'Grand Theft Auto V' sales race past $1 billion (Update 2)

September 20 2013

Pedestrians cross a street where a large billboard of the "Grand Theft Auto V" video game is displayed in Hong Kong on September 17, 2013. The game hit the streets in the former British colony as it launched worldwide on September 17, 2013 in respective time zones.

"Grand Theft Auto V" raked in more than a billion dollars in a record-shattering first three days on the streets for the unabashedly violent videogame, the publisher announced on Friday.

Take-Two Interactive Software said it believed that the blistering pace of GTA V sales "marks the fastest (of) any entertainment property, including video games and feature films."

"Grand Theft Auto is a cultural phenomenon, and Rockstar Games continues to redefine what can be achieved in interactive entertainment," said Take-Two chief executive Strauss Zelnick.

Take-Two's unit Rockstar Games spent five years crafting the title, with a rumored production budget of $270 million, and the time has paid off for gamers, according to a slew of reviews giving it top marks.

The GTA franchise has won legions of fans and cadres of critics with gameplay in which triumph depends on acts such as carjacking, gambling and killing.

Play in Grand Theft Auto games has included simulated sex with prostitutes and drunken driving. The latest version is said by reviewers to be rife with more of the same, along with profanity-packed dialogue.

The fifth installment in the GTA series is set in a fictional city of Los Santos based on real-world Los Angeles and its nearby hills and beaches.

Taylor Pelling of Sutton poses with his copy of the console game "Grand Theft Auto V" at the midnight opening of the HMV music store in central London on September 17, 2013. Mr Pelling had camped outside the store for three days.

It is billed by the New York City-based videogame publisher as the "largest and most ambitious" title in a franchise that has sold more than 114 million copies since its debut in 1997.

Versions of GTA V for play on Xbox 360 or PlayStation 3 videogame consoles or personal computers powered by Windows software launched worldwide Tuesday. Sales of the game are expected to be boosted with upcoming launches of the title in Japan and Brazil.

The estimates by Take-Two blow away the prior sales record set last year by Activision Blizzard's "Call of Duty: Black Ops 2"—which topped a billion dollars in sales after 15 days on the market in 2012 and boasted an opening day more profitable than any Hollywood film debut at the

time.

Take-Two noted that the 2012 blockbuster "The Avengers" took 19 days to bring in $1 billion, equalling the previous record of 19 days set by "Avatar" and "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2."

Fans say GTA appeals with captivating story lines and an open-world format that lets players go wherever they wish in game worlds, noting that players can rob banks, take a yoga lesson or fly a plane, as well as play with or against one another online.

Rockstar said that GTA V "focuses on the pursuit of the almighty dollar" in a re-imagined Southern California.

Grand Theft Auto IV blew away videogame and Hollywood records by raking in an unprecedented $500 million in the week after its release in 2008.

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