

Twitch looks beyond gamers; tries to court artists, educators, musicians at weekend event

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Patty arrived before the doors opened Sunday at the San Diego Convention Center for a chance to play Apex Legends, a battle royal style video game, against professional players in front of a live audience at TwitchCon.

The 30-year-old from the Washington, D.C., region, who didn't want to provide her last name, got that opportunity. She was chosen to join a three-person team at the Twitch Rivals tournament.

"I don't want to say I am confident, but I am comfortable," said Patty, who goes by name Amaranthias when she live streams herself playing Apex Legends on the Twitch [online platform](#) several times each week. "I know we are playing against GLG, which is a pro team. I have a lot of information on how they play, so hopefully that can pay off."

What is Twitch? At its core, it is a live-streaming service that allows individuals to create [online communities](#) around things they're interested in—and potentially get paid for it through subscriptions, donations, ad revenue and other means.

On average, more than a million people tune-in to the Twitch platform at any given moment, with nearly half a million streamers going live on Twitch every day.

Owned by Amazon, Twitch brought its three-day TwitchCon conference to San Diego for the first time since 2016. Based on ticket sales, the event was expected to draw 25,000 attendees per day – ranging from professional gamers to people who wanted to meet the Internet celebrities they follow online.

While its core audience centers on gamers, Twitch has been striving to branch out beyond Apex Legends and Fortnite streamers. It's now courting live streaming to artists, educators, musicians and others attempting to build an audience and get noticed.

At TwitchCon, singers on the Twitch platform squared off live Sunday afternoon in a contest. The winner was to be named Stream Star Champion, which included a \$20,000 prize and a record deal with Columbia Records.

Twitch also has been at the center of the rising popularity of e-sports – tournaments where gamers compete against each other in front of live audiences.

In San Diego, Twitch put on a \$250,000 video game tournament where three-player teams of all levels competed against each other playing Apex Legends. Giant television screens followed the action, complete with play-by-play commentary akin to an NFL game. Split screen take-outs cut to the players faces in the throes of action where they either moved on or were eliminated. A few hundred people in the audience gasped and cheered as players shifted from tactical maneuvers to intense action.

It wasn't a winner-take-all event like some e-sports tournaments. Twitch spread the [prize money](#) around to various teams based on how far they advanced.

Patty's team didn't win. They lost to a team made up of a professional player and two non-sponsored 19-year-old gamers from Texas. The teens are known by the Twitch names of iTzTimmy and BronzeyFPS, and met in person for the first time at TwitchCon—though they've been friends online for

some time.

The three players will split between \$8,000 and \$9,000 for winning their three-game set. But money wasn't the main motivation for the Texas players.

"For us, it gives you exposure," said Timmy, who didn't provide his real name. "Technically we are considered pros, but we are more like free agents. We are just looking for our opportunity, for an organization to look at us."

Beyond video games, TwitchCon featured an artists' pavilion – highlighting the company's effort to expand live streaming into new areas.

Jessica Fong and Chelsea Harper, artists/illustrators from Northern California, had a booth in the pavilion displaying their work. They like to live stream on Twitch while sketching, giving viewers a glimpse into their creative process.

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"Each artist can create their own community and their own guidelines," said Fong. "So you can say I want to set this session to be taking doodle requests or taking questions."

Still, the Twitch platform for artists lacks some of the features that video gamers have – such as an easy way for users to find live streams that match their interests, said Fong.

"Twitch as a platform still needs to grow in the artists' community area," added Harper. "They don't treat us as well as the gaming community. We feel it from time to time."

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