

# Videogame console icon turns mobile play god

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Peter Molyneux introduces the new XBox 360 "Project Natal" at a Microsoft XBox 360 media briefing on June 1, 2009 in Los Angeles, California. Videogame industry legend Peter Molyneux says the time is right for people to play God on smartphones.

Videogame industry legend Peter Molyneux says the time is right for people to play God on smartphones. The former Lionhead Studio chief and Microsoft Game Studios executive has teamed with Japan-based

DeNA to get his latest project—GODUS—on the array of mobile devices powered by Android or Apple software.

"There is something incredible happening on these devices," Molyneux said while hefting a smartphone in one hand. "This is where the home of gaming should really exist."

Molyneux, whose background in the computer game industry stretches back to the early 1980s, left Microsoft Studios last year and founded startup 22Cans.

He revealed his latest project, which 22Cans is building and DeNA will distribute, the same week that Microsoft unveiled a new Xbox One console designed to be at the heart of home entertainment in the Internet Age.

"When I decided to leave Microsoft and come to this space, the first thing I had to do is think in a completely different way," Molyneux said of the shift to play on smartphones and tablets.

"Console games are the equivalent of making films, whereas mobile is much more like television soap operas," he continued.

"In one you design for a defined time spent sitting, while in the other you design to keep the person coming back to see what happens next."

GODUS puts a mobile Internet spin on a "God game" genre pioneered by Molyneux decades ago.

Players can shape and mold their in-game worlds with brushes, taps or strokes of touchscreens.

"At the heart of the genre is the ability of people to create and engage

with their own unique world; being able to feel like this world is yours and that what you do in this world has amazing effects," Molyneux said.

The more players get inhabitants to believe in his or her godliness, the more powerful they become.

GODUS also allows players to direct their wrath in the form of tornadoes, earthquakes or volcanic eruptions at the followers of rival gods in battles for dominion, according to Molyneux.

"You can take some of your precious followers into these battles; that is more edge-of-the-seat stuff," he said.

Victory is rewarded with more followers or personalized gifts, such as additional powers or in-world items.

When GODUS is released later this year, it will be free to play, with revenue based on in-game sales of virtual items or abilities.

Molyneux praised mobile devices for the intimacy of touchscreens and rapid-fire innovation compared to years-long cycles for generations of videogame console hardware that put space between players and television screens.

"I would give up the big screen forever as long as I could keep touch," Molyneux said as he sculpted landscape in GODUS with light strokes of his smartphone screen.

"It destroys this barrier between the audience and the gaming experience."

Microsoft and Sony are set to release new-generation videogame consoles later this year. Nintendo launched a Wii U console last year that

featured a tablet-style second screen, but sales have been dismal.

"Seven years it has taken us to get to the next Xbox and PlayStation, but in that time every three months there is a revision of this technology," Molyneux said of the smartphone in his hand.

"This device is creating millions of new consumers enjoying games every day, and that is why the opportunities are massive."

Molyneux said that veteran game industry giants understand the potential of mobile games but equated the firms to "supertankers" that take a while to change direction and remain anchored in the practice of selling game software disks.

"They all, Microsoft included, mistakenly thought that mobile games were just another iteration of Facebook games," Molyneux said. "These games are more than that."

Mobile games are on the verge of becoming hobbies, with people playing for free but investing in items, accessories or experiences that expand on their passions, according to the videogame wizard.

"Mobile is about designing a game around engagement instead of spectacle," said DeNA West chief Clive Downie.

"You are designing something that has to engage people every day versus a packaged entity for a \$60 price," he continued. "That is something the Activisions and the Electronic Arts of the world don't have."

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