

'Gears of War' videogame will stay in Xbox arsenal

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A man plays 'Gears of War 3' at Microsoft's Xbox 360 display at the 2012 International Consumer Electronics Show at the Las Vegas Convention Center January 10, 2012 in Las Vegas, Nevada

Microsoft on Monday said that it bought the rights to "Gears of War" in a move that promises to keep the hit videogame franchise true to Xbox consoles.

Microsoft and rival Sony in November released new-generation

videogame consoles, Xbox One and PlayStation 4 respectively, and the battle for devotees includes exclusive games.

"Gears of War" has been only available for play on Xbox consoles and Windows-powered personal computers.

Buying the rights from studio Epic Games allows Microsoft to lock the door to a version being crafted for PlayStation at some point in the future.

"We're very proud of the franchise we built in close partnership with Microsoft over the past decade and are happy that this agreement enables Microsoft to forge ahead with the 'Gears' universe on their industry-leading platforms as Epic concentrates its efforts on new projects," Epic founder and chief Tim Sweeney said in a release.

Microsoft did not disclose the financial terms of the deal, which it said includes rights to all existing and future "Gears of War" games.

The US technology titan's game unit said that Black Tusk Studios in Vancouver will take over development of the franchise, with the former director of production at Epic playing a key role.

NPD Group reported this month that new consoles from Sony and Microsoft powered a winning holiday season for the videogame industry in the United States.

"The newest consoles from Microsoft and Sony are off to a tremendous start," said NPD analyst Liam Callahan.

"Xbox One led consoles sales in December, while PlayStation 4's two-month total makes it the best selling console during the two-month launch window."

US videogame hardware sales for the December holiday period were \$1.37 billion, a 28 percent rise over the same period a year earlier, NPD reported

Videogame hardware sales for the year tallied \$4.26 billion, up five percent from the \$4.04 billion logged in 2012.

When factoring in money spent on game rentals, downloadable content, micro-transactions, mobile "apps," play at social networks, subscriptions, and used game [sales](#), nearly \$2.4 billion was spent on games in December, according to NPD.

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