

Awesome! 'Lego Dimensions' combining bricks and franchises

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This photo provided by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment shows a scene from the video game, "LEGO Dimensions." Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment and TT Games unveiled plans Thursday, April 9, 2015, for "Lego Dimensions," a game and toy line combining real-world Lego bricks and figures with virtual game worlds depicted on screen, similar to the popular "Skylanders," "Disney Infinity" and "Ambio" franchises from Activision-Blizzard Inc., Walt Disney Co. and Nintendo Co. (AP Photo/Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment)

The creators of the "Lego" video games are building their own rendition of a toys-to-life franchise.

Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment and TT Games unveiled plans Thursday for "Lego Dimensions," a game and toy line combining real-world Lego bricks and figures with virtual game worlds depicted on screen. It's similar to the popular "Skylanders," "Disney Infinity" and "Ambiio" series from Activision-Blizzard Inc., Walt Disney Co. and Nintendo Co.

"Lego Dimensions" will click together several Lego-ized versions of entertainment properties, including "The Lord of the Rings," "Back to the Future," DC Comics, "The Wizard of Oz." Over the next two years, publisher Warner Bros. Interactive and developer TT Games plan to stack more figures and content onto "Dimensions" culled from other well-known brands.

"I think 'The Lego Movie' helped open the door," said TT Games managing director Jon Burton, who served as a producer on the film. "We've found that everyone from the intellectual properties we've partnered with were hugely open to this idea. It's lent itself to creating this world where hopefully it's only bounded by the imagination of the kids playing it."

The series' starter pack, which is scheduled for release Sept. 27 for all major consoles at \$99.99, will include the game, a reader and pieces to construct a Lego portal on the device, as well as figures of Batman, the Batmobile, Gandalf and Wyldstyle from "The Lego Movie." The trio is set to be voiced respectively by Troy Baker, Tom Kane and Elizabeth Banks.



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"It's not just about what's on screen," said Warner Bros. Interactive senior vice president Jeff Junge. "We wanted to capture play between physical and digital in a whole new way. Usually, when you get a typical Lego playset, the instructions are completely inside the box. Here, we're giving you a start, but you'll get the rest as you play through the game."

The reader, which is divided into three sections and can detect up to seven Lego figures or vehicles at a time, doesn't visually scan the bricks. Instead, the Lego figures and vehicles can be affixed to individually marked discs containing radio frequency identification technology that's

transmitted to the reader, just like the "Skylanders" and "Infinity" toys.

In a demonstration of "Dimensions" for The Associated Press, the two-player action kicked off with heroes Batman, Gandalf and Wyldstyle being ripped from their respective realms and teleported to Oz to restore an interdimensional gateway. At one point, the Caped Crusader from the "Lego" games crossed paths with the surly Batman of "The Lego Movie."

"It's a mashup," said Warner Bros. Interactive producer Doug Heder. "When kids play with their toys, they don't play with one character from one world. They put all their toys together, and that's the experience we're trying to recreate in the game. You can bring characters together like Batman, Gandalf and Wyldstyle, who don't normally associate with each other."

Unlike other "Lego" titles, "Dimensions" allows any character to be played from the start. Other personalities set to appear include Marty McFly of "Back to the Future"; Wonder Woman and Cyborg of DC Comics; the Wicked Witch of "Wizard of Oz"; Emmet, Bad Cop, Benny and Unikitty of "The Lego Movie"; and Gollum, Gimli and Legolas of "Lord of the Rings."



This photo provided by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment shows the interactive LEGO ToyPad for the "LEGO Dimensions" video game. Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment and TT Games unveiled plans Thursday, April 9, 2015, for "Lego Dimensions," a game and toy line combining real-world Lego bricks and figures with virtual game worlds depicted on screen, similar to the popular "Skylanders," "Disney Infinity" and "ambio" franchises from Activision-Blizzard Inc., Walt Disney Co. and Nintendo Co. (AP Photo/Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment)

The Danish toy company began blurring the lines between the physical and virtual last year with the release of "Lego Fusion," which combined real-world brick building with game apps utilizing mobile device cameras, as well as Funcom's "Lego Minifigs Online," a multiplayer game featuring virtual characters that can be unlocked with codes included with toys.

TT Games first laid the foundation for its successful "Lego" game series in 2005 with "Lego Star Wars" and has gone on to craft blocky renditions of "Harry Potter," "Indiana Jones" and "Pirates of the Caribbean." The studio will continue to create stand-alone titles that don't utilize "Dimensions" functionality, such as "Lego Jurassic World" and "Lego Marvel's Avengers."

"There have been 140 million units sold," noted Warner Bros. Interactive executive vice president and general manager David Haddad. "It'd be very easy for us to lean back, but we're leaning in because this is the exact moment we should innovate. It's our biggest investment yet in a very important piece of business for us—the 'Lego' business."

The game's producers declined to discuss if "Dimensions" would integrate other modes beyond the game's linear levels, like the open-ended virtual toy box from "Disney Infinity." They said additional announcements about "Dimensions" would be made in June at the Electronic Entertainment Expo, the annual gathering of the game industry in Los Angeles.

More information: www.ttgames.com

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