

Guitar Hero Leads Guitar Revolution

Video games have become tremendously popular in the last few years, with more and more sophisticated games emerging every year. In the last few years, there has been an emphasis on performance games, including Rock Band and Guitar Hero. These games have become so popular in fact that many clubs have even begun to sponsor special Guitar Hero nights. What exactly is a Guitar Hero night?

It is quite similar to highly popular karaoke nights at many clubs in which people get up on stage and sing along with lyrics broadcast on a large screen above the stage. The difference between karaoke nights and Guitar Hero nights is that gamers come together to battle each other using joysticks shaped like guitars and playing a variety of different songs and anthems. Guitar Hero nights have become so popular that many bars have discovered they are a great way to liven up slow nights.

One of the reasons that Guitar Hero has become so popular is that players do not actually need any particular knowledge of guitar playing in order to play and have a great time. Flashing lights indicate where the player should strike the frets in order to match the notes displayed.

Originally, the game was designed to be played in living rooms and game rooms like most other video games, however, its use and popularity has quickly eclipsed the home scene and exploded into bars and clubs. Guitar Hero has become so popular that many people are often surprised at the level of performance that is demonstrated by players.

Guitar Hero utilizes a Gibson SG Guitar Controller, which is a peripheral that is shaped like a guitar. The frets feature colored buttons along the neck while a small lever is used in place of the strum bar.

To get started, all players need to do is plug in the controller port and turn up the volume on their television. Dozens of the best known and loved anthems of rock are available including such memorable hits as *Smoke on the Water*, *Iron Man* and *I Wanna be Sedated*. Two different components comprise the game screen; a band playing for a virtual crowd and a large guitar featuring colored icons, indicating where and when the gamer should press on the guitar. Eight Guitar Heroes are available, each featuring their own playing style and look. In addition, more rockers can be unlocked throughout the game by playing well. If the gamer misses too many notes, the virtual crowd will begin to heckle the band. In the event gamer plays really badly, their virtual character will be removed from the virtual stage.

The game has become wildly popular, even among gamers who have no previous experience playing the guitar. A comprehensive tutorial comprised of

three parts and four different difficulty levels are included with the game; making it easy for gamers to quickly learn the ropes-or the frets in this case.

In fact, once they have begun to play Guitar Hero and have amassed some experience and skill, many gamers have discovered an interest in playing a real guitar. Interest in moving on from virtual guitars to real guitars has definitely been on the rise since Guitar Hero exploded onto the game scene.

This has certainly been good news for the previously declining guitar industry. According to industry statistics, the guitar had become far less popular as a musical instrument compared to the 1960s when it had reached its peak. This is hardly surprising considering the number of entertainment options available to today's generation including television, Internet and games like Wii. As schools flounder for budgets to cover the necessities, music education is often one of the first extracurricular programs to be scrapped.

Guitar Hero, however, has provided an easy, fun and entertaining way for kids to learn how to play the guitar. In fact, kids are flocking to learn how to play the guitar for real at a rate that has been unprecedented in the last forty years.

While there has been concern in the music industry regarding the effect of a game on the development of musical abilities, when interviewed music teachers have had nothing but positive things to say about the game and its influence on the guitar world. While the guitar industry has struggled in the last few decades, Guitar Hero has suddenly landed on the scene and almost overnight has introduced millions of adolescents and young people to the idea of playing a real musical instrument. While kids are definitely having fun playing the game, they are also learning the skills they need to play for real as well as developing essential confidence.

Of course, the original purpose of Guitar Hero was not really instruction and yet that is exactly what it provides. It also provides a creative way around one of the most common problems in learning to play the guitar, or any musical instrument for that matter. When picking up a guitar or any musical instrument for the first time, the best you can do is pick out a few chords. Many young people give up within the first few lessons because the gulf between what they want to do and what they are able to do just seems to be too wide to bridge at that point.

This is not a problem with Guitar Hero as the game shows players exactly when and where they need to press on the frets to play not only real songs; but also play highly popular rock songs. After playing the game for just a short while, many people become so 'hooked' on the idea of playing a guitar they cannot wait to begin playing the real instrument. Overall, the game provides the two most important fundamentals to learning how to play the guitar: independent hand usage mastery and sensitivity to rhythm. Guitar instructors around the country are reporting a rise in interest in learning how to play the guitar, especially among

young people. In fact, teachers commonly report that kids who have experience playing Guitar Hero are able to learn how to play the real deal at a rate that is at least two times faster than other beginners. Specifically, teachers have noted an improvement in finger agility and an improved understanding of rhythm among Guitar Hero students than other students with no prior experience.