Apple has a Proton-like Game Porting Toolkit for getting Windows games on Mac

Enlarge / Apple’s demonstration of loading and inspecting the performance of *The Medium* on a Mac.

reader comments

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There was so much packed into Apple’s WWDC presentation Monday that it’s hard to believe there are still major pieces of it left to uncover. And yet, as part of a developer presentation, Apple has quietly announced what could be major news for PC games on Mac hardware—its own SteamOS-like Windows compatibility initiative, but for millions of Apple Silicon Macs instead of Steam Decks.

“Bring your game to Mac” is laid out over three videos covering a game controller guide, a Game Porting Toolkit (Apple developers only), and a converter for making games’ shaders work with Apple’s Metal hardware acceleration API. Apple claims you “have everything you need to deliver an amazing gaming experience” with Apple-Silicon-based Macs and that its toolkit provides “an emulation environment to run your existing, unmodified Windows game.”

“It doesn’t take months to get a sense of how your game looks, sounds, and plays,” Aiswariya Sreenivassan, technical project manager at Apple, says in the video’s introduction. “You see your game’s potential right away.”

At the core of Apple's Game Porting Toolkit is CodeWeavers' open source code for CrossOver. CodeWeavers writes on its site that the company is "ecstatic" that Apple "is recognizing that Wine is a fantastic solution for running Windows games on MacOS." CodeWeavers "did not work with Apple on this tool, but we would be delighted to work with any game developers" who want to work with the company's PortJump team to refine their Windows-to-Mac translation.

That might be the best stance CodeWeavers has available, as just last week, the company announced its own DirectX-to-Metal, Windows-games-to-Mac translation tool coming in CrossOver Mac version 23 this summer. CodeWeavers' own post on its API ambitions noted that getting *Diablo II Resurrected* running on an Apple M2 chip required fixing "a multitude of bugs" and that it anticipated that kind of scenario for other Win-to-Mac games. It remains to be seen how Apple's implementation of CrossOver code differs in handling and translation.

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Apple's demonstration shows a relatively new and modern game, *The Medium*, being ported from Windows to Mac Metal. API calls to Windows DirectX 12 are translated to Metal, and input, audio, network, file, and other system calls are brought to their macOS counterparts. As spotted by The Verge, Reddit tinkerers have already loaded up *Cyberpunk 2077* and *Diablo IV* on Apple hardware, hours after Apple's Toolkit arrived. You can see how quickly a Windows game can be made to work on a Mac—and you can see their lukewarm-honey-in-a-jar speed.

Apple's chips can do some amazing things, but compared to the latest Intel and AMD chips doing gaming-related work, they are far more power efficient than performant. As detailed in our review of the M2-Pro-powered Mac Mini, M-series chips are optimized or efficiency rather than peak performance, whether they're in a fanless laptop or a high-end desktop. Next to similar x86 chips, their performance is "fine." While it's

hard to make direct comparisons given all the variables and architectures at play, you might compare Apple's graphics performance to a modern integrated Ryzen GPU, at least for the baseline M1 and M2 chips. Apple's Pro, Max, and Ultra chips will be faster, but are only used in more expensive Macs.

Even that could prove to be an amazing boon for gamers looking for something—*anything*—like an active games ecosystem on their Mac. Valve's Steam Deck is a miracle of Linux-powered compatibility, even if for most newer games, it must run them at lower resolutions, frame rates, and graphics settings. Many Deck fans are more than willing to trade ray-tracing and Ultra settings for the convenience of gaming where they like. Apple's toolkit, and CodeWeavers' own work, suggests Mac owners may get to indulge in that kind of trade-off quite soon.

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