

Sony aims at gamers with new PlayStation 4 console

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Sony unleashes its powerful new PlayStation 4 video game console on Friday, seeking to win over consumers with immersive, realistic game worlds and easy online sharing with friends.

The successor to the PlayStation 3 makes its debut in North America,

hitting Europe later in the month.

"Millions of gamers are eagerly awaiting the launch of PlayStation 4," analyst Scott Steinberg at the consultancy TechSavvy told AFP.

"It promises to define what the next generation of gaming and online connected titles will bring and help cement set-top devices' new position in a world increasingly defined by smartphones, tablets, free-to-play, social, online games and mobile devices."

The PS4 comes seven years after its predecessor and a week ahead of the release of a new-generation Xbox One console by Sony rival Microsoft.

The PS4 is priced at \$399, while Xbox One will have a \$499 price.

"With the PS4, we wanted to make a high-performance machine at a low price to put one in every living room across the world," Sony Computer Entertainment America vice president Adam Boyes said while giving AFP an early look at the new console.

"We created a box that is capable of amazing things."

Along with building more powerful computing engines into consoles for cinematic graphics, engineers built in social features and took lessons from smartphone and tablet games that are making inroads.

"Like a Swiss Army knife, we are taking the best of what we learn from [mobile devices](#) and putting it in the console," Boyes said.

"It is not just around the TV in your living room, it is about expanding that."

A button on the PS4 controller allows players to share video snippets or screen captures from [game play](#) at leading online social network Facebook. Pictures of game play can also be shared by firing off links via Twitter.

Players can let friends watch them play live, with video streamed at online platforms.

"For the first time in the history of consoles, you literally press a button and broadcast to everyone you know," Boyes said.

While Sony tools let game makers extend play to smartphones or tablets, the Japanese video game titan spotlighted ways it has tied its handheld Vita device to consoles.



Visitors look at a display case containing Sony Computer Entertainment's

PlayStation 4 at the Tokyo Game Show in Chiba, suburban Tokyo on September 19, 2013

A PS4 version of Ubisoft's hit [video game](#) Assassin's Creed Black Flag lets players use Vita as a controller for the console, or even use the handheld to pick up playing where they left off on a television screen.

Dozens of PS4 games demonstrated behind closed doors at a hotel in Manhattan revealed that studios are using the console's processing power to make scenes realistic.

"With the additional power, we can now add a bunch of technology to give you an even more immersive world," said Ubisoft's Sylvain Trottier, who is in charge of the next-generation console version of hit videogame "Assassin's Creed: Black Flag."

"For sure, future titles are going to be even more amazing and more realistic," he continued, referring to the potential of PS4 and Xbox One.

The PS4 has eliminated need to chose between game features and vivid graphics in games, according to "Killzone Shadow Fall" art directors Arjan Bak and Misa Baas.

"We can now actually do a lot more of everything," Baas said, noting that the exclusive PlayStation science fiction shooter created by Guerrilla Games studio has gotten "brainy" as well as immersive.

"We've gone from YouTube video quality to something that is much more cinema."

Activision crafted an even more vivid version of hot-selling "Call of

Duty: Ghosts" for the PS4.

"We were able to throw more on next-gen systems," Activision executive Daniel Suarez told AFP.

"As developers get more familiar with the hardware, work with Sony or Microsoft, you are going to see an evolution of games looking better, playing better, and new paradigms of how people play."

Doors opened by new consoles could include virtual reality, enhanced motion-sensing controls, and "things we haven't even thought of yet," according to Suarez.

"We are just at that first look at the summit of what is going to be possible," Suarez said.

For Sony, that future includes bringing independent game makers into the fold.

"They are making it a lot easier for people to self-publish on the PlayStation," said Katie Hallahan of Phoenix Online Studios.

"It means the player will have a good variety of games, not all shooters and action but cool stuff that is a little different," she added.

"Xbox has been noticing that and catching up."

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