

Virtual Reality Headset Turns Heads

Written by Marco Attard
08 August 2012

Do 21st century gamers still care for virtual reality (VR) headsets? Maybe they do, judging from the interest spurred by the Rift-- the latest attempt at head-mounted displays from newly-formed company Oculus.



Proof of such interest comes through Kickstarter, which Oculus are using for crowd-sourced funding. Unlike most Kickstarter campaigns, Oculus only "sells" early developer kits through the service-- managing to get over \$1 million (with around 3500 sponsors pledging \$300 for a single dev kit) in less than a week.

Each dev kit (available as in either assembled or slightly cheaper build-it-yourself form) comes with access to the Oculus Developer Center, as well as a copy of Doom 3 BFG Edition for PC.

What puts the Rift apart from previous, failed attempts at head-mounted displays? Apart from technology (the company promises "a truly immersive experience"), what the Rift really has is interest from games developers. These include big names such as Doom creator John Carmack, Epic founder Cliff Bleszinski and Valve president Gabe Newell.

The tech specs are also interesting, mind-- head tracking offering "ultra low" latencies and 6-degrees of freedom, a 110-degree field of vision and resolutions of up to 1280x800 (640x800 per eye). Inputs come through DVI, HDMI and USB (no VGA) and it runs on either PCs or mobile devices.

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A consumer version of the Rift is, as Oculus puts it, "still a ways down the road," but the interest shown from developers should in the least generate a fairly interesting finished product. Or one that is better than the many attempts at VR we've seen in the past... Virtual Boy, anyone?

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