are some of the best shooters available. The tight gunplay, combined with fun multiplayer and the ultimate loot system, make them great for gaming sessions of any length. *Borderlands 2 VR* takes that shooter experience to the next level. Nothing has been cut for the sake of VR, and that's what makes this game so great. You can earn all of the wacky guns that you can in the non-VR version, and they're just as fun to use. Shaky hands can sometimes cost you a sniper shot, but that's nothing compared to the feeling of being inside a *Borderlands* game, a hectic shooter that makes you feel like a real life action hero.

2. *Ghost Giant*

While *Ghost Giant* isn't a very challenging VR game, it's definitely one of the most-charming. Players take on the role of a giant ghost, hence the game's name. The story plays out in front of you, and it's bursting with heartwarming moments and incredibly well-written characters. The only caveat is that the controls can be a bit difficult, making for a bit of a frustrating experience at times.





The core gameplay requires you to interact with the scenery of each level, with what look like hand-crafted paper structures that make up the buildings and trees. Interacting with the roof of a house can lead you to a secret room within the attic, or a note on a table in a closet. While these are puzzles in the loosest sense of the word, they're really rewarding when just the right discovery is made to advance the story. It's the story that you should play Ghost Giant for. A lot of love has gone into creating these characters and the stories that unfold right before your eyes. It might only be four or five hours long, but they'll be four or five hours you won't forget quickly.

1. Blood & Truth

Blood & Truth was one of the crowning jewels of VR games in 2019. The game is made up of 19 shooter missions, all wrapped up in what feels like a heist movie. The overwhelming feeling that the game leaves you with is 'cool'. Everything about the layout of the missions

and the gameplay comes together really well to provide that gangster shooter experience that everyone wishes they could have after watching a good gangster film. In Blood & Truth you'll find a great cast of characters, a small selection of great weapons, and superb shooting. Some levels have multiple paths, and there are a few great sections with pillars and walls to hide behind and peek out from as you mow down the group of enemies in front of you. The game isn't all shooting though, with a few levels that see you do crazy things like climb up the side of buildings, taking enemies down from open windows as you go.



GAME MICRO-REVIEWS



XB PS PC

Back 4 Blood has built on the great foundations that Left 4 Dead laid over a decade ago. The gameplay is brilliant, there's also that little bit more to keep the challenge fresh and to keep zombie killing fun.

Back 4 Blood
7.5/10



PS PC

Deathloop is a creative masterpiece. Refining everything that is excellent about Arkane Studios previous titles, it takes every single dial and cranks it up to 11.

Deathloop
10/10



XB PS PC SW

I initially booted up Guardians of the Galaxy with tempered expectations but was surprised with how much fun I ended up having. Despite having a few setbacks, Guardians of the Galaxy is easily one of the best games of the year thanks to its fantastic story.

Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy
8.5/10



XB PS PC

HITMAN 3 is a satisfying conclusion to the World of Assassination trilogy, but makes a few missteps that make the game feel less impactful. This game is a must-buy for any Agent 47 fanatics and is a promising sign that Hitman is still relevant in the modern games industry.

Hitman 3
7.5/10



PS PC

A good first attempt by a studio that has only worked on animation, but not enough substance in the gameplay to keep you hooked to the very end.

Kena: Bridge of Spirits
6/10



You might be looking for something to go with your new hardware - well here's what GameOn think about this year's biggest titles



XB PS PC SW

Life is Strange: True Colors

8.5/10

What True Colors lacks in the emotional gut-wrench that the previous games have, it makes it for with a refined format that presents a story that fits right into the series and tells it in the best way seen so far. You're very unlikely to be disappointed here.



XB PS PC

Mass Effect: Legendary Edition

10/10

Mass Effect: Legendary Edition is a phenomenal remaster of the original trilogy, with enough changes to not only feel fresh, but with enough quality-of-life improvements to truly call this the definitive way to play the Mass Effect trilogy.



XB PS PC

Resident Evil Village

9/10

Resident Evil Village is an expertly-crafted narrative that seamlessly weaves subtle horror into action-driven sequences and backs it up with an excellent story supported by even better characters. An exemplary merit that Capcom still hasn't lost its creative spark



XB PS PC

Scarlet Nexus

10/10

Scarlet Nexus is easily one of the best games so far this year and a strong contender for game of the year. With addictive gameplay and compelling narrative, there is plenty to love in this Brain Punk vision of a psionic future.

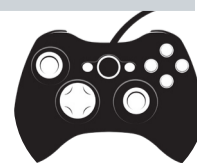


XB PS PC

Tales of Arise

10/10

Tales of Arise is so well done with the story, graphics, battle system, music, characters and voice cast that it is a must-play for anyone. Even if you aren't normally a big fan of role-playing games the story is so compelling there is a lot to love here.





[Click here to see if you have the latest version](#)