



## 'Donkey Kong' is back! Video games Atari, Sega make a comeback

Daniel Bukszan  
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- Gamers craving nostalgia are cheering the revival of classic games and the consoles they used to play them on.
- Retro fixtures like Atari and Sega are making a comeback, even as the new crop of video games are more sophisticated than ever.



*Mike Slaughter | Toronto Star | Getty Images*

Technology is bringing video game enthusiasts experiences so immersive and lifelike, it's hard to imagine how it could be enhanced any further.

Perhaps for that reason, gamers are craving a bit of nostalgia. The proliferation of retro gaming has seen a boom in classics like "Space Invaders," "Centipede" and "Frogger" — all of which are making a comeback on major consoles.

Later this month, Nintendo is expected to release the Super NES Classic Edition system, which may be a big dose of déjà vu to anyone who played 20 years ago. Meanwhile, AtGames is releasing high-definition versions of classic consoles like Atari, Sega Genesis, ColecoVision and Intellivision.

"After some generations, all forms of art and media become classics," said Jared Miracle, an anthropologist and education researcher who specializes in game studies at the Ocean University of China. "Think of 'Donkey Kong' as having status akin to 'Oliver Twist.'"

### **Gamers go for the 'authentic' over the elaborate**

It may be tempting to dismiss this as a fleeting nostalgic trend that's the product of pure nostalgia, but it appears to be more than just recapturing youth. The retro trend is estimated to be worth as much as \$200 million a year.

So what's driving it?

According to John Boyd Jr., principal at The Boyd Company, one factor driving interest in these games is their relatability. Boyd said they provide more of an individualized feeling than today's bigger and more complex games, which can feel a bit impersonal — even if they are more exciting and elaborate.

Retro games "seem more 'authentic' and 'real,' versus the big box-office-like promotion and rollout feel of Xbox and PlayStation games, like 'Grand Theft Auto,'" he told CNBC.

It's a feeling Lauren Giselle, a school teacher in Brooklyn in her 20s, is fully on board with indulging.

"New games are amazing, but the feeling of those old games is indescribable," she told CNBC. "I'm 10 years old again, sitting in my PJs, eating Golden Puffs cereal, trying to beat the boat level of 'Donkey Kong' before I run out of lives or battery life."

The move toward vintage games belies the way audiences have pointedly turned up their noses up at recent movie interpretations of '80s games, including "Transformers: The Last Knight," which bombed at the box office. "Pixels," a 2015 science-fiction action comedy starring Adam Sandler, also foundered with moviegoers and was harshly reviewed by critics.

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The resurgence of retro gaming is partially based on how they compare to newer ones. Vishal Sandhu, founder of the tech wearables company LumoSquid and a former strategic planner of immersive gaming for Intel, said many of today's video games may be too intricate for their own good.

After all, sometimes people just want to turn their brain off and smash stuff mindlessly.

"If I have half an hour to myself and would like to play some video games, I could easily play a couple levels of 'Donkey Kong' but wouldn't get anywhere more than chatting up a few shopkeepers in 'The Witcher 3,'" he said, citing a popular role-playing game developed by CD Projekt.

And evidence suggests consumers aren't totally ready to turn their backs on old classics. According to research by Bank of America, 76 percent of Americans still use old-school devices like compact discs, VCRs and vinyl records.

In that vein, the appeal of vintage games becomes apparent for those who might be overwhelmed by all the digital gadgets in our day-to-day lives.

"A lot of gamers from my generation still congregate around the Nintendo 64 to play original 'Smash Brother' or original 'Mario Kart,'" Giselle, the school teacher, said. In fact, she never stopped playing a few of her old-time favorites.

"It still means a lot to be able to dominate others on their original platforms," she added.



Daniel Bukszpan Special to CNBC.com