

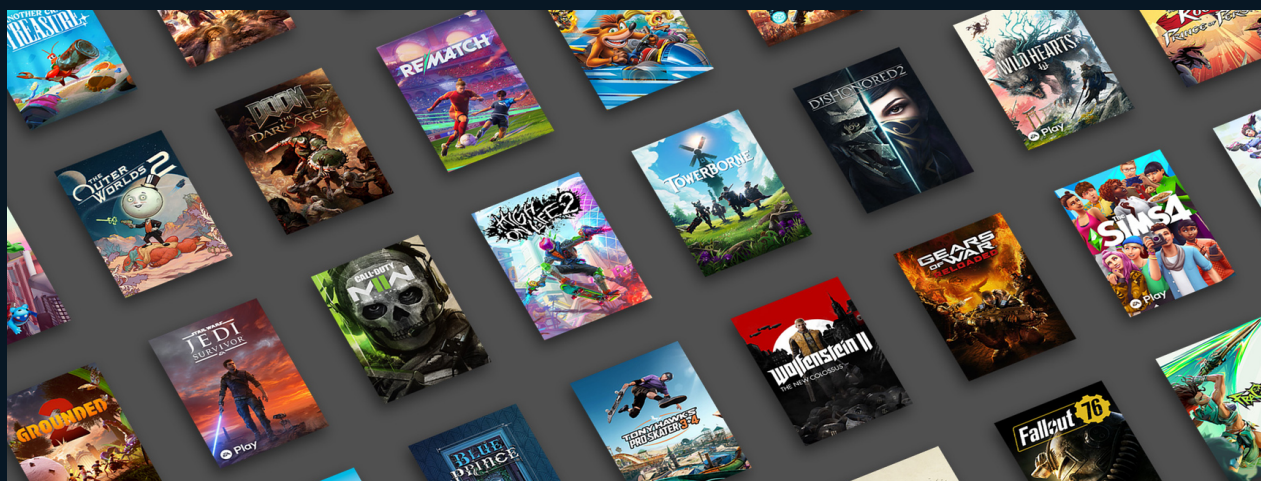
RE'S BISCUITS IN THE TIN, WHO WANTS BISCUITS?

By Will Guyatt

Tech Journalist and Broadcaster

If your energy bill rose by 53% overnight, wouldn't you be out on the streets demanding regime change? I know I would, so it's hardly surprising to see the reaction to the unexpectedly high price rise for the Xbox Games Pass. So peeved were gamers that they managed to cause the Game Pass cancellation page to crash.

The undeniably steep increase in the monthly cost of the already profitable Game Pass service is probably all part of a clever Microsoft plan - and if you give me a few moments, I reckon this might actually be a good result for developers and publishers too - who find releases outside of Game Pass not doing as well.



Game Pass is a bit like spending a week in Las Vegas cruising the all you can eat buffets on the strip. You go overboard - a bit of lobster, chocolate sauce and one or two cupcakes - but eventually all you're craving is a bowl of cornflakes and a slice of Hovis. That kind of freedom might have stalled Xbox software sales.

Since launching in 2017, Game Pass has become an intrinsic part of the Xbox 'difference' - the platform that's the home of all you can eat, Netflix style gaming. For many, including me - it's been a really strong reason to buy into the Xbox ecosystem.

It's perfect for gamers of all ages who don't really know what they want to play, and parents who don't want to invest too much cash into their kid's love of games. So good was the Game Pass offer, I must have recommended it at least 100 times in buyer's guides and gaming phone-ins since day one.

Perhaps Microsoft wants to see just how many will step away from the good stuff? By bringing players back into purchasing a handful of new, full-price games a year - Microsoft may encourage price conscious gamers to step back from grazing on Games Pass, and focus on a handful of key games each year, like Call of Duty 98. I can't remember the last time I paid full price for an Xbox game - but I still use the console all the time.

Maybe it's my age, but I'm one of those arses that purchased a record player - and it's all down to digital blindness - which happens with all you can eat music as well as all you can eat games. I got the turntable for an experiment to see if it made me enjoy and engage with music a little more, and it really does. I still love Apple Music and the fact I can play Arnie's early 80's workout album on repeat, but I connect more with music when there's more activity - getting out of the sleeve, flipping it half way through - all that kind of stuff.

So - while the Game Pass price rise found itself headline news on BBC Radio 1 there's part of me wondering whether this isn't just about Microsoft making more money to invest in the AI revolution - it might be attempting to tweak buying habits too.



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