The Death of Traditional Multiplayer

"I'm gonna get you man," said Justin while staring intently.

"Not if I get you first dude," yelled Maxx quickly. "You'll pay for what you did, fucker".

Justin was slowly approaching a dark corner, trying not to startle whomever or whatever could be waiting behind that wall. Once he turn it, he moved swiftly to the left, trying to get to cover. That's when he felt it. A knife had gone through his back, killing him at once.

"No! NO! Damn it! I know you were looking at my side of the screen!" said Justin angrily.

The game was Call of Duty 4. Justin, Maxx and three other friends were playing together on a warm and otherwise uneventful Saturday. The table in front of them was busy with snacks, sodas and unused controllers.

Not that long ago, this scene was a common sight in households all over the world, back when online gaming was still nothing more than a cool gimmick. In order to play together, friends had to go out to the arcade, an internet café or more commonly, somebody's house. Split and shared screens were the staples of multiplayer gaming. Now, games with these options are the exception, not the rule. What has changed?

It's usually safe to blame terrible things on your standard COD 12-year-old.

Technology, for one. The digital world is in constant evolution, and as time – and devices - change, so do the old traditions. Arcades, once the to-go place for kids and adults to have some fun with each other on a boring afternoon, are now virtually gone, reduced to a few county fairs around the country and whatever Dave & Buster's location you choose to waste your money in.

Internet Cafes were also immensely popular, providing players with a venue to play their favorite games with many friends at once. Such was the golden era for household names like Warcraft III and Counter Strike, right when MMO's started to take their first steps toward domination. Internet Cafes are too dying

out, even in Asia, where games like Starcraft 2 and League of Legends are sometimes lifestyles rather than hobbies.

Much more than hobbies.

But it was the traditional console multiplayer what truly left a mark on most players. The mark left by those rainy days spent eating Doritos while embracing the madness of Super Smash Brothers. The mark left by the face of your best friend after that epic Mortal Kombat fight with a humiliating fatality. The mark left by all that trash-talking done on that Saturday afternoon.

But then came the game changer. Then came online gaming, and with it the advent of guilds and clans and the dawn of MMORPG's. And it all truly changed. No longer did you need to plan out a gathering in your house to play with your friends. Games could be played at any time, either with friends or with total strangers. Suddenly, there was a paradox: you could connect with more people than ever before, and yet you found yourself sitting alone in the living room most of the time.

Don't get me wrong, the era of online multiplayer has been enjoyed by everyone. The problem is that it came with a price. Increasingly, console games don't even have the option to play locally with a friend.

Split screen is seen as a nuisance, a thing of the past. Only mainstream franchises like Call of Duty and Halo even bother including the option anymore. No longer do we get the satisfaction of seeing friends despair at the expense of our glory. Now, we get "lol's", emojis, and not much more.

Change is unavoidable, but this particular path doesn't ring true. Take the success of the Wii for instance. It wasn't just the revolutionary system what made it so popular. It was the social aspect. Suddenly, anyone could play games. Not just gamers, but kids, older couples and families, often together. It was the potential to play with others so easily that helped it get so popular among all age groups, a potential that is slowly disappearing on the rest of the consoles.

Eerily social.

Fortunately, this situation is not being wholly overlooked. Videogame website Polygon recently reported that many indie developers are going back to the roots of multiplayer gaming, releasing local-only multiplayer games like Towerfall and Samurai Gunn. Big developers are also taking notice. In Hearthstone, the new golden hit by Blizzard Entertainment, players are rewarded with special perks simply by meeting with other players in their area and playing in the same subnet.

The truth is that future generations probably won't get the opportunity to experience the good ole' multiplayer experiences that we did. But we can take a reprieve in the fact that the essence of those times may be coming back, just in different and modern iterations.

Meanwhile, we'll just have to conform to some modern day ass whooping. Happy gaming!