Innovation on display at Games Conference

March 13 2010, By DERRIK J. LANG , AP Entertainment Writer

In this undated image released by Sony Computer Entertainment Inc., Sony's new motion controller is shown. The Japanese maker of the PlayStation 3 unveiled Thursday, March 10, 2010, its highly anticipated motion controlling system, as it takes aim at Nintendo's dominance in the gaming sector. Used with the existing PlayStation Eye camera, the new wireless motion controller can track players' body movements. The controller, in turn, has on its end a light-emitting orb that is recognized by the camera. (AP Photo/Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.)

(AP) -- Motion controls and social gaming were the hot topics at this week's Game Developers Conference, the annual convention of game designers, programmers and executives.

Sony shook up the conference with a splashy introduction of the PlayStation Move, a new wand-shaped [PlayStation 3](link) [motion controller](link) system that will rival Nintendo's popular Wii.

Sony showed off several games that use the new system, which utilizes a PlayStation [Eye camera](#) to detect players' movements. Among them were the action brawler "Motion Fighter," over-the-top party game "TV Superstars," athletic simulator "Sports Champions," mini-game collection "Move Party," third-person shooter "SOCOM 4" and wacky downhill racer "Slider."

"It's just scratching the surface," said TechSavvy technology analyst Scott Steinberg. "If you talk with game developers themselves, they will tell you they don't know what they're quite capable of doing because they're just coming to grips - no pun intended - with the hardware itself. At this point, we're just seeing some very early possibilities."

The biggest buzz, however, seemed reserved for [social gaming](#), a form of easy-to-play online multiplayer games. With the success of such social games as the real-time crop-growing simulator "FarmVille" and the gangster role-playing saga "Mafia Wars," several conference sessions this year were devoted solely on how to tap into the gaming world's Next Big Thing.

"I feel like people are motivated more this year," said [Game Developers Conference](#) director Meggan Scavio. "They seem genuinely excited to be doing what they're doing, and there's an air of anticipation. I think they've discovered there's still new business models out there. There's still new ways to develop and make games that they hadn't thought of before."

There's still wow factor, too. On the sprawling expo floor, attendees gawked at the VirtuSphere, a huge hamster ball-like virtual reality doodad that allows users inside to control a virtual character by walking around inside it. Folks also crowded in front of a mock living room populated with hipsters rocking out with the upcoming guitar game "Power Gig."

"Civilization" and "Railroad Tycoon" designer Sid Meier delivered a keynote address to hundreds of attendees Friday morning about the psychology of game design, encouraging gamemakers to suspend players' disbelief without taking them out of the interactive experience. Meier told the audience that they can "save millions" just by tapping into gamers' imaginations.

"What it comes down to is we're trying to create this epic journey for the player where the process of playing a game takes you from one place to another," Meier later said. "By the end of the game, you've maybe learned something about the world and hopefully something about yourself. That's what we're really trying to do with the psychology of making a game."

More information: http://www.gdconf.com/

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