

Playtrix



Canadian company **Playtrix** have been around for more than 15 years but will be a new name to some in the gaming world. We spoke to Vice President of Engineering **George Samaha** about the company and their exciting new products...

A privately-owned company, Playtrix has been in business for around 16 years, and started out selling five-player Blackjack games to South Carolina's burgeoning market. In 1998, they started making their Treasure Game, a multi-game product which was – and is – a flexible product in either the Playtrix MiiNii cabinet or for your own cabinet or bar-top design.

The company's wireless MiiNii Blackjack solution is a simple way for a casino's customers to enjoy wireless technology without the casino breaking the bank; the kit contains the main MiiNii blackjack control box, five battery operated remote controls for the players, one operator remote control for credits in-out, and universal power supplies/chargers – everything you need to get started in just minutes.

We spoke with VP of Engineering George Samaha about the company, their products and their future.

Casino International: George, tell me about the origins of Playtrix.

George Samaha: After we sold Blackjack into South Carolina, in 1998, we introduced the Treasure Game, which was 10 games at the time. It was one of the first touchscreen multigames. But we didn't really advertise it at the time, which was a big mistake. We were thinking that if it's a good product, a good game, it will sell itself; we don't plan to make that mistake again.

If we'd advertised it and done everything at the time, we would be much bigger than we are now; but now we have new versions and we have our wireless Blackjack and we're making a wireless multigame which we're testing right now... We're moving forward strongly. We like to make advanced games, something new, a novelty in the gaming business.

CI: Tell me more about the multigame product?

GS: Treasure Gem Factory is a gaming product featuring poker, slots, fruit cards, Blackjacks, 12-number roulette, Keno... It's 15 games in all, using buttons and touchscreen. We've had many versions of this, and it now has approval to operate in Italy. The games have been around a long time but we modify

them, we refine them instead of new games, new games, new games. We constantly improve the games. It is available in the MiiNii cabinet (as is the Blackjack) or on the X-tera board, to build your own upright or countertop cabinet.

CI: Tell me about the board...

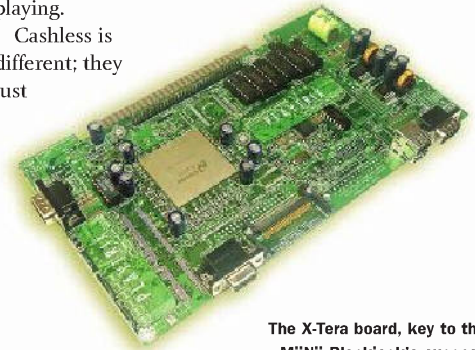
GS: The X-Tera board has a Pentium-class processor on it. It has accelerated Super-VGA graphics – everything is geared towards gaming on the board. It has a huge non-volatile memory inside... It's very, very powerful and is basically ideal for gaming. And it's low cost at the end of the day, which makes it even more attractive.

It allows us to make Treasure Gem Factory with 15 games, as touchscreen or button games, and allows us to make MiiNii Blackjack wireless too; so it's an advanced board and it gives us great flexibility. It can cope with downloadable games, fixed games (internally programmed, that is) and external memory games. Multiple boards can also be connected together to create a dual-screen machine, like the ones that are currently so popular.

CI: How does the player bet on MiiNii Blackjack if it's outside the gaming area and played with remote controls?

GS: It can work in different ways. Some customers use it cashless, some with a bill acceptor. The acceptor is near the plasma somewhere, so the customer inserts the bill and presses a button on his remote so the money is credited to him and starts playing.

Cashless is different; they just



The X-Tera board, key to the MiiNii Blackjack's success

call to a member of staff in that area and they insert the money wirelessly. They have a remote control as well, and credit the money to the player when they've received it.

CI: In terms of approvals, where can MiiNii Blackjack be sold?

GS: The customer would have to come to us and ask about the product. If they're interested, we work with the jurisdiction and have it approved. We take care of all that work to get it done, no problem.

To get approvals then sell it would be very expensive and possibly unnecessary; we could have gotten Nevada approval but then gone to ICE and discovered all of our customers were Asian, which would mean unnecessary expense for the company.

Basically, we're ready to produce solutions for any market, we're ready to modify the products to make them legal for the market the customer wants.

CI: How do you see these products physically fitting into the casino? Is it with a lounge area in mind?

GS: Like the Keno many casinos have, in the restaurant or in the lounges, or even near the casino somewhere like in a game room, club, bar or restaurant. You can use it in the bathroom even, if you wanted! But I see it with people in the lounge, relaxing, outside the traditional gaming environment, in a relaxing ambience playing with the remote control.

CI: So how does the wireless technology work? There the screen, the receiver, the player consoles...

GS: The main board is in the receiver, the antenna, and this attaches to the monitor, which can be say a big plasma with this behind it somewhere and the remote controls are all with the players. The wireless technology is similar to Bluetooth and is an industrial

standard; it's not an invention of ours, it's a standard frequency that is industrial and it is CE and FCC approved.

CI: Are there existing installations of the product already?

GS: We now have a few installations in the USA, Europe, South America and Asia. And there are others about to be installed.

We had it up and running at ICE in January and that impressed me because in convention centres there is often interference and even mobile phones don't work properly. I was worried that it would cause us problems at the show but it didn't. I walked five or six blocks of the show away and it still worked perfectly.

CI: What kind of feedback did you get about the product from ICE?

GS: The feedback was huge, from all over the world and especially from Asia.

People want to use our games in their casinos, clubs, game rooms, everywhere. We even had people who wanted them for their homes. We also received offers for partnerships and co-operation from many companies and are presently negotiating a co-operation with a large cabinet manufacturer in China.

CI: How do you plan from here to grow the Playtrix name and market the product from here?

GS: I'm still planning to advertise it, of course, to make people aware of it, and show it to people so they can test it and play it and learn about it for themselves. Good products do generate word of mouth, you just have to get it out there. We'll be going to many shows as well, as many as possible to spread the word.

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