

Gamers gather for look at new PlayStation, Xbox in Tokyo (Update)

September 19 2013, by Kyoko Hasegawa



Visitors look at a display case containing a Sony PlayStation 4 at the Tokyo Game Show in Chiba, suburban Tokyo on September 19, 2013.

Gamers gathered Thursday for the start of the Tokyo Game Show, an annual extravaganza that this year will give punters their first real taste of the PlayStation 4 and the Xbox One.

Developers from more than 350 companies in 33 countries were vying to showcase their latest offerings, with special areas in the vast Makuhari Messe convention centre set aside for romance simulation games, cloud gaming and the booming smartphone and tablet game sector.

Around 200,000 people were expected at the event, which runs until Sunday just outside the Japanese capital, with many relishing the chance to get their hands on the new consoles from Sony and Microsoft.

Etienne Fouillade, 21, who flew to Tokyo from Paris specially for the game show, gave the PlayStation 4 (PS4) a qualified thumbs up.

"I'm impressed at the graphics, the new titles are great and I'm looking forward to sharing gaming with friends and strangers on the net," he told AFP.

"The new game console is a little bit disappointing, though, because you need to get used to a slight difference in controls from older ones."

The home-grown PS4 hits shelves in North America in November, in time for the holiday shopping season, but will not be available to Japanese buyers until February.

Sony announced the roll-out earlier this month, seven years after PlayStation 3 debuted. It will be the first time the company's home market will not take the lead.

Company bosses said Japanese developers had been slower to exploit the potential of the new console and Sony wanted to wait until the software was ready before unleashing their latest offering.

For the original PlayStation, 18.6 percent of global sales were in Japan. Its successor, the PlayStation 2, tallied 14.7 percent of sales at home,

while the PS3 racked up 11.9 percent, according to data from VGChartz Network.

North America, by comparison, accounted for about one-third of all PlayStation sales.



Graphic on the global games market, including revenue share and number of gamers by region.

Sony sets ambitious target

The new PlayStation will sell for just under 40,000 yen (\$400) in Japan, about the same as in the United States, with Sony aiming to sell five million consoles worldwide by the end of March 2014.

That ambitious target compares with the 3.55 million the PS3 sold between its November 2006 debut and the end of March the following year, the Wall Street Journal reported.

The rival Xbox One will be rolled out in 13 countries, including the US, Britain and Australia, on November 22. No date has been set for its release in Japan, although it will reportedly not be before next year.

Experts say that while a hardcore of gamers will likely never forsake them, console makers including Japanese giant Nintendo have found their market share squeezed by the spread of smartphone and tablet gaming.

Free-to-play offerings on those platforms tempt casual users not willing to shell out \$50-plus for a title on a dedicated machine.

Andrew House, president and group CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment, told convention-goers in fluent Japanese Thursday the PS4 had been developed to make it competitive in the new world of gaming.

"For game consoles to be at the centre of the home they need to have high quality content which all family members, from children to adults, can enjoy," he said.

"Also important is to offer the experience of social networking... we have really pushed the status of games to that of films and TV.

"In our next generation PS4, we have added new functions and services,"

he said, including networking with other game players through smartphones and tablets.



Visitors walk past Microsoft's Xbox One stall at the Tokyo Game Show in Chiba, suburban Tokyo on September 19, 2013.

For PlayStation 4, 18 game titles were presented including action game "Knack" and shoot-em-up RESOGUN.

The 22 new Xbox titles unveiled include racing game "Forza 5" and shooter "Titanfall".

Independent game developers occupied a part of the exhibition site for the first time this year.

Eike Kruger and Sebastian Katsura, postgraduate students of game developing in Germany, were showing off their efforts for Sony's PlayStation Portable (PSP).

The big selling point for smaller developers is their affordability: "Our games are cheap and simple to play with," he said.



Visitors wear Sony's new head mount display (HMD) "HMZ-T3" to play videogames at the Tokyo Game Show in Chiba, September 19, 2013.

Meanwhile, established franchises like Grand Theft Auto, which made a splash this week with its fifth incarnation, had gamers standing in long lines waiting for their first peak.

The Tokyo Game Show is open to media and industry professionals on Thursday and Friday. General admission begins Saturday.

As the show got under way, the death was announced of longtime Nintendo chief Hiroshi Yamauchi, who died Thursday at the age of 85. He was credited with turning the company into a global videogame powerhouse.

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