What is Mixer, Ninja's new exclusive streaming home?

Tyler "Ninja" Blevins said goodbye to Twitch today, announcing that he is moving exclusively to the Microsoft-owned streaming platform Mixer. But what, exactly, is Mixer?

It's not a household name in the same way that Twitch and YouTube are, and its user base is much smaller than the aforementioned sites. Mixer, which was originally called Beam, was acquired by Microsoft in 2016, and it has existed as a potential competitor to Twitch and YouTube Gaming ever since. Like Twitch, it's mostly used for gaming, and it plays host to both amateur streamers who just want to test the waters as well as professional e-sports players and verified content creators. Its biggest draw is being integrated with Xbox One and Windows 10 dashboards, making it easier for people on those platforms to stream.

Mixer also boasts monetization options for streamers similar to Twitch. There are channel subscriptions (that are slightly higher priced at $7.99, compared to Twitch's $4.99), and a tipping-like tool called Embers. Embers are similar to Twitch's Bits, which allow fans to essentially purchase digital emotes that they can then donate to their favorite streamers. Mixer also uses a site-wide currency called Sparks. Essentially, people passively earn digital points just by watching streams. Those Sparks points are then transferred to a streamer, and, once they hit a certain threshold, they can turn that into actual revenue. Mixer currently doesn't have third-party advertising on the platform, but streamers can earn "synthesized ad revenue" through display ads on their page.

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Not everyone who joins Mixer can start earning revenue as a partner, though. Mixer’s rules state that a streamer must have an account for at least two months. Once that milestone is reached, they must maintain at least 2,000 followers and stream for at least 12 days every month for a minimum of 25 accrued hours to start earning revenue. That’s similar to what Twitch has now. Although there are quite a few differences between Twitch and Mixer, there are some major advantages to the platform — especially for a streamer like Blevins.

There are about 69,000 streamers on Mixer compared to the more than 1.5 million on Twitch, according to a report from analytics firm Streamlabs earlier this year. While Twitch is still the biggest streaming platform for gaming, Microsoft has made strides with Mixer: the platform’s concurrent viewer count increased by 195 percent in 2018, according to Streamlabs.

All of these factors make Mixer a much more appealing place for Blevins to stream. Twitch has become oversaturated with streamers all vying for people’s attention, jumping onto popular games like *Fortnite* and *Apex Legends* as a way to propel their careers forward. Even superstars in the industry feel like they can’t take any time off because of the constant competition. Blevins deciding to move over to Mixer exclusively — a move that many streamers and insiders have wagered netted him a seven-figure deal — could be the start of more people experimenting with Mixer.

“Given the current frustrations part of the Twitch community has now, it could be the beginning of migration to or at least dabbling with Mixer,” longtime YouTube commentator Philip DeFranco tweeted. “There is risk outside of the what I imagine has to be just crazy money they gave him to switch, but I think the possible reward for everyone involved is way way, way higher.”

Certain streamers can make the move to Mixer and not have to worry about losing a big potential audience for people who just visit Twitch and stumble upon a stream. Blevins is one of them. His subscriber growth on Mixer is already skyrocketing, and his chat is incredibly active – even though he hasn't started streaming yet. He's also someone who can secure a major financial deal that allows him to not have to worry about these types of metrics. One of Blevins' closest friends, fellow streamer Timothy "TimTheTatman" Betar, spoke about Blevins' move to Mixer during a stream on Twitch today. Betar suggested that Blevins can start to take vacations now and not worry about losing subscribers or money.

It's been a concern for a while now, and Blevins is likely burned out. He told *The New York Times* in December 2018 that the longest vacation he ever took was his honeymoon – six days in total – and called it "devastating," adding that it was "a calculated risk." He added that even taking a couple of hours to talk to the *Times* or even just relax on his couch means losing 200–300 subscribers each hour. Prior to that interview, Blevins broke down his intense streaming schedule on the *H3H3* podcast.

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"The schedule is: 9:30 is when I start in the morning and then I play until 4, so that's like six, six-and-a-half hours," Blevins said. "Then I'll take a nice three- to four-hour break with the wife, the dogs, or family – we have like family nights, too – and then come back on around 7 o'clock central until like 2, 3 in the morning. The minimum is 12 hours a day, and then I'll sleep for less than six or seven hours."

It's not like Blevins can just stop streaming, nor does he want to. His announcement video about moving to Mixer included a message about returning to the good old days of streaming, back before he was Twitch's number one superstar. What Mixer does give him, however, is a potentially extremely lucrative

deal to not have to worry as much. It also gives him less competition on a platform that isn’t as saturated. Mixer isn’t for everyone right now. Twitch and YouTube still offer larger audiences and better monetization options for creators. But it has been identified as a less toxic space, and it gives Blevins the opportunity to establish himself on another platform.

Maybe he’ll team up with Drake again — but this time, it’ll be on Mixer.

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