

Game developers preparing for diverse E3 show

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In this June 2, 2009 file photo, show attendees play video games at the Activision booth at the E3 Expo in Los Angeles. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, file)

(AP) -- There might be something for everyone at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo.

Once a boisterous bastion for geeky gamers, the gaming industry's annual convention has in recent years morphed into a more modest showcase of the latest in hardware and games from publishers and developers who now want to reach consumers of all kinds - not just guys. This year's E3 is likely to mimic last year's shift to a cautiously glitzy affair.

Nearly 250 exhibitors, including publishing giants Microsoft, Sony and Nintendo, plan to hype their latest games and gizmos. The Entertainment

Software Association expects 45,000 attendees this week, which would be 4,000 more folks than last year. That's still shy of the massive crowd of 70,000 who flocked to the Los Angeles Convention Center back in 2005.

"I think there will be a couple of surprises and a couple of expected things," said Greg Zeschuk, co-founder at Electronic Arts' BioWare. "Obviously, the thing that Sony and Microsoft are going for is to broaden their reach with consumers. It'll be interesting to get hands on and see what kind of products they'll have that use the motion controls."

Microsoft and Sony unveiled their respective motion-control doodads at last year's E3 and will focus their attention at this year's show on games that use the camera-based systems. Nintendo, who launched motion control into the mainstream in 2006 with the Wii, will meanwhile flaunt their pulse-detecting Wii Vitality Sensor and the 3DS, a 3-D [handheld device](#).

In anticipation of the expo, which kicks off Sunday, Sony lunged into 3-D gaming last week by releasing three downloadable 3-D games for the [PlayStation 3](#). The publisher plans to demonstrate 3-D versions of bigger games at E3, such as "Killzone 3" and "Gran Turismo 5." Other game makers will also exhibit 3-D titles that require a 3-D TV or computer.

Besides motion control and 3-D gaming, many attendees will no doubt be buzzing about what effect mobile and cheap-to-produce-and-play online games, such as "FarmVille" and "Mafia Wars," will have on the industry, though such titles won't have a major presence at the convention. Developers of bigger games are now paying attention to the popular little guys.

"I see it as quite an interesting challenge," said Jamie Jackson, creative

director at Activision's FreeStyleGames. "It feels to me it's the start of a new type of gaming. It feels like it's going to be here to stay. It doesn't feel like it's going to go away. It almost reminds me of when handheld blew up again, and we started seeing the DS and the PSP."

Jackson will be showing off "DJ Hero II" at E3. The music game boasts new modes and songs featuring Lady Gaga and Rihanna. In a sign that the genre isn't played out, [game makers](#) will add the adventurous "Guitar Hero: Legends of Rock," hip-hop rap-along "Def Jam Rapstar" and "Rock Band 3," which introduces a piano controller, to the E3 mix.

E3 will also include celebrity appearances and absurdly lavish soirees. "The O.C." actress Rachel Bilson is hosting THQ's "Homefront" pool party while "Saturday Night Live" cast member Kenan Thompson is throwing EA's "Bulletstorm" bash. "Deadliest Catch" captain Sig Hansen and "Man vs. Wild" explorer Bear Grylls will descend on the Crave Games booth.

More importantly, the convention will serve as an opportunity for people in the gaming industry to see what their peers have been working on. Josh Olin, community manager for "Call of Duty: Black Ops" developer Treyarch, is looking forward to experiencing "Gears of War III," the third installment of Epic Games' bloody third-person shooter series.

"I'm a big 'Gears of War' fan," said Olin. "They have always told a great story, and they have a great narrative. Personally, I'm a single-player guy. I really live for good action stories. With 'Black Ops,' of course, we're telling a pretty good story this time, so that makes me happy, but 'Gears of War III' is another big one I'm looking for at E3."

Other new installments slated to be on display include intergalactic first-person prequel "Halo: Reach," expansive role-playing sequel "Fable III" and cyborg blaster "Deus Ex: Human Revolution." Among the

anticipated franchise follow-ups are survival space thriller "Dead Space 2," futuristic shooter "Crysis 2" and behemoth zombie slasher "Dead Rising 2."

There will probably be surprises of new sequels, too. Games rumored to be making their debut at E3 include a next-generation edition of the James Bond first-person shooter "GoldenEye 007," a new "Legend of Zelda" title for the [Wii](#) and possible third chapters of the alternate history first-person saga "Resistance" and action-adventure series "Uncharted."

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