

E3 BUZZ: Women triumph, Kinect vanishes at E3

June 16 2015, by Lou Kesten



Singer Jason Derulo performs during the "Just Dance 2016" game segment at Ubisoft's E3 2015 Conference at the Orpheum Theatre on Monday, June 15, 2015, in Los Angeles. (Photo by Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP)

Seen and heard as the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo gears up for its three-day run at the Los Angeles Convention Center:

For the longest time, Lara Croft of "Tomb Raider" was the biggest female star in video games—mainly because she didn't have much competition.

Things are changing, though, with game companies finally waking up to the realization that women make up nearly half of their audience. So at this year's E3, we're seeing more heroines like Emily Kaldwin, the assassin in Bethesda Softworks' "Dishonored 2." Microsoft's "Beyond Eyes" tells the tale of Rae, a blind girl whose other senses are enhanced. Sony's "Horizon: Zero Dawn" features a female hunter on a planet where mechanical dinosaurs run rampant.

Meanwhile, EA Sports' "FIFA 16" brings women's teams to the soccer pitch. Rooftop-running athlete Faith makes her long-awaited return in Electronic Arts' "Mirror's Edge Catalyst." And, of course, Lara herself is back in Square Enix's "Rise of the Tomb Raider."

There are also games like Bethesda's "Fallout 4," EA's "Mass Effect: Andromeda" and Ubisoft's "Assassin's Creed: Syndicate" that let you play as either a man or a woman. And even ultra-macho military franchises like "Halo" and "Gears of War" include female warriors in their squads.

Also encouraging: More women have appeared this year on the E3 stages where companies are showcasing their new games. "Mirror's Edge," EA's "Star Wars: Battlefront" and Ubisoft's "Rainbow Six: Siege" were just a few of the high-profile titles presented by female developers. As "Beyond Eyes" director Sherida Halatoc put it, "If we open ourselves up to new experiences, it can be a beautiful world."

Five years ago, Microsoft introduced its Kinect motion control device

with a flamboyant E3 extravaganza starring Cirque du Soleil.

This year? Kinect didn't even merit a mention at Microsoft's Xbox show. One presenter blurted a Kinect [voice](#) command, but the device itself doesn't even appear in most pictures of the Xbox One.



Brazilian soccer legend Pele, top, speaks at Electronic Arts' brief for upcoming "FIFA 16" game with EA CEO Andrew Wilson, center right, during the Electronic Entertainment Expo at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, Monday, June 15, 2015. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

Sony, which has put far less emphasis on its PlayStation Move doodad, didn't bother mentioning during its presentation. At least Nintendo's Wii U still incorporates the gimmick, last time we checked.

So what's taking motion control's place? "Virtual reality," with both companies promising immersion in three-dimensional worlds via wraparound headsets. Microsoft's has adopted the Oculus Rift for use with the Xbox One and PCs; Sony has its own Project Morpheus.

Can virtual reality thrive where [motion control](#) stumbled? We'll check back in 2020.

Celebrities, no matter how much we love them, don't thrive during E3 presentations. The attendees are there for computer-generated spectacle, not to watch Kobe Bryant fumble with [video-game](#) controls (as he did in 2011).

So even an undisputed legend like Pele, who appeared this year to promote "FIFA 16," can bring the show to a screeching halt. Jason Derulo may be a chart-topper, but he wins this year's Flo Rida Memorial Trophy for Awkward Performance promoting Ubisoft's "Just Dance." Neither was greeted with the kind of applause that was received by video game designer Fumito Ueda, creator of the cult classics "Ico" and "Shadow of the Colossus," and the new "The Last Guardian."

But then we have Matt Stone and Trey Parker, the brains behind "South Park." They surprised the Ubisoft audience with a trailer for the forthcoming "South Park: The Fractured but Whole," then treated us to a profanity-filled Q&A with host Aisha Tyler. Stone acknowledged saying they'd never make another game after last year's "The Stick of Truth," but joked that they'd just figured out what they were doing by the end of that game's development and didn't want to let it go to waste.

He expressed all that in words I can't repeat in an AP story. That's knowing your audience.

Buzziest game announcements of the pre-E3 showcases:

- Bethesda's postapocalyptic role-playing epic "Fallout 4."
- Sony's boy-meets-monster love story "The Last Guardian."
- EA's parkour-happy "Mirror's Edge Catalyst."
- Sony's "Dreams," a freaky dive into the unconscious mind for the creators of "LittleBigPlanet."
- Ubisoft's "South Park: The Fractured but Whole," in which the boys become superheroes.

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