

Wii-diculous fun?

Steve Wright sits down to play with the Nintendo Wii.

In the past two years, Australians have purchased over 2,000,000 new gaming units - either hand-held or home-based consoles - meaning that at least 10 per cent of our population can be considered gamers.

That figure equates to one Australian in ten, much like another figure those possessing the sought-after 'pink dollar' are familiar with.

Current Australian sales figures list the Nintendo Wii as the highest-selling home console of 'the big three' - which also includes Sony's PlayStation 3 and Microsoft's Xbox 360 - but does that mean it's the right buy for you?

You're most likely familiar with the Wii's big selling point - Nintendo has done away with the traditional controller scheme and replaced it with the 'Wiimote'. A motion-control device, the wiimote can be turned on its side to emulate a traditional controller, or innovatively used as a variety of tools, including a tennis racquet, a scalpel, a light-gun, or a serving tray.

The innovation certainly carries over to the games. *Trauma Centre: Second Opinion* allows the player to become a rookie surgeon in an addictive medical-simulator. Old icons like Mario have been reinvigorated with games like *Super Mario Galaxy*. The upcoming 'Wii Fit', out this week, has

been advertised as an alternative to a personal trainer and features a balance board used for push-ups and yoga.

Those looking to relive past glory days can take advantage of the Wii's Virtual Console channel, allowing one to download and play old classics from retired consoles. Virtual Console games range from 500 to 1000 Wii points; points roughly cost \$1.50 for 100. The Wii is also backwards-compatible, meaning it can play last-generation's Nintendo Gamecube games. Other channels offer online functionality, such as 'Everybody Votes', where you can put your opinion up against that of other Australian or Global Wii owner.

Online play begins and almost ends there, sadly. For every *Mario Kart Wii* Aussies receive with legitimately online play, they also get a *Medal of Honour Heroes 2*. The latter sports a 32-player online deathmatch feature available in every region except Down Under.

The Wii's innovation can only go so far; the system is currently flooded with party-games such as *WarioWare: Smooth Moves*, *Mario Party 8*, or *Rayman Raving Rabbids*. The games are great in groups, but are very repetitive otherwise. The console is still seen as a child's plaything by some game developers, and new titles like *Grand Theft Auto 4* will not be avail-

able for the console - if not for the console's reputation, then certainly due to its graphics' capabilities. For those less tech-savvy, the Wii has graphics that look great on a normal TV, but not-so-great otherwise (especially when compared to a competitor).

Graphic limitations mean game exclusives are mostly limited to Nintendo first-party releases, though they are strong; *Super Smash Bros. Brawl* is sure to be a top-seller. However, many third-party developers simply take advantage of the console's popularity and flood the market with copies of games originally designed for last-generation's PlayStation 2. The result is an inundation of graphically unimpressive games with wiimote controls added on purely for novelty. In the same vein, those graphical limitations mean the Wii doesn't support DVD or Blu-Ray playback.

The Nintendo Wii is not just for kids, but may not satisfy all with its games. However, at a suggested retail of \$399.95, the cheapest of the big three by far, the Wii is a great starting-off console for new gamers looking for simple to learn and addictive games.



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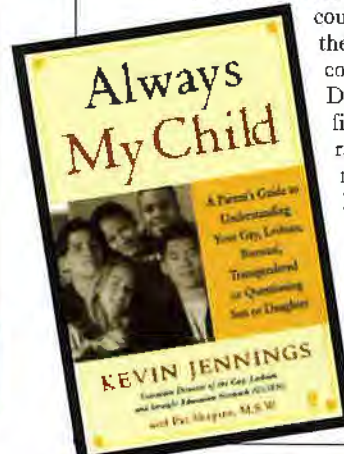
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