'The Witcher 3' takes a cue from 'Game of Thrones'

May 11 2015, byDerrik J. Lang

This photo provided by CD Projekt RED shows a scene from the video game, "The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt." (CD Projekt RED via AP)

"The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt" isn't shying away from its name.

With quests involving topless sorceresses, supernatural fetuses and missing frying pans, the third installment of the role-playing saga is expected to be the wildest yet for Polish video game developer CD Projekt RED.

The latest edition of the video game franchise based on Polish writer Andrzej Sapkowski's fantasy book series unflinchingly begins with a horse decapitation.

"It's a medieval world," said Marcin Iwinski, co-founder and CEO of Warsaw, Poland-based CD Projekt RED. "It's nothing strange. There are people dying on battlefields, and there are animals dying on battlefields. It's just a way to show the world of 'The Witcher' as it was described in the books. I actually see a lot of similarities between 'The Witcher' and 'Game of Thrones.'"

It's true both fantasy franchises are mercilessly brutal, as well as morally ambiguous and unapologetically adult.

Shortly after that horse loses its head, the M-rated series' mystical protagonist Geralt shares a sudsy moment with his lover. Later, he's slicing foes in half and witnessing a barroom brawl that ends with a bloody bludgeoning, depending on how players approach the open world of "Witcher 3." It's entirely possibly to avoid some conflicts with smooth talk.

"We are not removing any of the violence, but I promise it's not there to shock you," said Iwinski. "It's there to show you that sometimes there are ruthless people who are much worse than the monsters you fight in the game."

This photo provided by CD Projekt RED shows a scene from the video game, "The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt." (CD Projekt RED via AP)

The game's "Wild Hunt" subtitle isn't a reference to racy content but to an icy army that white-haired hero Geralt battles throughout the lengthy single-player experience, which is set for release May 19. Inspired by "Game of Thrones" and other TV shows, Iwinski said the developers at CD Projekt RED created several animated recaps that will launch each time players load up the monstrous title.

"I think gamers have a lot of distractions these days, so we wanted to make it easier for them to understand where they left the story," said Iwinski. "We didn't want them to just say, 'What the (expletive) was going on?' then turn it off."

That's not likely.

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The original "Witcher" and "Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings" sold more than 7 million copies. With a virtual world billed as 35 times larger than its predecessor, one that will take 100 hours to completely conquer, expectations are high for "Witcher 3." Game Informer magazine said last week a recent reader poll found "Witcher 3" and "Batman: Arkham Knight" were the year's most anticipated titles.

CD Projekt RED announced Monday that pre-orders of "Witcher 3" have passed the 1 million mark.

"It's an extremely important moment," said Iwinski. "I hope the gamers like it. We're still quite stressed until the reviews come out and users start playing the game, and they say on social media around the world whether they like it or not. At the same time, there's a feeling of accomplishment. It's my baby. I have six babies now, if you combine my

real babies with my game babies."

More information: www.thewitcher.com

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