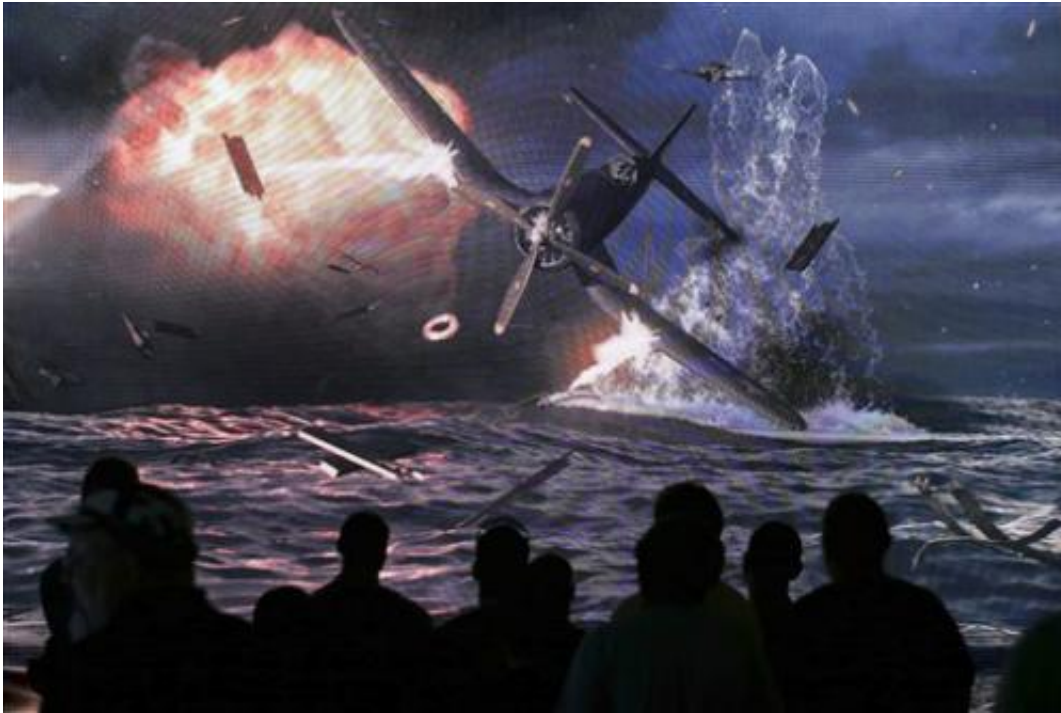


# Winners and losers at this week's E3

June 15 2013, by Lou Kesten

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Show attendees watch a presentation on the video game "World of Warships" at the Wargaming.net booth during the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, Wednesday, June 12, 2013. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

Since the first battles over "Pong" machines in local arcades four decades ago, video gamers have loved good competition. And this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo—the industry's largest annual gathering—presented more thrilling showdowns than ever. Microsoft vs. Sony. Mobile vs. console games. "Titanfall" vs. "Destiny." So who won E3?

— MICROSOFT VS. SONY: Both companies served up flashy presentations of the forthcoming next-generation consoles, the Xbox One and the PlayStation 4. Microsoft's show came off bland and corporate, and did little to answer consumer disenchantment with the Xbox One's requirement for regular Internet connections and Microsoft's vague statements on the playability of used games. Sony came out swinging, promising it would not try to restrict used [game sales](#) and the PS4 would not require a persistent online connection.

Sony also scored by announcing a \$399 price tag for the PS4, \$100 less than the Xbox One. While the contest is far from decided (indeed, much of the whole used-games issue rests in the hands of third-party publishers like [Electronic Arts](#) and [Ubisoft](#)), Sony assuredly won over some hearts. Winner: Sony.

