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Rock Band 3 takes music to a new level

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Editor

Over the past four years, Harmonix Music Systems have created one of the biggest video game franchises, *Rock Band*. With seven games in the series on multiple platforms and even devices (phones, DS, etc.), *Rock Band* has become one of the most icon party games in this age.

Their latest game in the series, *Rock Band 3*, takes the series into a new direction, completely unique of its main competitor, *Guitar Hero*.

The biggest difference between *Rock Band 3* and its predecessors is the addition of the Keyboard and "Pro" instruments.

The keyboard has 25 keys, is played like a normal keyboard, and has a normal and "Pro" mode with the normal 4 difficulties. The "Pro" mode uses all 25 keys, while the normal mode uses only 5 keys. However, the chord shifts on the higher difficulties on normal mode seem to be just as challenging as those on the "Pro" mode.



This picture features (from top to bottom, left to right): Vocal Harmonies, Pro Keyboard, Pro Drums, and Pro guitar. Photo courtesy of sidequest.com

Hardened piano players or keyboardists may find the un-weighted keys a pain, and the limit of 25 keys seems too small for two handed playing, but too large for one handed, but the keyboard is a great addition to the instrument lineup.

In addition to playing the "Keys" and "Pro Keys" parts on the keyboard, you also imitate the real thing and play both Guitar and Bass parts as well. This allows keyboard-

ists to play songs that don't have a keyboard part and makes the keyboard a great, versatile instrument for anyone is new to the Rock Band franchise.

Pro instruments/modes are also a new addition. Along with the previously mentioned "Pro Keys" (which requires only a keyboard), there is a "Pro Guitar," "Pro Bass," (both of which require buying one of two types of new guitars) and "Pro



"With this new guitar, you will be able to play real songs on a real guitar, but learn through a video game."

Drums" (which requires the purchase of a new cymbals add-on).

The new "Pro" modes allow music game veterans a new challenge: the new guitars will teach you the precise notes on a real guitar, the drums a more realistic set, and the keyboard a "full" set of 25 keys.

The new guitars are the most pricy addition; the most basic "Pro" compatible guitar is priced at \$149.99 and features around 102 buttons (one for each string on each fret of a real guitar) and has real strings across the base of the guitar that you strum. This allows an easy transition from Rock Band controllers to real guitar providing the player with the coordination to switch between chords

quick instead of just buttons.

The second controller will be released in March for a price of \$279.99 and will feature 6-strings, no buttons, and the ability to plug into an amp. Yes, you read correctly. With this new guitar, you will be able to play real songs on a real guitar with real sounds, while still being able to plug it into a video game.

This revolutionary guitar will take playing and learning instruments into a new digital age; no more tabs, no more listening to your iPod for that 2-sec clip of the song. Now, a video game will be able to teach you to play the guitar.

Beyond these new additions, there are minor modifications to the game play and the addition of vocal harmonies parts.

The combination of all these aspects makes *Rock Band 3* the best music game ever sold. Without a doubt, other companies are going to have to play catch up with all of these new additions in order to compete. Nonetheless, *Rock Band 3* is fantastic.

The game came out October 26 and is available for \$60 for the Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, and Nintendo DS.