

# PACMAN'S INFLUENCE ON POP CULTURE AND OTHER MEDIA

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Released in 1980 (5), Pac-Man quickly caught the world's attention as a fun-for-all pop culture icon. Although Pac-Man has faded from its former spot on top of the videogaming world, it left an eternal mark as an influence of media and pop culture in the decades since its release and continues to maintain cultural relevance to this day. Follow each power-pellet to find out just how extensive Pac-Man's influence has been.

As a game, Pac-Man was revolutionary. It started the "maze chase" genre that can be seen in games such as *Alien: Isolation* and *Metal Gear Solid*. It also started the trend of franchise mascots that later led to *Sonic*, *Pikachu*, and *Mario* (3). Perhaps most importantly, Pac-Man transformed gaming from a long line of shooting games to something that could appeal to any audience. It opened gaming to women and children and directly led to games such as *Pengo*, *Mr. Do*, *Dig-Dug*, and *Tutankham* (1). A screen capture of our time in the game may be seen to the right.



A common way to measure a franchise's success is to observe its influence on cinema and television. In this regard, Pac-Man has done very well. Two years after it was first released, it spawned a spin-off cartoon that lasted for 40 episodes and had a prime time special (4). It got a second series in 2013, shown below (6), on Disney XD, although this was not particularly well received critically (6). 2014 saw the release of the *Maze Runner*, a popular movie based on a novel series whose titular maze was inspired by the "World's Largest Pac-Man Maze" (2). Pac-Man has also been referenced many times in *Futurama* and *Family Guy* (4) and played a role in the 2015 movie *Pixels*.

Like all good capitalistic ventures, Pac-Man strives to make as much money as possible off of its brand name. This has led to a breakfast cereal (seen right), a board game, and many clothing designs all based off of or using the Pac-Man image and theme (1)(8).

"Pac-Man Christmas Story Book" was released in 1982, "Pac-Man Christmas" was featured in *Women's Day Magazine* in 1983, and most recently, in 2008, Madrid, Spain, displayed a Pac-Man themed Christmas tree for all to enjoy (4). Clearly, if consumers are still interested in Pac-Man, it's had a very lasting impact.



Pac-Man has also had a surprisingly large impact on music. The most well known song based on Pac-Man is 1981's "Pacman Fever" by Buckner and Garcia, which became a No. 9 hit and had sold over 2.5 million copies by 2008. Also released in 1981 was "Weird Al" Yankovic's "Pac-Man," a parody of "Taxman" by The Beatles. These hits were joined by "Pac Jam" by Jonzun Crew in 1983, the 2004 Top-20 single "Game Over" by Lil' Flip that included in-game audio from both Pac-Man and Ms. Pac-Man, and "Pac-Man EP", a collection of songs by Apex Twin released in 1992 (7). Like so many other pop culture icons, Pac-Man was also featured in its very own Christmas album in 1982 (4).

Despite its age, Pac-Man has managed to stay culturally relevant. From maintaining an audience via "retro" status as classic arcade game to influencing an entire game style to inspiring a popular and successful book series, Pac-Man carved his niche in American pop culture. Although its actual games are few nowadays, Pac-Man is visible in cinema and television, audible in catchy pop tunes, echoed in "maze-chase"-esque videogames, and dispersed throughout other facets of life, a legacy founded in the simple beeps and blips of an arcade cabinet.

## SOURCES

- (1) <http://www.fastcocrete.com/1683023/how-pac-man-changed-games-and-culture>
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- (3) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/picture-galleries/7764234/How-Pac-Man-influenced-video-games.html>
- (4) <http://classicgames.about.com/od/popculture/tp/PacManChristmas.htm>
- (5) <http://www.namcoentertainment.com/about/our-history>
- (6) <https://www.commonsemmedia.org/tv-reviews/pac-man-and-the-ghostly-adventures>
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