

# Console kings battle with grand games and virtual worlds

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Sony launches new video game "Dreams" ahead of the opening of the Electronic Entertainment Expo in LA, where it is battling for fans with fellow console king Microsoft

Console kings Microsoft and Sony battled for players' hearts with blockbuster games and the lure of virtual worlds as the Electronic Entertainment Expo was poised begin in Los Angeles on Tuesday.

The companies behind Xbox One and PlayStation 4 (PS4) consoles staged flashy media events where they showed off dizzying action games and highlighted exclusive content.

Microsoft grabbed the spotlight early Monday with word that people will be able to play beloved old video games on new-generation Xbox One consoles. Gamers have long-desired such "backward compatibility" for titles, which typically retail for about \$60.

Microsoft touted "exclusive" blockbuster content, including "Halo 5 Guardians," from in-house teams and early availability of hotly anticipated video games such as "Rise of the Tomb Raider," set for release late this year by outside studios.

"If you have been waiting to move from your Xbox 360 to Xbox One, now is the time," Xbox division head Phil Spencer said.

Sony PlayStation 4 consoles trounced Xbox One after the new generation consoles hit the market in late 2013.

Microsoft since lowered the price and increased the focus on game play, rather than features such as streaming films, and has begun narrowing the sales gap.

The ability to re-play previous generation Xbox games promised to be a hit with gamers who have lamented that upgrading to new hardware, historically, has come with leaving behind old titles that don't work on new consoles.

"Xbox One backward capability allows you to play the games you have already invested in," Spencer said, eliciting raucous cheers from an audience of gamers, partners and the press.

Xbox executive Mike Ybarra promised that more than 100 titles would be available by year's end in a library of games with backward compatibility, crowing that a personal favorite, "Mass Effect," will be among them.

## Exclusives and independents



Fans react to announcements of new games ahead of the opening of the Electronic Entertainment Expo, known as E3 on June 15, 2015

Xbox and PlayStation are both investing in new franchises, along with cultivating creative original content from small independent studios.

Microsoft studios announced a partnership with famed Japanese game

designer Keiji Inafune, Mark Pacini and teams at Comcept and Armature Studio to debut an all-new Xbox One exclusive titled "ReCore."

Independent games in the works for Xbox One included "Beyond Eyes," in which the main character is blind and engages her world using other senses, and a "Cuphead" game with the intentional vintage look of a 1930s era cartoon.

Microsoft played up the work done to harmonize play across Xbox One and computers powered by Windows 10 operating software due for release later this year.

Sony fired back Monday evening, proclaiming a "new era" of PlayStation gaming complete with big-name games and the dawn of virtual reality on its powerful PlayStation 4 consoles.

The Japanese entertainment titan boasted an array of beloved games for exclusive play on PlayStation 4, along with demonstrations of titles tailored to immerse players in fantasy worlds using Sony's Project Morpheus virtual reality head gear.

"We are witnessing an historic evolution in gaming," said Sony Computer Entertainment America chief Shawn Layden.

PlayStation is the "new home" for blockbuster "Call of Duty" franchise due to an alliance with video game publisher Activision, according to Sony Computer Entertainment president Andrew House.

Sony Studios is also expanding the humongous science fiction shooter world of its successful new "Destiny" video game centered on seemingly limitless online play.



Fans watch a preview of the video game "Call of Duty, Black Ops III" ahead of the opening day of the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles

Blockbuster titles promised PS4 lovers included "Uncharted 4: A Thief's End," due out early next year.

## **Virtual reality games**

Microsoft announced a partnership with Valve VR to make Windows 10 a platform for play using virtual reality head gear.

Facebook-owned Oculus last week said its Rift virtual reality head gear will come with an Xbox controller due to an alliance with console maker Microsoft.

Virtual reality "experiences" will be built on top of Windows and that Xbox games will be playable on Rift, according to Microsoft.



Virtual reality games are proving to be the next frontier for console makers Sony and Microsoft at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in LA

Microsoft used the Xbox One event at E3 to show off a version of popular Minecraft game make for play using the HoloLens augmented-reality visors, which have yet to hit the market.

Sony's House boasted that developers were embracing crafting games that give players 360-degree perspectives in worlds visited using Morpheus virtual reality head gear Sony is readying for market.

He showed off a "Rigs" arena battle game and teased other titles that

visitors to the PlayStation booth at E3 will get to play.

"Project Morpheus is real, evolving, and continues to capture the imagination of developers," House said.

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