The Switch 2's promising start hides an uncertain future

With the Switch 2 launch days away, analysts and consumers are watching to see how well Nintendo can follow-up the best selling home console in its history. Judging from the pain of trying to secure a Switch 2 pre-order, it seems like Nintendo has nothing to worry about — at least at launch.

Down the line, however, concerns about tariffs, a steadily rising cost of living, and a saturated market might cast a shadow on the Switch 2. *The Verge* talked to analysts, journalists, and normal video game playing people to put the Switch 2 launch in perspective. The key takeaway? While the console will assuredly have another blockbuster debut, its future looks much less certain.

The Wii U gets brought up a lot in the conversation surrounding the Switch 2, as it's the most famous example of a Nintendo failure. "The Wii U, with its confusing controller-screen gimmick, sluggish user interface, and lack of a great *Custom Robo* game, was one of Nintendo's worst flops," *GameFile* author Stephen Totilo explained in an email to *The Verge*.

It sold less than 14 million units, a dramatic drop from the Wii, which sold over 100 million. And while Nintendo expects to sell one million more Switch 2 units in its first year than the Wii U sold in its life, that's not necessarily indicative of long-term success. "The Wii U nevertheless sold out at launch back in November 2012," Totilo said, "pulling in sales that reportedly topped the US launch sales of the Xbox 360 and PS3."



The OLED version of the original Nintendo Switch.
Photo by Cameron Faulkner / The Verge

When looking at launch sales projections and predictions, Mat Piscatella, video game analyst for Circana, warned that what a console does during its launch period is no indication of what it'll do overall.

"Sales around the launch period are more reflection of available supply than anything," Piscatella said. Another, more important factor for a console launch is the audience. "With anything regarding gaming right now, we have to separate the enthusiast market from the mass market, because they're behaving very differently," Piscatella added.

According to Piscatella, it's the enthusiasts driving most of the Switch 2 hype we're seeing, particularly since the last major console launches — the PS5 and Xbox Series X/S — happened five years ago. "We haven't had new hardware designed for the masses in a long time," he said. "So we have a big pent up demand just for something new."

We’re seeing part of that demand satisfied by the Switch 2 pre-order frenzy. The day pre-orders opened in the US (after a few weeks’ delay because of President Donald Trump’s tariff chicanery) they sold out within hours. GameStop held in-store pre order events that saw people lining up outside storefronts for hours to secure one.

But what will really determine the success of the console is how the bigger, mass market reacts, the same one that made devices like the Wii and original Switch such hits. Piscatella says this group is biding its time right now, “leaning into free-to-play and the content they already have.”

It’s a tricky time for the industry. New blockbuster titles are getting ever more expensive to make. Consumers, in turn, are buying fewer of them in favor of spending their time and money in established games, all while persistent layoffs three years running are making it harder for new games to come out on time. Add that to 2025’s unique and volatile US tariff situation and the associated price increases, and now is one *hell* of a time to launch a video game console.

“A games console is for a lot of people […] an unaffordable luxury, especially for families,” said Keza MacDonald, video game editor at *The Guardian* and author of a forthcoming book about Nintendo’s history. MacDonald believes that most people who want a Switch 2 will have already pre-ordered one and that Nintendo’s real work will be to convince everyone else they want one too — a job the company doesn’t seem to be doing that well.



The Nintendo Switch Lite.
Photo by Amelia Holowaty Krales / The Verge

Silvie Krekow, a gamer who works at Vox Media as a creative director, says she knows “almost nothing” about the Switch 2. She doesn’t frequent gaming websites or consume gaming media, but she noted it was odd that “a 33-year-old gamer with disposable income who owns a Switch, PS4, and Xbox One” didn’t casually come across at least *some* Switch 2 information.

Other colleagues and self-described “gaming casuals” I spoke to expressed similar sentiments. According to MacDonald, Nintendo is handling this launch period very conservatively. “It’s like, ‘We know everyone’s going to buy this anyway. We don’t have to sell you on it,’” she said. “But I’m not sure if that’s true.”

At the Switch 2 Direct in April, Nintendo showed off a console with some slight quality-of-life and performance upgrades. That may work for the enthusiasts — they get more of what they already liked about the original. But without something more

to entice consumers beyond the diehards, the Switch 2 may struggle to find its audience.

“As for the [Switch 2 features] I’m not particularly excited,” said Kushal Raval, an operations manager at Vox Media. “The rolling controller sounds interesting, but the voice chat feature seems a bit pointless.”

Kushal owns a Switch, which he said didn’t run games like *Fortnite* as well as he wanted. And while the Switch 2’s technical upgrades will likely improve this, Kushal said, “With a $450–$500 price tag, I’m leaning much more toward getting a Steam Deck.”

The Switch 2 also has to compete against people content with its predecessor. “I have a Switch Lite that I bought during the pandemic,” said Jackie Noack, a video producer at Vox Media. “My husband has the Switch 1, and I don’t think we use them quite enough to justify replacing them.” For Noack, the console’s price is also a major factor. “$500 does seem steep to me!”

The Switch 2 will not be a dud like the Wii U, but it likely will not reach the heights of the original Switch. The price and lack of defining new features are two reasons, but perhaps the biggest is that the circumstances that fostered the OG Switch’s success were incredibly unique.

“The Switch really picked up during the pandemic with *Animal Crossing*. That was an enormous hit,” MacDonald said. “And obviously that was such a unique combination of circumstances, I’m not sure that could happen again.” Piscatella agrees: “The Switch is an outlier success. I think [the Switch 2] is unlikely to do Switch numbers in the long term.”

The lead up to the launch of the Nintendo Switch 2 has been filled with so much built-up pressure from the anticipation of hungry gamers eager for any news, which was exacerbated by prolific leaks and Nintendo’s typical propensity for silence.

With the console’s official reveal and the enthusiastic response from dedicated fans, that pressure could not be higher — and with launch coming next week, the release valve is finally about to open.

“Simply because of the logo on the box, it’s safe to say that the Switch 2 is too Nintendo to fail,” said Totilo. “At least in the early going.”

https://www.theverge.com/games/677301/the-switch-2s-promising-start-hides-an-uncertain-future