

# 'Call of Duty', the stalwart video game veteran, turns 20

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The 'Call of Duty' video game franchise has brought in more than \$30 billion since it was launched 20 years ago, becoming synonymous with the military shooter genre.

James Spratt recalls dashing home from school as a teenager to band together online with friends to do battle in "Call of Duty", the global

video game juggernaut that never gets old.

The franchise deployed by Activision Blizzard 20 years ago helped define the military shooter game genre, winning millions of fans and raking more than \$30 billion.

And Spratt, to the amazement of his dad, now makes a living sharing his "CoD" sniper skills on his YouTube channel from his home in Britain.

"At school, we were racing home basically to get a squad of six together because if you missed out on being with your friends, you were playing by yourself," said Spratt, who recently turned 30 years old.

"There was something about that game that just kept me coming back every year; I was hooked."

Activision published the original "Call of Duty" created by Infinity Ward studio in October of 2003 and has released installments at an annual cadence that continues with the arrival of "Modern Warfare 3" on November 10.

The yearly release cycle is "almost this ingrained holiday" and became a "secret sauce" for the franchise, "Call of Duty" general manager Johanna Faries told AFP.

"Players almost set their watch to when a new 'Call of Duty' is coming to the forefront," Faries said.

Wedbush entertainment software analyst Michael Pachter described the decision to create annual installments of the game as the "biggest driver" behind its success, combined with varying content between World War II, [modern warfare](#), and "black ops" secret missions.

## All the talk

Another driver of success for the franchise was continually refining an online, multi-player aspect that won over players like young Spratt and his friends who turned it into group fun.

"It wasn't just the game itself, but it's what 'Call of Duty' represented—each year you had a massive community that was continuing to grow," Spratt said.

"You could talk about it with someone down in the garage or down at the shop or people online—everyone just seemed to know what 'Call of Duty' was."

Spratt said his partner has nieces and nephews playing the game, along with her brother-in-law.

"I feel like it was a teenager thing when I started, but now you've got the old gamers and the new gamers," Spratt said.

"It's all ages now."

## Guns and Goosebumps

A Call of Duty forum at Reddit has 1.2 million members, bonding over memories of favorite moments in past installments and opinions on the newest version, which some were able to access early.

"I will always get goosebumps whenever I hit the 'Of their own accord' mission in Modern Warfare 2," wrote a forum member self-described as someone in their 20s who spends 90 percent of their free time playing video games.

"You go from absolutely decimating a Gulag with the navy, to an absolute hellscape and the music perfectly sets the tone."

After debuting as a relatively small game for personal computers, the franchise catapulted with the launch of "Call of Duty 2" that came out with the Microsoft Xbox 360 consoles in 2005, according to Circana video game analyst Mat Piscatella.

More than 70 percent of people who bought an Xbox 360 in the weeks after its launch also bought "Call of Duty," said Piscatella.

Two years later, "Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare" became a an even greater blockbuster for the franchise due to improvements to multi-player capabilities, according to the analyst.

"Call of Duty is one of only a handful of what can be referred to as 'forever games' that offer enough compelling content and community features to make these games the default go-to for players whenever they want to play or hang out with friends and family in game," Piscatella said.

"Whole books could be written about this franchise and its impact."

Call of Duty has been the best-selling premium video [game](#) franchise in the United States annually for more than a decade, and the installment available Friday will likely be no different, according to Piscatella.

"We're really proud," Faries said.

Video games are, "arguably the most dynamic global form of entertainment right now and to have 'Call of Duty' as a leading franchise in that conversation is an honor."

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