

Video game makers ready barrage of blockbusters

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A model demonstrates a 3D videogame content for PlayStation 3 videogame console at the Tokyo Game Show. Video game makers are breaking out the big guns and hitting players with a barrage of dynamite titles that will compete for their devotion and entertainment dollars this holiday season.

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Bethesda Softwork's freshly released "Rage" blends brilliant graphics with fast-paced combat on foot and in vehicles in an expansive vision of an Earth rendered wasteland by an asteroid strike.

"Resistance 3," crafted by Insomniac Studios exclusively for [Sony PlayStation 3](#), builds on the shooter franchise's notorious arsenals to arm

players in a fierce last-ditch quest to save humanity from alien invaders.

"Battlefield 3" launched Tuesday, getting a head start on eagerly-awaited shooter rival "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3," which hits the market in early November.

Those who prefer to duel with their wits can play the famed Dark Knight from comic book lore in "Batman: Arkham City," a sequel that arrived this month to rave reviews.

[Electronic Arts](#) has meanwhile added a new pet-themed version to its cult hit Sims videogame franchise.

"This is the most crowded release schedule I've ever seen," [video game industry](#) analyst Michael Pachter, of Wedbush Morgan Securities, told AFP on Wednesday.

"They are all going to make money," he predicted. "And this is the season to make money."

The year is finishing out with a barrage of of must-have titles. [Video game makers](#) are also enticing customers by adapting to the new motion-sensing capabilities of Xbox 360 and [PlayStation 3](#) consoles.

Pachter expected it to be a lucrative season, with the earliest titles to hit the market grabbing the largest share.

"It is like going to a smorgasbord, and by the time you get to the dessert your plate is full," Pachter said.

"Everything is so good that people are going to fill up their plates by the time those later games get there... Those out first are the winners and the losers are the guys who come out last; it is not a quality issue."

"Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception," an action-adventure title set for release on November 1, features breathtaking graphics and is seen as a sure contender for [video game](#) of the year.

"Modern Warfare 3" meanwhile promises to "such the air out of gamers' lungs" when the title becomes available to zealous fans of the military shooter franchise a week later, according to Pachter.

That could leave players' wallets light by the time French video game titan Ubisoft releases the next installment in its "Assassin's Creed" franchise in mid-November.

"Saints Row: The Third" and "Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3" are due to hit the market at about the same time.

Car racing game "Need for Speed" and Bethesda's epic fantasy game "The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim" will also come out in November.

"They are all going to be good," Pachter said, predicting that lackluster packaged video game sales would get a boost over the holidays and downplaying the impact of free online games, like those offered on social networks.

Blockbuster titles typically debut with prices in the \$40 to \$60 range.

But Pachter likened big console videogames to the major Hollywood success "Avatar" and free online games, like those from startup Zynga, to hit television programs such as "American Idol."

"They are both televised entertainment, but they don't compete," he said. "There is not a person alive who said they couldn't watch 'Avatar' because they watched 'American Idol' instead."

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