

Startup lets you play Console Video Games remotely

(AP) -- As any video game aficionado knows, it's easy to pop a game into your Xbox 360 or PlayStation 3 and spend hours working your way from one level to the next. Without the hefty console, though, you're out of luck if you want to keep blasting those aliens while away from home.

A startup called Spawn Labs thinks it has a solution to this problem. Starting Monday, the Austin, Texas-based company began selling a box that is much like a Slingbox - a device that lets you watch your home TV remotely - for video gaming.

Spawn Labs' HD-720 costs \$200, or about the same price as Microsoft's cheapest Xbox console. Unlike playing a video game on a Web site, when the box is connected to one of several different gaming systems you can remotely access any video game disc already inside, along with any games stored on the console's hard drive.

You can connect the HD-720 to up to two video game systems, including an Xbox 360, Sony's PlayStation 3, and to a TV set to play games at home. If you install Spawn Labs' free software on a computer, you can then log in to the company's Web site and play games remotely in real time, using a video game controller plugged into one of the computer's USB ports or a keyboard.

Spawn Labs, which showed off its product Monday at the TechCrunch50 startup

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conference in San Francisco, is also pushing its product as a way to connect remotely with friends who might not be able to come over and play games with you - instead, you can allow them to access your console online and they can play on a computer from wherever they happen to be.

If you want to let more than one person to play remotely, Spawn Labs sells \$30 adaptors that plug into the back of the box, enabling group gaming.

You'll need a good Internet connection to use the HD-720: CEO David Wilson said that the box streams video games in high-definition video. If a connection isn't speedy enough, though, the HD-720 can show games in standard definition, he said.

"This will take two or three years to fully roll out into the mainstream, probably, and as that happens everyone will have a fat pipe they can play with," he said.

As for any computing requirements, Wilson said that most laptops currently being sold should work well with the device. Some netbooks may also be able to support the high-definition video, he said.

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