

Digital upgrades

PlayStation2 shortage whets hardcore gamers' appetite

BY MATTHEW HANSEN

John Blanchard and Carlos Ramirez stepped up to the demonstration of Sony's brand-new PlayStation 2 at Circuit City on Tuesday afternoon, and their reactions made it clear: This wasn't your older brother's Nintendo.

"Damn," Blanchard said, staring at the computer-like graphics and DVD-quality picture of the PlayStation 2. "I've never seen anything like this."

"The demand has been exponential. It has just been huge. It's like nothing I've ever seen."

Rob Bruns
Best Buy
media specialist

Blanchard and Ramirez want one despite the \$299 price tag. Thousands of Lincoln high school and University of Nebraska-Lincoln students have reacted similarly to Sony's ad campaign, which highlights the quality of the system's picture.

But everyone will have to wait. "We're sold out right now," said Rob Bruns, a media specialist at Best Buy. "The demand has been exponential. It has just been huge. It's like nothing I've ever seen."

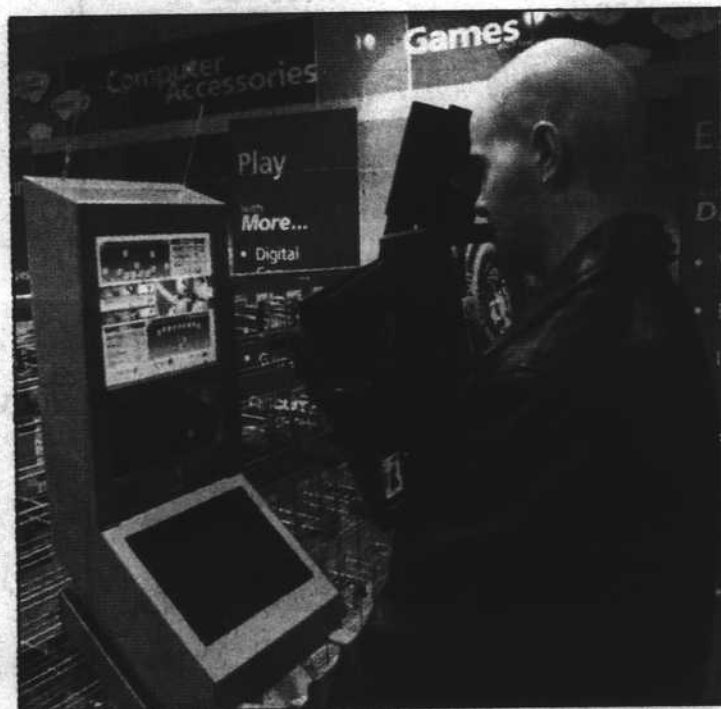
The demand is exponential. The supply isn't. Sony delivered only 500,000 systems on the first day, half its promise of 1 million.

Many who had camped out in front of department and electronics stores in Lincoln hoping to be one of the first to own a PlayStation 2 were turned away. They're still without the game system.

Sony hasn't been able to make up the difference in ensuing days. The company says the holdup is a glitch in one of PlayStation 2's parts. Others have speculated that PlayStation is trying to prolong the excitement of the release.

Either way, many are being forced to wait for what Bruns called an "incredible system," the first to include a DVD player.

What sets the PlayStation 2 apart is its picture. While Blanchard and Ramirez played "Madden 2000 Football," the action looked more like the real thing than a conventional video game. Close-up



Nate Wagner/DN

Rob Hagedorn, a Circuit City sales specialist, plays a demonstration version of the PlayStation2 game system while off duty at Circuit City, 6140 O St. The game console has been a hot item among college students with the first shipments selling out in minutes.

shots of players between snaps are especially detailed.

The system's picture quality is only going to get better, Bruns said.

"Right now, the graphics on those games are running below what DVDs are capable of," he said. "Many games that were supposed to launch with the system are being held so the writers can make them even better."

"Trust me, those games are going to be amazing."

Ramirez thinks the new game system is amazing right now.

"I couldn't have even imagined something like this five years ago," he said. "I remember when Nintendo was the thing, and this doesn't look anything like Nintendo. Makes all the rest of them look pretty stupid, too."



David Clasen/DN

Jason Moorehead, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln broadcasting graduate, scans through the chapters of a Jackie Chan movie on his DVD player Sunday night. Moorehead said he liked his DVD player because he can go through an action sequence one frame at a time.

High DVD sales might eject VCRs from market

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

It may not be long before the VCR joins the pile in the closet next to the box of Styx records and sits atop the dusty Apple II-E computer adjacent to the Atari.

The trusty VCR is meeting its match. Another three-letter acronym has captured the hearts of the people. And their pocket-books.

Digital Video Disc, or DVD, is the sexy toy that has folks turning their noses up at the VCR.

"With that clarified picture and crisp, clear sound, it is just so much better."

Don Sanders
business major

How can the VCR compete? With the DVD, "there's no rewind button," said Josh McNeal, an 18-year-old UNL freshman computer engineering major. "That makes it better right there. You can go exactly to where you want to in the movie."

It's left recent VCR buyers kicking themselves. "A year ago I bought a VCR, and it turned out to be a very bad mistake," said Ty Dilts, a 20-year-old UNL sophomore economics major from Omaha. "In one year, prices of DVDs will probably be the same as tapes are now, and DVDs' picture is so much better."

At this point, price is about the only advantage the videocassette recorders and videotapes have in their favor.

At Best Buy, 400 N. 48th St., prices of VCRs are well below the \$100 to \$700 that a DVD player costs. Tapes are also cheaper, selling for an average of \$10, while the average price of a DVD is \$20.

Yet most people are willing to fork over a few extra Ben Franklins for added quality.

"With that clarified picture and crisp, clear sound, it is just so much better," said Don Sanders, a 21-year-old business major from Papillion. "You always have to mess with the volume consistently on tape to get it right, where it's CD-quality sound with a DVD."

Sanders has a collection of 25 DVDs. He seems to be just part of a growing phenomenon.

"It's nuts how many DVDs we're selling every week," said Wade Reitz, Best Buy supervisor in the video department.

Reitz said consumers have exceeded Best Buy's expectations. DVDs are bringing in 135 percent of the weekly revenue that was expected from them. He also said that young people between the ages of 18 and 25 are the leading buyers of DVD products.

Reitz said two factors are leading to DVDs' success.

"The picture quality is the main thing that separates it from video cassette," he said. "The picture is twice as good, and then there's the convenience factor. There's no rewinding or fast forwarding with a DVD."

The DVD picture could even be enough to push all VCRs to the dumpsters, according to Sanders.

"I think it's going to make videocassettes obsolete in a couple of years," Sanders said. "Price is still an issue. If they weren't so expensive, video cassettes would become obsolete even sooner."

Reitz said the DVD could cancel the VCR, but he was doubtful.

"The reason it might not is because the DVD is not able to record, and some people still want that videocassette to record their shows," he said.

So maybe the VCR will survive the DVD ambush.

"But I wouldn't be surprised if this replay television that is coming out eventually overtook them all," Reitz said.

Replay television?



Delon Lonowski/DN