— "TITANFALL" VS. "DESTINY": Two of the biggest debuts at E3 were first-person shooters from veterans of the genre. Respawn's "Titanfall," shepherded by the masterminds behind the landmark "Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare," updates the formula with the addition of giant robots. "Destiny," from "Halo" creator Bungie, is more ambitious, promising vast open worlds that reward exploration more than the typical shooter. Winner: "Destiny."

— CONSOLE VS. MOBILE: Console [game publishers](#) have been fretting over the continued viability of the \$60, disc-based game in the face of competition from 99-cent smartphone apps. But [mobile games](#), tucked away in the corners of the Los Angeles Convention Center, barely made a peep amid the bombast of their big-budget brethren at E3. And some big companies are looking at mobile games as less of a threat and more of a gateway drug for large-screen play. Winner: Consoles.



Show attendees watch a presentation on the video game "Destiny" at the Activision Blizzard Booth during the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, Thursday, June 13, 2013. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

— **INDIE VS. CORPORATE:** Independent game development is blossoming, and the Indiecade area of the convention center displayed more creativity than most of the expensive corporate booths. (The most fun I had this week was playing "Tiny Brains," a multiplayer puzzler from Spearhead Games, a small studio founded by EA and Ubisoft veterans.) But Sony, in particular, is aggressively wooing indies to create PS4 and Vita games, and the buzziest titles at its booth were idiosyncratic gems like "Hohokum," "Octodad: Dadliest Catch" and "Secret Ponchos." Winner: Can't we all just get along?

— **'ELDER SCROLLS' VS. 'DRAGON AGE':** The two most popular American role-playing franchises hurled a few fireballs at each other. BioWare is looking to rebound from the divisive "Dragon Age II" with

the more classically expansive "Dragon Age: Inquisition." But Bethesda Softworks' "The Elder Scrolls Online" is further along and looks more impressive each time I see it. Meanwhile, sword-and-sorcery tales are thriving, with promising epics like "The Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt," "Dark Souls II" and "Blackguards" in the pipeline. And yes, "Final Fantasy XV" is coming. Winner: "The Elder Scrolls Online."

— NINTENDO VS. ITSELF: Nintendo has a stable of talented game designers with impressive resumes, but they've been relegated to uninspired projects for the Wii U. The team behind the stellar "Super Mario Galaxy" games is producing the multiplayer "Super Mario 3D World," which plays an awful lot like last year's "New Super Mario Bros. U." Retro Studios, architect of last decade's spectacular "Metroid" reboot, is bogged down with another "Donkey Kong Country" game. While Nintendo's character roster is second to none, the company desperately needs an influx of fresh ideas. Winner: Nobody.

— "PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES": Popcap Games' flora were in full bloom at E3, with the long-awaited "Plants vs. Zombies 2" for mobile devices as well as "Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare," a goofy 3D shooter for the Xbox. Still, zombies continue to run rampant, starring in "Dead Rising 3," "The Evil Within," "Dying Light," "Ray's The Dead" and the next episode of the "Walking Dead" saga, alongside about half a dozen other games. Winner: Zombies.



Show attendees play video games on the PlayStation 4 at the Sony booth during the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, Thursday, June 13, 2013.  
(AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

— "CALL OF DUTY" DOG VS. CAT MARIO: In "Super Mario 3D World," a cat costume enables Mario to scramble up walls and pounce on enemies. Activision's "Call of Duty: Ghosts," however, features a German shepherd named Riley who can sneak through bushes, jump through windows and rip the throats out of terrorists. Plus, he's become an Internet sensation, and his Twitter account has over 26,000 followers. Winner: Dog.

— OPTIMISM VS. DESPAIR: No doubt, these are anxious times in the video-game business. The Wii U has yet to gain traction, and no one has any idea about how enthusiastically consumers will embrace the Xbox One and [PS4](#). And big questions remain about piracy, privacy and the sustainability of big-budget game development. Still, the E3 show floor

was packed all week, and most of the industry veterans I spoke with agreed it was the most exciting show in years. Winner: Optimism.

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