

# Wii bit of fun

**A** year ago in this column, I dismissed the Nintendo Wii. It wasn't out yet, but I figured there was no way it would work. Nintendo makes kids' games, my reasoning went, how would this be any different — the Wii and its funny-looking remote would be an also-ran in the track meet between PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360.

With apologies to singer Dinah Washington, what a difference a year makes.

After Thanksgiving last year, my friend Mitch asked me to come to his classroom to see something. Usually Mitch shows me extremely cool manly things — robots, hi-powered rockets or new power tools. But on this day, he showed me a white box and a controller shaped like a skinny remote control. It was a Wii, somehow finagled from his 17-year-old son, who had camped out for a few days to snag one at a local toy store.

I slid the oblong Wii remote on my hand and looked at what appeared to be a cartoon tennis match. Mitch told me to swing the remote like a tennis racket. I did ... and voila! The man on the screen turned a nice forehand. For the next 10 minutes, I couldn't stop smiling. I was hooked, sore arm and all.

I explained to anyone I saw how thoroughly cool the Wii was, how I

EVEN EBENEZER WOULD HAVE A HARD TIME  
HOLDING A FROWN WHILE PLAYING THIS VIDEO

GAME TRIUMPH **BY MARK LUCE**

had never experienced anything like it in some 30 years of playing games. I needed one. Yesterday.

Demand was beyond high. In June, after six months of searching, I finally found one. I dropped \$250 for the system and another \$50 for a game and extra controller.

Since then, our house has been a virtual training ground. We've played baseball, skeet, bowling, golf, pool and any number of midway games. We've participated in the Wii Fitness Test, where we are challenged in games for a particular age; my first pathetic attempt resulted in an age of 76, but now I am down to about 26 (20 is the best score). We've cut onions and stirred soup in a particularly fun but weird game called Cooking Mama Cook Off. We've saved Bikini Bottom with a Sponge Bob game, skated with Tony Hawk and even played old-school NES favorite Super Mario Brothers (the Wii has WiFi and a store to download older games at \$5 a pop).

Of course, I still think the Wii remote simply possesses magic powers, but really its loaded with accelerometers and



infrared detectors, which help the remote understand where it is. Thus, your physical movement — be it a roll, a toss, a pitch, a swing or just shaking — gets immediately translated into movement of your character on the screen.

While adults will flip for the Wii, the kids will, too, and there are already several Wii educational titles, such as Big Brain Academy.

I guess my small brain should learn not to judge a game system before I play it. It takes a man to admit he's wrong, but it takes a curmudgeon not to enjoy the Wii.

*Mark Luce is a freelance writer in Kansas City, Mo., where his 5-year-old son still beats him at Wii Bowling.*

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