

The Trend of Creating TV Shows from Video Game Franchises

In the past, video game adaptations were often met with skepticism, with many early film or TV renditions criticized for failing to capture the essence of their source material. However, the trend has shifted dramatically in recent years. Television studios and streaming platforms have increasingly turned to video game franchises for adaptation, with major successes reshaping the entertainment landscape. This growing trend reflects changes in both industries, offering new ways to tell stories and reach wider audiences. As games become more cinematic and narrative-driven, the jump from console to screen is now more natural and effective than ever before.

From Failure to Formula: Early Attempts and New Success

The idea of adapting video games for the screen isn't new. In the 1990s and early 2000s, movies like *Super Mario Bros.* (1993) and *Street Fighter* (1994) attempted to bring video game characters to life but were widely seen as failures. These early adaptations often strayed too far from the games or misunderstood what made them special, focusing on action and spectacle rather than story or character depth.

It wasn't until the last decade that things began to shift. One of the first notable improvements was Netflix's *Castlevania* series (2017), an anime-style adaptation of the classic horror-themed platformer. Instead of rushing through plot points, the series focused on strong character development, world-building, and faithful storytelling. It received critical acclaim and proved that game-based shows could stand on their own merits.

This opened the floodgates. More studios began investing in adapting popular video game properties into high-budget series. With the rise of streaming services like Netflix, HBO Max, Amazon Prime, and Paramount+, the demand for fresh content skyrocketed. Video games, with their established fanbases and rich lore, became prime real estate for adaptations.

Major Success Stories: *The Last of Us*, *Arcane*, and *The Witcher*

One of the most important turning points was HBO's *The Last of Us* (2023), based on the hit PlayStation game from Naughty Dog. Starring Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey, the series remained incredibly faithful to the source material while also expanding the narrative with emotional backstories and new scenes. It drew massive viewership numbers and critical acclaim, earning Emmy nominations and praise for being one of the best video game

adaptations ever made. The success of *The Last of Us* demonstrated that game narratives could not only transition to TV but also elevate the genre as a whole.

Another standout is *Arcane* (2021), an animated Netflix series based on *League of Legends*. While the game itself is known more for its competitive gameplay than storytelling, *Arcane* built a deep, emotional narrative around the characters of Piltover and Zaun. Its unique animation style, powerful voice acting, and layered storytelling won it multiple awards and brought in both gamers and newcomers. It became a massive hit with both fans and critics, showing that even games without a traditional single-player story could be adapted into compelling television.

The Witcher (2019), while technically based on the books, gained massive popularity due in part to the success of the video game series from CD Projekt Red. Henry Cavill's performance as Geralt and the show's gritty tone helped bridge the gap between book, game, and screen audiences. The show performed well across multiple seasons and expanded the franchise's visibility globally.

These shows proved that successful adaptations don't have to rely on just big names—they need thoughtful storytelling, respect for the source material, and strong production quality.

Why This Trend Works Now

Several factors have contributed to the rise of video game TV shows. First, video games have matured. Modern games like *God of War*, *Red Dead Redemption*, and *Horizon Zero Dawn* are not just about gameplay—they offer emotional, cinematic experiences. Their complex characters and detailed worlds lend themselves naturally to serialized storytelling.

Second, streaming services are in constant competition for exclusive content. Adapting well-known games gives platforms an edge, as these titles already have passionate, global fanbases. This built-in audience reduces risk and boosts engagement right from launch.

Third, game developers are more involved than ever in adaptations. Studios like Naughty Dog, Riot Games, and CD Projekt Red now collaborate closely with showrunners, ensuring that the adaptations stay true to the original tone, lore, and world-building. This cooperation improves the quality and authenticity of the final product.

Lastly, audiences themselves have changed. Today's viewers are more open to fantasy, sci-fi, and game-based stories, thanks to the success of franchises like *Stranger Things*, *Game of Thrones*, and *The Mandalorian*. These shifts in audience preferences have paved the way for video game shows to thrive.

Looking Ahead: The Future of Game-Based Shows

With the success of current adaptations, the trend is far from over. Many new projects are already in development:

- **Amazon's *Fallout*:** Set in a post-apocalyptic world, this show will explore new stories in the *Fallout* universe, blending dark humor and survival themes.
- **Netflix's *Assassin's Creed*:** The popular Ubisoft franchise is getting a live-action adaptation, with potential for multiple interconnected stories across different historical eras.
- **Sony's *God of War*:** In development at Amazon Prime, the show will follow Kratos's journey in the Norse mythology arc.
- **Horizon Zero Dawn, Mass Effect, and Ghost of Tsushima** also have shows or movies planned, with big-name producers and studios attached.

However, success is not guaranteed. Adapting games requires more than copying plots—it takes thoughtful pacing, character depth, and a willingness to expand the world. Poor adaptations risk alienating fans and wasting potential, as seen with poorly received attempts like the *Resident Evil* series on Netflix.

Conclusion: A Golden Age for Game Adaptations

Television has become the perfect platform for video game storytelling. With their rich lore, detailed worlds, and character-driven plots, games are uniquely suited for long-form narratives. Thanks to improved writing, studio collaboration, and greater respect for the source material, we are witnessing a golden age for video game adaptations. If this trend continues with care and creativity, the line between gaming and television will continue to blur, offering fans the best of both worlds.