

## Will Your MOBA go Mobile?

Though the death knell for PC gaming has been rung many times before, there's no doubt that mobile platforms are changing at least some aspects of how we play games. PC gaming actually grew last year to an estimated \$18 billion in revenue, fueled by growth in the free-to-play sector, as well as regions like China. Yet mobile grew too. There are also many strategy games on mobile markets, and that now includes a huge franchise like Total War, which has launched its own foray into the mobile market from the ground up. Other games like Anomaly: Warzone Earth, Civilization Revolution, and Hero Academy have started on or quickly been ported to mobile. InnoGames, which specializes in browser-based titles, has just brought its most popular game, Tribal Wars, to Android after a successful experience releasing it on iOS late last year.

The obvious big hitters and the AAA games aren't quite there embracing mobile just yet, but how long might it be before they do? MOBAs seem like they'd be playable well on a tablet. Some predict that mobile will start to truly impact the PC gaming world in a couple of years. It's easy to scoff, since it's highly unlikely that PC gaming will die. After all, people have been singing that tune for a long time, but there might be a bit of truth to the assessment.

PC gaming was there first, and robustly shared the market with consoles, even as those consoles became better and better and even started being multitaskers. This helped to put them into many more homes, and so the days of the PS2 and Xbox were monster years. One thing that consoles, which are small, compact PCs anyway, have that is appealing to developers and many consumers is a consistent hardware profile. Your Xbox is the same as my Xbox. Well, this is also one reason many developers like to work with Apple's devices. There's a lot of consistency across the iPhone and iPad that enables a developer to only have to invest so much into the process. Just like PCs, Android models are numerous and the profiles differ. It's one limitation to Android that I've personally found a little annoying, since some games I want to play either aren't available for the platform or don't pass a compatibility check with my particular phone model. So there are still a few hurdles similar to the PC market at work here.

Bringing this conversation back to strategy games, the variety available has really grown to include many quality titles. The RTS and turn-based strategy games are at home on mobile devices due to their pacing, so it's a natural fit. This might mean a greater impact on the strategy genre than others if mobile does erode some of the PC market. Even eSports is going mobile. The World Cyber Games dropped all PC games from competition and became a mobile-only event, while MLG and Sony just signed a deal to create a mobile eSports platform. It's clear that the mobile platform is going to be around for some time.

The casual player is a huge part of this. You probably know people who play stuff like Angry Birds but little else. Will they suddenly convert over to StarCraft mobile? Probably not, but it doesn't quite matter yet. A lot of strategy gamers are live and die by the PC gamers too, however, so while games

in the genre translate well in current examples, it seems many of us complement our console and PC habits with mobile gaming.

Mobile apps are one of the latest successes though, tying the player to the game when not even at a PC. We previewed the recent app release for *Dungeon Overlord* and noted that the app kept dedicated players connected to the game. But how long until the game itself is what's being played on the go? Maybe not long.

Nvidia released a prediction in April that Xbox 360 quality GPU will be available on mobile devices by 2014. So it seems that the graphics will be there. Will the players?

As habits shift somewhat, I do think we'll be seeing a MOBA on mobile devices. In fact, I think one of the major ones will announce such multiplatform play in the future. I might be wrong, but all the signs point to a quality experience, as well as a graphically beautiful one in just a year or two, so why not? Paging Riot Games, perhaps? The ability to play anywhere reflects our increasingly connected culture, and it's a wise move to take advantage of that. Using MOBAs was just one example, but as a growing and popular subgenre, it's fair game. The current limiting factors would seem to be touch controls and the need for a guaranteed stable connection. So, ultimately, it's a just matter of when, not if.