

Xbox LIVE: Price Now Justified

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I'm a dissenter. A non-conformist, if you will. When I'm passionate about something you're not going to hear the end of it until shit gets done to my satisfaction. If you give me the right and reason to argue about something, know that I will oblige to do so. Among my favorite debates as far as gaming goes concerns Xbox Live. To me the fifty smackolash a year has been a rip-off for features as inexpensive and basic as what Microsoft has offered. There was no service that Microsoft provided that required \$50 from the average consumer in my mind, and they only have charged us because they had enough lackeys (myself included) willing to pay.

That was until yesterday.

You've heard the news by now: Xbox Live is getting a make over come Fall. Netflix support is integrated into the dashboard, giving Netflix subscribers access to over 10,000 movies and TV shows that can be streamed instantly. You and your buddies will be able to stay together with Live Parties, a feature which lets you and a group of people move from game-to-game and chat among one another with ease. Xbox Live Primetime, the modern equivalent of the family board game as our own Beau King put it so eloquently. You can now compete with others for achievements and real prizes in virtual game shows. Did I mention that you can play Primetime games and share your Netflix content with your party?

Then, of course, there's the much talked about inclusion of Avatars. Like everyone else, at first I was unimpressed and taken aback by how blatantly and shamelessly Microsoft had ripped Nintendo's Mii concept. The longer it's marinated in my mind though, the more I'm beginning to like the idea. The one issue I have with Miis is that there isn't enough customization. Once you craft your splitting image there's not much to do with or add to it to convey your style. The demo of Avatars shown at the press conference gives me the impression that developer Rare's sole purpose was to improve on the Nintendo formula. Now that I think about it, it's really not a bad idea, and it appears they have outdone the big N.

I hated paying for Xbox Live because I felt I was being forced to do so. The fact that I was paying an annual fee just so I could access the multiplayer portion of games I had already purchased frustrated me. My critics (A group so numerous it still baffles me. I can't believe how many people enjoy spending money these day.) would tell me that \$50 a year isn't a lot, then proceeding to break down the monthly cost.

Still, free is a lot less (like the competitors offer), and most people pay that 50 bucks all at once anyway. Breaking it down is as meaningless as calculating the cost of watching of a movie per minute in the theater.

This was the old Xbox Live. The new Xbox Live has me excited as I can finally pay for the service without feeling annually raped. Now it's the opposite, really. I'm now getting bang for my buck. Instead of paying for features that should have been free in the first place like friends lists (Hello there Steam.), online multiplayer (How's it going PS3?), and a video store (What's poppin' iTunes?), I'm now paying a premium for great, premium service: Netflix sharing, Live Parties, Primetime, and Avatars. You've done me right MS.

All is not perfect. I still feel that as a consumer it's weird that I have to pay for DLC and the video store content, but I'm slowly getting around. I liken Xbox Live to Costco. While you could go to Wal-Mart and pay nothing to enter the store, Costco offers enough advantages to justify that membership. Same goes for Xbox LIVE; it's now worth it. So you got me Microsoft. As much as I love letting my thoughts and complaints be known, what pleases me even more is someone solving that issue and making me shut the hell up, and you did. This is the last you'll ever hear Jaleel Boone complain about the pricing for Xbox Live.

Source: xboxfocus.com