

2 August 2008

By: Calin Ciabai, Games Editor

Ahoy, matey!
devinjohnston

[Weekend Reading: Fighting Against Piracy](#)

Are PC game sales really affected that much by pirates or game developers only lost their interest?

Earlier today I wrote a report about how piracy hampered the PC sales of [Devil May Cry 4](#) and that was the moment when I realized that this is probably the most debated topic when it comes to PC gaming: piracy. According to game developers, that's the main reason behind their departure from the old PC systems to consoles. And I must admit that, just like everybody else on this planet, I started to ask myself why the companies can't do anything on the matter. Nintendo is one of the latest firms which have been trying to do something about pirates by starting the war against [R4 chip](#) manufacturers in what is, probably, the biggest mission of the kind. However, this is not a typical approach to the situation, since usually game developers strive to create codes which cannot be cracked rather than try to stop the process entirely. On the other hand, the R4 chip only affects Nintendo DS consoles and it is, after all, a piece of hardware that should not (according to the suing companies) be produced anymore. So, what happens to PC games? Are indeed giants like Electronic Arts, Activision and all the other developers and publishers unable to create a code which can't be hacked? Usually, games hit torrent sites almost instantly, on the same day as the official release. This probably means that the protection codes were very weak, right? Then, they should improve them, change them, keep trying (without harming the gamer's experience, of course) until they hit the jackpot. For example, BioWare managed to give hackers serious headaches with their Mass Effect, which is still not completely cracked, according to Capcom's VP of strategic planning, Christian Svensson. Alone in the Dark is another game which was not cracked; this proves that, one way or another, piracy can be stopped or, at least, slowed down quite a bit. So, are game developers and publishers really doing their best to stop piracy? They say that they lose tons of money but, on the other hand, they usually gain enough exposure with the pirated products - enough to make loyal fans buy their products or even get new consumers. Because that's my personal opinion: if you like a product, you pay for it, out of respect for the work which was invested in creating that specific product, to be sure that similar ones will be created in the future, too (of course, by no means I'm saying that if you dislike a product or you don't know anything about it, you should use a pirated copy!). Also, if piracy is such a huge problem, game developers and publishers should use digital distribution methods only. They would indeed have less potential buyers - but it would be a stronger base, ready to pay for the product because they would have no other means of getting it. There is really no point in having more potential buyers, but a lower purchase rate, just for the sake of it. Probably it is just easier to say that PC games are dying because of piracy - games developed for consoles are sold at higher prices, they can have pay for downloadable content packs and so on, finally bringing more money to the developers. And that's what matters the most in such cases. Because it's a sure thing: if there were no profits from PC gaming (because of high piracy OR other reasons), nobody would develop games for them. Yet again, Electronic Arts reported that income from PC software sales held the second place in their yearly income report (yes, right in front of Xbox 360s and Wiis).