

# Good games get lost in year-end sales push

December 30 2008, By Victor Godinez

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If game makers take anything away from 2008, it should be that sometimes you can have too much of a good thing. So many good and great games were released at the end of the year during the holiday blitz that gamers were forced to make some hard decisions.

So top-notch games such as Mirror's Edge and Dead Space and LittleBigPlanet generated lackluster sales numbers because they were competing with must-buys such as Gears of War 2 and Call of Duty: World at War and World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King.

Even gamers - who continue to grow the games industry despite the slumping economy - have only so much time and money to spend. And that is biting companies in tangible ways. For example, Electronic Arts, pinched by the underperformance of Mirror's Edge and Dead Space, among others, is laying off 1,000 workers. Other publishers have announced cuts, too.

I think there's a bit more panic underlying those layoffs than is warranted.

After all, game industry sales hit \$2.91 billion in November, up 10 percent compared with November 2007.

But hey, panic is the order of the day in much of corporate America right now.

Even so, expect to see some strong results for game companies early in

2009, especially those who, whether by foresight or luck, didn't cram all their hits into the end of 2008.

Sony opted for a February 2009 release for PS3 shooter Killzone 2, and Microsoft is rolling out the strategy game Halo Wars for the Xbox 360 in early March.

In mid-March will come zombie-fest Resident Evil V on multiple consoles from Capcom, and Sega's shockingly gory MadWorld hits the Wii at the end of the month.

Given how quiet that time of the year is normally, gamers are likely to vacuum up those titles.

Still, the end-of-year glut of quality software is, on the whole, a problem that almost every other industry would love to be dealing with. And there were lots of games that I dearly enjoyed playing in 2008.

I won't pretend to crown a "game of the year," since I really played only a fraction of the titles that crossed my desk.

But if I were to pick my personal favorite, it would have to be Fallout 3.

The massive, blasted, post-apocalyptic landscape of Washington, D.C., made for a delightfully decrepit playground.

Whether climbing epic mountains of junk to snipe at mutants, or furtively squirming through collapsed subway tunnels to engage in diplomacy with a gang of vampires, there's always something new to see in this game.

But while Fallout 3 made a great first impression, I realized just how much I liked this game only when I had finished my official review and

still kept playing anyway, just for fun.

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