

MAME for the masses? “Legends” arcade cabinet could thread that needle

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- I’m told this cabinet art isn’t final, but it gives some idea of what the cabinet might look like.
- You get a bit better view of the crowded control panel from this angle.
- The Legends Ultimate cabinet will fit right in to your stark white, lightly furnished bedroom
- This front-end mockup looks pretty bare bones at the moment.

For gamers of a certain age, a real, playable arcade cabinet is one of the ultimate nostalgic conversation pieces/status symbols that you can have in your home. AtGames’ newly announced Legends Ultimate cabinet—which promises hundreds of built-in games and more available via download—sounds like it could be the ideal blend of authenticity, expandability, affordability, and convenience for that specific breed of nostalgic arcade fan.

The Legends Ultimate is far from the first “multicade” cabinet to hit the market or aim for home users. But this “all-in-one” cabinet, with pre-orders planned to start in July, differentiates itself in part with a console-level suggested

retail price: \$599 for a the full-sized 66" cabinet, or \$399 for a "compact" 44" tall version. That's a huge step down in cost from existing options that easily cost thousands of dollars for a full-sized upright cabinet.

At its three-digit MSRP, the Legends cabinet is more comparable to the Arcade1UP line, which launched last year as a variety of 3/4 scale arcade reproductions in the \$300 to \$400 range. But each of those miniature cabinets only contains three to 12 built-in titles, limited control options, and no official options for expanding the lineup (aside from buying an entirely new cabinet).

The Legends Ultimate press release, on the other hand, promises "200 to 400" included games, and it shows "350 games" on cabinet art provided by the company. That line-up will include at least a few well-known titles (see list below) from companies including Atari, ColecoVision, Data East, Disney, Jaleco, and The Tetris Company, as announced so far. AtGames has worked with companies like Activision, Bandai Namco, Konami, and Taito on past products, so it's not unreasonable to expect some of their classic games might be announced in the future.

And with two sets of joysticks and buttons, a trackball, and two spinners, the standard Legends Ultimate cabinet should be able to play most classic arcade games without much problem (though the current spinner placement does look rather uncomfortable). The press release also promises Bluetooth compatibility and a coming light gun expansion, which will probably need some custom hardware to work with an LCD screen.

But the most interesting feature of the Legends Ultimate might be its built-in Wi-Fi hardware, which connects to a proprietary system being called ArcadeNet. Besides offering features like leaderboards, tournaments, network play, and "free DLC" (huh?) that system promises to also let players expand their libraries with additional game downloads or

subscriptions. AtGames is also promising “cloud game streaming” and “BYOG” functionality that lets players “access PC libraries,” but details on this are pretty scant.

Right now, I can almost hear scores of a certain breed of commenter typing out that this kind of machine is pointless when you can just build your own MAME cabinet and load it with thousands of ROM files yourself. But even with pre-cut parts and pre-compiled emulators, building your own cabinet from scratch requires a level of tinkering that not every nostalgic gamer has the time or inclination for. The Legends Ultimate could provide a simple, cheap, no-nonsense entry point for retro arcade fans that just want to play a wide selection of classics in their original form-factor without taking on a do-it-yourself project (plus the officially licensed games are actually legal and provide money to the rights-holders, for those who care about such things).

AtGames doesn’t exactly have the best reputation in the retro games community—its plug-and-play consoles tend to have a bit of a slapdash quality to them. And there are still a lot of unanswered questions regarding the Legends Ultimate’s build quality, emulation, game expansion costs, and more that we hope to get answered at an E3 demo next month.

For now, though, we’re at least intrigued by what seems like an ambitious effort to build an all-in-one, expandable retro gaming cabinet that could thread the needle between authenticity and affordability. Honestly, we’re surprised no one has tried something similar before now.

Some of the games revealed for the Arcade Legends cabinet in press materials so far include:

- *Asteroids*
- *Astyanax*
- *Bad Dudes vs. Dragon Ninja*
- *BurgerTime*

- *Burnin' Rubber*
- *Centipede*
- *City Connection*
- *Fix-It Felix Jr.*
- *Millipede*
- *Missile Command*
- *Joe & Mac*
- *Pong*
- *Pro Soccer*
- *Side Pocket*
- *Star Wars*
- *Tetris*
- *TRON*

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