

'Avatar' mobile game landing ahead of film sequels

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In this Wednesday, June 1, 2011, file photo, a figure of Jake Sully's avatar character from the movie "Avatar," is on display at the Experience Music Project in Seattle. Before moviegoers return to Pandora, they'll be able visit the exotic alien world from "Avatar" on their smartphones. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, File)

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Lightstorm Entertainment and 20th Century Fox have enlisted game studio Kabam to develop an "Avatar" mobile game for release ahead of the next four film sequels.

"The idea is to extend the world beyond the big screen and create an experience that will be true to what James Cameron did in making the most technologically advanced film of its time," said Kabam COO Kent Wakeford. "That's what we want to do with this game."

The multiplayer strategy game is set for release in 2018 before the second "Avatar" film hits theaters. Wakeford said Kabam plans to update the game as "Avatar" sequels unfurl every other year through 2023.

Kabam previously released mobile games based on such franchises as "Star Wars," Marvel and "Fast & Furious." Wakeford said the budget to produce the "Avatar" game will be substantially more than \$14 million, the average cost of Kabam's previous titles.

The original 2009 film centered on the conflict between the human-led Resources Development Administration and the blue-skinned alien race Na'vi of Pandora. The film sequels will explore Pandora's other environments and cultures.

"For us, to be able to come out ahead of the movie and start to introduce a whole new set of characters and experiences when the movie releases and then again and again and again as the new films roll out, it'll allow us to create a really engaging game," said Wakeford.

The game won't only rely on the first movie for inspiration. For the past year, the developers at Kabam have been collaborating with artists and others working on the next "Avatar" installments at Lightstorm.

"There might be a creature or RDA aircraft that was not in the first movie that we designed for the sequels that's part of the texture of the films," said "Avatar" producer and Lightstorm COO Jon Landau. "If it doesn't reveal a story point from the films, why not share that with Kabam and allow them to use it in that space?"

The four sequels are slated to be simultaneously filmed. Landau said screenwriters are close to finishing their scripts and filming with the principal cast, which includes Sam Worthington and Zoe Saldana, is set to begin in early 2017.

Landau said the mobile game's plot will be separate from the "Avatar" films and will allow players to align together and make decisions that will affect the narrative.



In this Thursday Jan. 28, 2010 file photo, Canadian film director James Cameron poses for photographers prior to the opening of the movie Avatar in Davos, Switzerland. Before moviegoers return to Pandora, they'll be able visit the exotic alien world from "Avatar" on their smartphones. "The idea is to extend the world beyond the big screen and create an experience that will be true to what James Cameron did in making the most technologically advanced film of its time," said Kabam COO Kent Wakeford. "That's what we want to do with this game." (AP Photo/Virginia Mayo, File)

"I think science fiction can be a great metaphor for the world in which we live," said Landau. "As people play this game, I want them to have choices, just like they have in life. The choices you make in a game

create different experiences for you—some for the better, some for the worse. It's about engaging people in this world but never losing sight of the ethos of 'Avatar.'"

A series of "Avatar" games, including mobile editions and a console game developed by Ubisoft Entertainment, were released alongside the first "Avatar" movie and received a mixed reaction from critics and fans. Landau said the partnership with Kabam doesn't mean Lightstorm has ruled out developing another console game.

While filmmaker James Cameron's sci-fi saga remains the biggest blockbuster of all time with \$2.8 billion at the worldwide box office, "Avatar" has mostly been away from cultural consciousness except for a touring exhibit and Cirque du Soleil show. Walt Disney World is set to open an "Avatar"-themed land in 2017, while Dark Horse Comics is working on an "Avatar" series.

More information: www.kabam.com
www.avatarmovie.com

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