

# The PlayStation 2 Is Dead, Long Live The PlayStation 2



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by Doc Watson ([http://www.gamersftw.co.uk/author/lm\\_watson/](http://www.gamersftw.co.uk/author/lm_watson/)) on April 2, 2016



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In 2001, I woke up in my little home in New Plymouth, New Zealand to find a gigantic yellow box waiting for me for my birthday. I knew immediately what it was: my first ever home console, the PlayStation 2. Being nine, this was amazing: I only knew one other person on my street that had the console, and it looked better than any other console that had come before it. The memories I had with my humble PS2 were astounding. *Ratchet And Clank*, *Jak And Daxter*, *Timesplitters 2*, *Need For Speed Underground 2*, *Maximo* – these are the games of my childhood, and what made me the type of play I am today. When I heard that the PS2 was being discontinued in 2013, I was devastated, but understanding. Time has a way of moving on, and the seventh generation were leaving the little console in the dust. And yet, a few days ago, we finally got the death keel of the console: the last service available on the console, *Final Fantasy XI*, finally closed its doors and I was floored that a) it was just as shocking the second time, and b) that the stubborn little machine was still chugging along,

The legacy of the PlayStation 2 is astonishing: the console lasted through two console generations, spanned sixteen years of gaming history, was home to over 10,000 different titles, has sold the most units of any console ever made at a whopping 155 million units worldwide, sold over 1.5 billion units of software and launched the legacies of some of the most influential games ever made, including *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, *God Of War*, *Metal Gear Solid 3* and the previously mentioned *Ratchet And Clank* and *Jak And Daxter*. It is a console that has spanned generations, exceeded every expectation and broken every barrier. A console like this only comes around once in a blue moon, but it begs the question: what was it that made the black box so good? Can the developers and publishers of today take some notes from the legacy of the PlayStation 2?

For starters, it offered everything that the audience could ever want, right off the bat. The initial apprehension was from those who owned the PSX, and were not 100% on coming over to a new console and starting their collection all over again. "Backwards compatibility, you say? Not a problem", Sony declared, stroking its chin and making the adjustments. On top of that, the PS2 retailed at the same cost as most DVD players at the time, while still housing a DVD player. What people were essentially buying was a gateway into these new fangled DVDs as well as getting a free video game console. It was a win-win, and to people that owned the PSX beforehand, it was only ever going to be a step up from its predecessor. On top of that, when the PlayStation 3 came out in 2006, you would think that they would sweep the old rust bucket off to the side. What they did instead was slash the price and continue its growth in tandem with its new offering.

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It also boasted such a step forward in graphical fidelity from its older brother, showing off its glorious bits as the console wars turned towards shows of graphical fidelity. With this flexing contest in mind, the PlayStation 2 should never have lasted as long as it did. The PlayStation 2 was outclassed in both online capacity, technical grunt and established community. The Xbox burst onto the scene with better looking games, online functionality and that new *Halo* game the kinds kept going on about. Nintendo's GameCube, by its token, had video game royalty sitting in its pocket. *Mario*, *Zelda*, *Super Smash Bros* and the rise of *Pikman* – titles that were guaranteed to sell, and sell they did. Yet not only did the PlayStation 2 outlast all of them by several years, it sold more than all of its sixth generation competitors combined.

So what did the PS2 have that they didn't? Diversity. In a generation where publisher divergence was becoming the norm, and the concept of cross-platform release was only just beginning, Sony threw a developer kit at everyone with a pulse, and allowed games with all manner of experimental gameplay mechanics. Some of these just happened to be best sellers that Sony took a punt on, *Shadow Of The Colossus* and *Guitar Hero* being two major examples. The PlayStation 2 could easily afford to take the chances that publishers of today would balk at because they

were comfortable with their console sales. Selling as well as it did, the console was everywhere. You couldn't throw a stick in the room of fifteen year old kid back in the early 2000s and not hit a PS2, so some small portion of the player base was going to listen to your crazy idea.

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Not only that, but that exact same brick of a console you bought back in 2000 would not die. I had to take one apart a few days ago to clean some dust out of it and the thing is built like a Soviet tank. No wonder that the hardware revisions of the slim PS2 made it the same size as the original Xbox controller – and no, that size comparison is no exaggeration (<http://static.giantbomb.com/uploads/original/18/187968/2576717-9694816954-23828.jpg>). The PS2 was built to last, and while the Xbox gathered dust and the GameCube acted as the most colorful paperweight imaginable, the PS2 was still churning out the occasional title and outselling some next generation consoles even up until the shutting down of its production in 2013. Even then, such was the endurance and dedication to the console that the very last game to be released for it – *Final Fantasy XI: Seekers of Adoulin* – was being played right up until Sony pulled the plug on their servers.

Availability, adaptability and abundance: they were what made the PlayStation 2 great. Great enough to wipe the floor with its competitors, both handheld and console, and great enough to go toe to toe with technically superior consoles right up until near the very end of the following console generation. But with all of this comes a sense of sadness. The PlayStation 2 was the last of the consoles that kicked off the golden age of console gaming that we are still experiencing to this very day, and many innovations would not have been possible without their first appearances on the PlayStation 2. It simply goes to show that you don't need to be the biggest, the fastest, the cheapest, the most expensive or the best looking to remain relevant. You simply need to do the simple things right. There is no doubt in anybody's minds that this dear old black box did everything so, so right.

Rest in peace, PlayStation 2. You won't be forgotten anytime soon.