

Gaming news

We asked our resident gamer, Kevin Kennedy, to introduce us gently to his world....Here is what he thinks we mean by gentle...

For the beginners among you, and the more experienced too he reviews ways to do this thing called gaming..

Well, we're fast approaching that time again. The end of one generation of consoles and the beginning of another. This generation seemed to last especially long this time around, with the Xbox 360 releasing in 2005 and the PlayStation 3 and Nintendo Wii coming out a year later, we've had close to a decade of broken consoles, account hacks and willy jokes. Now though, it is time to move on. Deciding what console to get next can be daunting, get it wrong and you'll end up with a £300 – £400 paperweight. That's why Kevin is here to drive you round the curves of this very peculiar time, as a common word to describe this new launch is 'confusing'.



Nintendo Wii U

We should probably start off with the console that has already released. The clear runaway winners of the last generation (as far as sales go anyway), Nintendo seems determined to recapture the casual audience while also reclaiming the hardcore gamer, who some felt were forgotten about last time around.

When the Wii U was announced at E3 2011, it was met with a great deal of confusion; was it a new console or simply a tablet looking controller that you plug into your Wii? Keeping the 'Wii' in the title may have felt like a stroke of genius at the time, but upon reflection makes it feel like nothing but a weak expansion as opposed to a brand new console. Nevertheless, this would mark Nintendo's first foray into HD, hopefully helping them with third party games, an aspect Nintendo had been struggling with as games made on the more powerful consoles had to be downgraded to work on the Wii, if they even bothered to do it at all.

Though enough about all that, lets talk about the console itself. It certainly is the cheapest clocking in at about £250, plus it has been out for a year so you will have more games to work with, plus the Wii U has backwards compatibility, meaning that you can play Wii games on it, extending the library further. If you decided to give Nintendo a miss last time around, you have a lot of fun to catch up on.

However, as is the problem with Nintendo consoles these days, the only real games of note coming out for the Wii U will be made by Nintendo themselves, and you'll be lucky to get one of those a year. So far, we only have Pikmin 3 and a remake of a 10 year old Zelda game. We've been promised more Mario and Zelda games are coming, but the risk of the Wii U gathering dust in the corner as you wait is very high unfortunately.



Xbox One

You want to talk about confusion? Here's some confusion!

Lets start with the name; Xbox One? The perfect number to follow 360 right? Plus we already had a console affectionately called the Xbox 1, it's called the Xbox.

To make matters worse, Microsoft have flip-flopped on almost every major aspect of the console since it was announced. Xbox One initially required a 24 hour sign in period for the machine to actually work in an attempt to combat piracy, plus you wouldn't be able to play pre-owned games without first paying an added fee. This riled up the community so much that Microsoft removed it from the system.

We were also told that the Kinect (essentially a camera that tracks your body movements) was required for the console and that it simply wouldn't work without it. Yet further complaints (and some troubles over at the NSA) resulted in Microsoft flip-flopping on that as well.

At this point, there is nothing to differentiate the Xbox One from the PS4, other than the exclusives, the fact that it's slightly less powerful and a bit more expensive.

Microsoft seem to be making the same mistake as Sony did with the PS3. After success with the 360, they seem to be resting on their laurels; presuming that the fan base they've created will stick around for more. Which is why Microsoft seems to be

focusing less on games and more on actually capturing the living room through Netflix, sports, TV, movies etc. Over half their announcement presentation was dedicated to this aspect.

There will certainly be games sure, lots of them, but a Lion's share of the Xbox 360's success came from TV and movies so it would seem that Microsoft is hoping to capitalise on that some more.

For people that already own a TV and Sky however, they're hardly to be won over by the prospect of watching those things on a games console. Being able to watch TV always felt like a nice addition, not a primary selling feature.

At this rate, the main draw on the Xbox One is that many people are still likely to get one and Xbox Live is still the main place to go for online gaming. The sales of PS3 and Xbox may still be neck and neck, but more people play games like Call of Duty on the Xbox.

While the Xbox One does seem like a nice piece of kit, the main drawback is going to be the price. £425. The same price as the PS3 when it shipped and struggled to make sales. For a console with a confusing image and bad PR going for it, it's hard to see it competing, at least at first.



PlayStation 4

Sony seem set on winning back gamers' trust. Everything they've done from stating the importance of independent gaming to their rather unsubtle jokes at the expense of Microsoft seem to come with the message of "these guys don't care about games anymore, we do".

While I hate to get involved in "console wars", the first console I bought was an Xbox so I always sort of considered myself own of them, but it's hard to see where Sony have put a foot wrong in this current battle. Microsoft seems to be merely playing catch up, as they hastily change aspects of their console in an attempt to keep up with Sony's momentum. With the Wii U struggling to make sales just now, my money would be on the PS4 winning this console war. It's cheaper, has better PR working for it and cooler looking games.

I may have looked at all three consoles, but I'm not quite done yet. For people wanting to take their next step in gaming, there is one more choice that I'm actually planning on taking. It's not really part of the console war, in-fact it was there long before these consoles were even announced.

PC

Like previously mentioned, this generation has been a long one. Some may say too long. Therefore it's surprising how many people have instead decided to upgrade their PC instead of waiting. I myself would have never considered myself a PC gamer until about 2 years ago when it was my primary way of playing games. Simply put there are much more options out there for PC gamers.

A main selling point of any console are the exclusives. Nintendo has Mario and Zelda, Microsoft has Halo and Gears of War and Sony has Naughty Dog and Sucker Punch. All great stuff, but a major problem with console games these days is that they're quite expensive (£40 approx.) and just like in movies, game companies look for the bottom line so the more expensive a game is, the less they are willing to take a chance and creating something unique. They'd much rather slap on a multiplayer mode than risk something. Understandable when so much money is on the line, but hardly entertaining stuff.

This is why I love indie gaming so much. So many unique experiences from small teams who consider a big paycheck to simply be a nice bonus. Personal favorites in the last year include The Walking Dead, FTL and Gunpoint to name but a few. Even better, these games are cheap! I picked up Gunpoint on sale for about £4, The Walking Dead for about £10 and FTL for £3. What's more, free to play gaming is really taking off on the PC, me and my friends have clocked in some ridiculous hours on Defense of the Ancients 2 (Dota 2) for absolutely free.

Add this to the news that Valve are planning on releasing Steam Machine, perhaps PC gaming, once thought to dying due to the consoles, is making a comeback in a way that consoles are going to struggle to keep up with. To be fair, Sony are trying, but I wonder if it will be enough.

Well, that went on longer than I thought it would. To top off, my main advice is honestly just to wait a bit; see what happens in the long run. You don't need a console right away

do you? Mainly, I'd wait to see what the Steam Machine is about, it's sounds like nothing more than a PC with a brand, but if anyone could figure it out, it's Valve.

Or do what you want I ain't your Mother.