

Video game giant Ubisoft thinking young at age 30

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People play 'Steep' by Ubisoft during the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) annual video game conference and show on June 14, 2016 in Los Angeles, California

French video game star Ubisoft is still diving into new worlds at the age of 30.

At a packed booth on the show floor of the premier Electronic Entertainment Expo trade event in Los Angeles on Wednesday, Ubisoft

took players from dance floors to snow-covered Alps and the virtual deck of a "Star Trek" ship.

The company was trying to show it is still looking to innovate even as the industry evolves and moves to new platforms.

"Ubisoft is an entertainment company," Ubisoft marketing vice president Tony Key told AFP on the E3 show floor.

A coming major motion film based on Ubisoft's blockbuster "Assassin's Creed" video game franchise with actor Michael Fassbender is set for release on December 21.

Ubisoft also plans in coming months to open a theme park in Canada based on its popular Raving Rabbids franchise.

The game series in which large, crazed rabbits cause havoc and mischief was spun off of another game, Rayman, in 2009.

Ubisoft is also making a Rabbids television show. The game maker some time back expanded into books.

The Inquisition

"Assassin's Creed" is Ubisoft's biggest video game franchise, selling more than 96 million copies.



Costumed characterizations from the game 'For Honor' by Ubisoft roam the stage during E3 on June 14, 2016 in Los Angeles, California

Ubisoft this year broke from releasing annual sequels to the game, saying it taking time to creatively reboot the franchise based on fan feedback.

The film is set during the Spanish Inquisition and is a new chapter in the story that has played out in the game, which taps into the genetic memory of a descendant of an order of assassins fighting for justice in historically accurate settings.

"We believe games are changing," Ubisoft Motion Pictures vice president Stephanie Simard told an E3 press briefing.

"The worlds that Ubisoft is creating provide opportunity for storytelling

that goes beyond a particular medium."

Ubisoft has a history of boldly taking chances on new technology, jumping into games tailored for consoles with motion-sensing capabilities as well as play on mobile devices.

Ubisoft is moving with similar alacrity when it comes to games for virtual reality gear.

"Virtual reality is a major focal point for Ubisoft," Key said.



People wait in line to sample Tom Clancy's 'Ghost Recon Wildlands' by Ubisoft on June 14, 2016

"We love to experiment."

Ubisoft is poised to satisfy a longtime geek fantasy by letting fans virtually join the crew of a "Star Trek" ship exploring the cosmos.

"Star Trek: Bridge Crew" was built from the ground up as a virtual reality game where players take posts on the command deck of a Starfleet ship and tackle adventures similar to those faced by characters in the television shows and films that have won a devoted following.

Ubisoft's lineup of coming virtual reality games include one that lets players soar like eagles above Paris and another that casts them as villagers who must figure out who among them is a werewolf.

Adventure sports

Ubisoft did not reveal whether it has virtual reality plans for a freshly revealed new game titled "Steep," which lets people live out adventure sports fantasies in the Alps without risking life or limb.

"Steep" players can explore magnificent, snow-blanketed mountains using skis, snowboards, wind suits or by paragliding.



People try out a "Star Trek" themed Ubisoft virtual reality game on June 12, 2016

The game is designed to let online players cavort together, and capture video of feats or crashes to share socially.

Meanwhile, a coming sequel to a hit "Watch Dogs" game pits hackers against a corrupt political power structure in a fictional version of tech-centric San Francisco.

"We all live in a hyper-connected world," said game creative director Jonathan Morin.

"From the perspective of a hacker, this world is filled with opportunities."

Sony announced at E3 that it is collaborating with Ubisoft on a motion picture based on "Watch Dogs."

"Real innovation and magic happens when teams and players are free to create, innovate, take risks and have fun," said Ubisoft chief executive Yves Guillemot, who was among a band of brothers who founded the company in 1986.

"That is what got us here today and what will drive us for the next 30 years and beyond."



A dancer takes a bow while promoting 'Just Dance 2017' by Ubisoft on June 14, 2016

On the business operations side, Ubisoft has been bolstering defenses in the face of what it sees as hostile takeover moves by French mass media

company Vivendi.

Vivendi has been quietly buying up shares of Ubisoft since late last year, amassing a stake of more than 17 percent, according to media reports.

Vivendi recently gained ground in a hostile takeover of mobile game company Gameloft founded by the Guillemot family, leading analysts to believe it will take aim next at Ubisoft.

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