# The Stream Deck mastered the LCD key by making it peripheral

Like many great products, the Elgato Stream Deck wasn't *exactly* a new idea.

When the very first one debuted six years ago this month, we instantly compared it to Art Lebedev's legendary Optimus Maximus keyboard, which promised an array of swirling OLED screens under your fingertips an entire decade earlier. Razer, too, pioneered LCD keys before their time, tacking them onto a keyboard and the company's very first Blade laptop.

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In today's digital age, it sometimes feels like hardware has taken a back seat to the software that drives our devices. Button of the Month is a monthly column that explores the physical pieces of our phones, tablets, and controllers we interact with every day.

But today, we're celebrating the simple genius of Elgato — the company that finally turned them into a viable product by making them relatively cheap, comfy, and most importantly: *peripheral*.

Art Lebedev and Razer both believed we wanted a new keyboard that morphs, where our primary computing input mechanism should be replaced with one that intelligently adapts to our needs.

Even today, the idea feels grand: "Why would Photoshop and

*Quake* present you with the same boring keyboard?” you can practically hear Art Lebedev’s concept images ask.

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Razer, perhaps inspired by that *Quake* keyboard layout, asked a follow-on question in 2011: “If your keys can morph, maybe you don’t need so many of them to play PC games on the go?” The result was the Razer Switchblade, a 7-inch concept handheld gaming PC prototype created through a partnership with Intel.

Razer didn’t sell that one, though. The final “Razer Switchblade” turned out to be far less exciting at the time: ten LCD keys and a touchscreen trackpad embedded into a regular keyboard. You can almost see a Stream Deck if you look closely — but still integrated, not yet *peripheral*.

That’s why the idea didn’t stick. Razer thought users would buy into a pricey keyboard ($250) or laptop ($2000+), give up the familiarity of the input devices they already owned, and trust that game developers would support its new Switchblade UI. It also didn’t help that the keys felt brutal — stiff, flat and brittle.

The Elgato Stream Deck asked for none of those tradeoffs.

*a:hover]:text-black [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black dark:[&>a:hover]:text-gray-e9 dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-gray-63 [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-13 dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63″>The buttons on an Elgato Stream Deck, in profile.*