

High-energy E3 bodes well for videogame lovers

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People reach for free T-shirts thrown at the Microsoft X Box 360 exhibit during the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) at the Los Angeles Convention Center, on June 16, in Los Angeles, California. The Entertainment Software Association expects 45,000 people to attend the E3 expo featuring more than 250 gaming industry publishers and developers such as Nintendo, Microsoft and Sony.

Scintillating titles, hot motion-sensing controllers and rich 3-D play dazzled videogame lovers at a high-energy Electronic Entertainment Expo that heralded stellar times ahead.

The E3 show floor was packed with theater-sized screens streaming scenes from action games while people played titles in booths decked out to look like fantasy worlds.

People queued to try Nintendo's new 3DS Microsoft Kinect that lets players command [Xbox 360](#) games solely with gestures, and Sony Move motion-controls for [PlayStation 3](#) consoles.

"This year's E3 was foremost about the introduction of new technology that promises to reshape the industry going forward," said Scott Steinberg, founder of GameExec Magazine and [Game Industry](#) TV.

Microsoft unveiled Kinect in a theatrical event two days before Sony and Nintendo staged their press events at the opening of the expo on Tuesday.

Along with touting Move, Sony hyped 3-D videogames such as "Killzone 3" for the PS3.

"Sony really pushed 3-D hard but I think they are jumping the gun," said Shane Satterfield, editor-in-chief of GameTrailers.com videogame website.

"A lot of people just recently got HD televisions and I don't think they are ready to go out and get 3-D. I think Sony is planting the seed right now."

But Satterfield admitted he was stunned by glasses-free 3-D graphics in Nintendo's new 3DS, and said he was also impressed by tilt-sensing and 3-D camera capabilities built into the hand-held gaming devices.

"My jaw just dropped," Satterfield said of seeing the 3DS. "There were objects hovering above the system. I don't know if Nintendo used witchcraft, but however they did it was amazing."

Microsoft and Sony both made "auspicious" showings, but Nintendo "hit it out of the park," according to Satterfield.

Kinect seemed part of a move by Microsoft to expand Xbox 360 consoles to be all-purpose entertainment devices that let people get online films and music as well as access websites and video chat with friends.

"Game consoles aren't just about games anymore," Steinberg said. "They are portals to online services that can now be controlled with a spoken word or a wave of a hand."

Kinect lets people control Xbox 360 consoles with voice commands or natural gestures.

Nintendo started the motion-controller craze with the launch of Wii consoles in late 2006 and its two big rivals will wade into the arena later this year when their spins on the concept hit US markets.

E3 was also packed with powerhouse sequels to proven blockbusters such as "Assassin's Creed," "Call of Duty" "Halo," "Dead Space," "Portal," and "Zelda."

Private hands-on demonstrations of coming games were booked to capacity throughout E3.

"Rage," "Brink" and "Bulletstorm" were among promising new titles getting rave reviews.

"Rage" is "a combination shooter-racing game in a beautifully rendered post-apocalyptic wasteland where you blow the bejesus out of slavers and anything else that comes your way, sort of a Mad Max," Steinberg said.

"Bulletstorm" is a shooter game that rewards players for clever ways they kill enemies.

"It's not about the head shots, it's about going into a situation to kill creatively with the only limitation being your sadistic imagination," said game producer Tanya Jessen.

About 45,600 people from 90 countries attended E3, which featured approximately 300 exhibitors, according to organizers at the Entertainment Software Association trade group behind the event.

Film director Steven Spielberg and actors Leonard Nimoy and Zoe Saldana were among the celebrities that stopped in.

The energy boded well for the [videogame](#) industry, which suffered from lagging sales during the economic meltdown.

"We are all optimistic about a return to form for the industry," Steinberg said. "There was not the gloom and doom as last year."

"I don't think there is anything to worry about at all," Satterfield said. "You have the Move, Kinect, 3-D, and great software coming out. The industry is going to be fine."

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