

Everybody's working for the Wii-kend

Whether they were actually working or not, Gateway writers **RYAN HEISE, RAMIN OSTAD AND MIKE SMITH** were definitely having fun playing with their new Wii-Wiis

There's been plenty of skepticism about Nintendo's new console, the Wii. With its remote-shaped controller and motion sensing capabilities, people are dying to know whether this crazy contraption is actually worth the price (a hefty \$279) or if it's just another Virtual Boy.

The console itself is very small—about the size of a DVD box set. GameCube legacy ports on top of the unit, and the SD card port on the front, are both hidden under panels. Nintendo appears to be taking a cue from Apple by using a bright white plastic shell and clean lines, as well as a slot-loading optical drive.

The unit also uses a new type of controller: the Wii remote and Nunchuk attachment. The remote is small with a trigger on the bottom, a D-pad and several face buttons on top. The Nunchuk acts as the left side of a more traditional controller, with an analog nub and two trigger buttons. The controllers are comfortable, but the remote suffers from poor button placement, something that could be troublesome for certain games.

The motion-sensing, on the other hand, feels entirely intuitive. Although the sensitivity varies on a game-by-game basis, when done right—such as in first-party games like *Wii Sports*—the Wiimote has the potential to single-handedly revolutionize how games are played.

Of course, no console launch would be complete without a selection of launch titles. We decided to take a look at some of the more prominent titles and how each one uses the remote's functionality.

Wii Sports

The Wii comes pre-packaged with *Wii Sports*, a disc that contains five games: golf, tennis, baseball, bowling and boxing. Each game uses the remote to emulate the actual sport, albeit with varying levels of accuracy. Golf is the most complete game of the bunch and provides a fairly enjoyable nine-hole experience, though it doesn't always detect the strength of your swing very well. Boxing is the only game that requires both the remote and Nunchuk, each of them acting as your boxing gloves. The baseball game is a fairly shallow affair where the remote is simply your baseball bat. Once you learn to time your swings, there's not much left to do. Bowling, however, can be a lot of fun. You play by raising the remote to your chest, and using it as your bowling ball, lowering it and releasing it at just the right time. You can also add spin to it

by twisting the remote upon release of the ball. Of all the games, tennis is probably the most intuitive, and for those new to the console, it offers an easy introduction that will most likely get you hooked.

Wii Sports is a perfect game to package with a Wii, as it really shows off the functionality of the remote. It's just too bad it couldn't have more depth.

Red Steel

When the unique control scheme of the Wii was announced, no other genre showed more promise than first-person shooters, which are typically cumbersome on consoles. However, they seemed to translate perfectly to the Wii, with aiming handled by the remote and movement by the Nunchuk. Ubisoft's *Red Steel* garnered much attention for this very fact. Coupled with the addition of first-person swordplay, *Red Steel* could have been one of the must-have games for the console. Sadly, it will

only go down in geek history as one of the worst launch titles ever.

This game is indescribably bad. From the sub-par graphics and horrid controls to the half-baked Yakuza-stole-my-girlfriend storyline, the whole game falls flat on its face from the get-go. Even the menu system is convoluted and awkward.

If by some miracle you get past the menus and have the patience to sit through the godawful opening, you're provided with muddy graphics and controls that make you wonder how Ubisoft could ruin something as simple as point-and-shoot. Waving the remote frantically to attempt to turn and face your foe results in either spinning in place, or your crosshair sluggishly crawling across the screen while you're being fired at. In all, *Red Steel* is nothing more than a poorly executed and unsuccessful game.

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess

Originally planned for a November 2005 release as a GameCube title, *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* was instead delayed a year and moved to the

Wii as the killer app for the console's launch. Now the question weighing on the minds of *Zelda* fans is how well will the title transfer to the new and innovative Wii.

Fortunately, *Twilight Princess* delivers in a way that only a first-party Nintendo game can.

While the controls initially feel tacked on with the Wii version, they grow to be incredibly nuanced. A simple flick of the remote will swing your sword, though not in a one-to-one manner, which many had hoped for. But this motion allows for more buttons on the remote to be freed up and used for other tasks, such as equipping other weapons.

The remote can also be used for smaller tasks such as fishing, aiming slingshots and bows, and locking onto targets. All of these work flawlessly and create an incredibly deep play experience.

While the graphics are definitely reminiscent of the GameCube, mediocre textures are balanced with vibrant colours, excellent lighting and varied environments.

With over 70 hours of game play, *Twilight Princess* is Link's biggest and arguably best adventure yet, and clearly the must-have Wii launch title.

Excite Truck

Excite Truck isn't a game for simulation lovers. It takes very heavy liberties with concepts like reality and physics. At its core, *Excite Truck* is a game for speed lovers who desire to suddenly spin wildly out of control.

This feeling is a direct result of the way the game controls. The remote is held sideways with the face buttons up. The 1 and 2 buttons serve as your gas and brake, respectively, and you steer by tilting the controller left and right. Hitting any direction on the D pad kicks in your turbo boost. When you hit a jump, you have control over your airborne truck by tilting the controller forward and back.

The controls aren't difficult to get a grip on, but they're far too sensitive. Tilt the controller an inch and you'll veer you into a tree. This leads to the games out-of-control feel, which can be exciting one moment and infuriating the next. Handling mid-air turns, for example, doesn't feel consistent from jump to jump. There's no real indication that lets you know whether you're tilting just enough or too much.

What you end up with is a fast-paced arcade racer that may keep you amused for a while—especially in multiplayer—but probably not for as long as you'd like. If the controls had been a little tighter, it may have made for a better experience.

Rayman Raving Rabbids

Rayman Raving Rabbids is probably the most unique launch title on the Wii.

The story goes something like this: one day during a picnic with his Globox friends, Rayman and the Globoxes are kidnapped by a group of blue-eyed, bunny-like creatures called Rabbids. The Rabbids desire to take over the world and, fearing his skills, force Rayman to entertain the Rabbid masses through gladiatorial combat.

Unlike previous games in the *Rayman* series, *Raving Rabbids* pits Rayman in a series of 70 highly amusing and completely random mini-games, each using the functionality of the Wii remote and Nunchuk in unique ways.

In one hammer-throw-type game, you spin the remote around as Rayman violently twirls a cow over his head while attempting to time the release the bovine just right. Another forces you to defend your carrot juice stand from snorkel-mask wearing Rabbids by pumping the Nunchuk to spray juice into their masks, effectively drowning them. But some of the most fun comes from the pseudo-FPS games in which you ward off Rabbids by firing plungers with the remote.

All of these games are short and sweet, but the formula would get tiring if it wasn't for how hilarious the Rabbids are. The antics of these adorable, masochistic creatures never gets old, especially considering every game is named after something they can't do. For instance, the cow toss is called "Rabbids don't know what to do with cows."

Raving Rabbids exemplifies the Wii's functionality. All of the mini-games are intuitive and interesting. While some may make your arms sore, you'll be too busy enjoying yourself to care.



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