

Nintendo seeks E3 game show buzz with Wii U peek

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Crowds line up to view the new Nintendo game console Wii U at the Nintendo booth during the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, in 2011. Nintendo provided a glimpse Sunday into its second-generation Wii console as the Japanese videogame giant set out to generate excitement ahead of the E3 industry extravaganza.

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In a webcast streamed online, Nintendo president Satoru Iwata revealed details about the Wii U GamePad and promised more was to come at a press conference in Los Angeles on Tuesday prior to the opening of the E3 show floor.

The console's name was a reference to a 6.2-inch (16-centimeter) screen that displays maps or other information to complement game play, acts as a touchscreen game board and serves as a second monitor.

And the tablet-style screen can serve as a "social window" to exchange messages between people using Wii U tablets to play with or against one another online in the belief that "together is better," according to Iwata.

Iwata pulled back the curtain on a "Miiverse" social network that serves as an online community for users of Wii U consoles. Miiverse messages and posts can be accessed using standard Web browsing programs on computers or mobile gadgets.

Players in Miiverse could take part in video chats or communicate with messages written in script with fingers on touchscreen GamePads.

"One of the challenges we set for ourselves was creating something that will help unite people rather than divide them," Iwata said.

Nintendo will tout its coming Wii U GamePad console as well as videogames being tailored for play on the beefed up console it hopes will reignite passion sparked by its groundbreaking Wii devices released in 2006.

"I think what Nintendo has done is really great," said Ubisoft chief executive Yves Guillemot.

"They are mixing buttons with a screen and it is allowing the gamer to have everything they want," he continued. "This is really helping change the experience for gamers."

Games tailored for play on Wii U are expected to be part of a powerhouse line-up that the France-based videogame titan will show off

at a press event in a Los Angeles theater on Monday.

Microsoft has said that it will not unveil a successor to the US technology firm's Xbox 360 console and Japan-based Sony said it will remain mum about a next-generation PlayStation 3.

Wii consoles introduced motion-sensing controllers that were a smash success and unlocked a vast audience of "casual gamers" enticed by the ability to play with simple gestures instead of having to master toggles and buttons.

That casual audience has been lured to inexpensive or free games that can be played on smartphones or tablets using swipes on touchscreens and by games enjoyed online at venues such as zynga.com or social network Facebook.

"The snack food type games thrive at the expense of casual games," Wedbush Securities analyst Michael Pachter said, referring to social and mobile titles.

"They have hurt the Wii and the DS (Nintendo handheld game device) badly and taken away the casual gamer."

Analysts doubt the Wii U will win over hardcore gamers or the casual crowd increasingly captivated by games played inexpensively on smartphones or tablets.

The absence of new Xbox or PlayStation consoles was cited as among the reasons that videogame publishers are betting on established franchises.

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