



## How Netflix is Using Gaming to Bring Original Content to Life

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Netflix is taking a deeper dive into the video game industry, the streamer announced during its first E3 appearance on Wednesday.

"We've been working on original content for a long time—we've seen how passionate fans are getting about series and films, so we're looking for opportunities to extend the [content] to other mediums," said Chris Lee, director of interactive games at Netflix.

Netflix's dive into gaming started with its most-watched supernatural sci-fi series, *Stranger Things*. After season one was complete, The Duffer Brothers—who are passionate gamers themselves—suggested the new venture as an opportunity to expand on the characters' love for games.

"The characters in the show are gamers. They go to the arcade—Will desperately wants an Atari for Christmas in season one—and a lot of fans are gamers as well," said Paul Dichter, writer for *Stranger Things*.

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This led to the creation of *Stranger Things: The Game* and more recently, *Stranger Things 3: The Game*, which launches on July 4 alongside the series' third season.

It also led Netflix to begin developing its upcoming location-based mobile game with game developer Next Games. Lee unveiled the upcoming game during the streamer's panel on Wednesday. Although few details were available, it's expected to release in 2020 and will feature a new level of interactivity, Lee says.

Key art for *Stranger Things*' mobile game set to launch in 2020.

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But despite the current focus on *Stranger Things*, Netflix sees gaming as an opportunity to expand the storylines, characters and universe of all original content. This concept is being applied to the upcoming game announced during E3's Nintendo Direct presentation: *The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance Tactics*.

The tactical game will expand upon Jim Henson's 1982 fantasy film and the upcoming prequel series that's set to premiere this August on Netflix. Using similar animation and puppetry, the game will pay homage to the iconic film while expanding on the unique world of Thra and the characters within it.

"We're able to have elements from the show, move past that and see what else can be discovered," said Stephanie Wise, director of global and interactive media at The Henson Company.

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This led to the creators' deliberate choice to make the game tactical, which Dave Pottinger, president of game studio BonusXP, says "felt right immediately."

"The world of Thra is so rich and there's so many pieces and creators that we can use," he said. "It was a great marriage between the franchise, the world that could be shown, and the type of game."

But translating these beloved shows and characters isn't as simple as it seems. Especially for *The Dark Crystal*, which has a long-standing history of its own.

"The challenge with *The Dark Crystal* is living up to 30 plus years of fandom," Wise said. "There are so many creatures that were barely touched on in the

film and show. We're now able to showcase them in the game."

There's also the challenge of creating new, original content while staying true to the series' universe and characters. In the past, it was common for video games to mirror a show's storyline with little to no change. But now, consumers are looking for expanded storylines that offer something new, Wise says, which Netflix aims to provide.

"It's important to us to give people the show's content with content beyond the show—we don't want people to play the game and feel like there's nothing to discover," Pottinger said.

But despite this challenge, the creators at Netflix see video games as an opportunity to take something serious like *Stranger Things*, which features its famous, yet terrifying, Demogorgons, and create a product that fans, developers and showrunners are proud of.

"Our goal and vision is to have epic moments you see on screen translate into video games," Lee said. "But at the same time—we've seen video games allow for interactivity. The potential there is exciting."