

Microsoft challenges Sony with new Xbox One X

Microsoft on Sunday unveiled Xbox One X - billing it as the most powerful video console ever made, and escalating a battle with market king PlayStation.



The \$499 product was built with the muscle for seamless play on ultra-high definition 4K televisions and will be available worldwide on 7 November 2017, according to Xbox team leader Phil Spencer.

He introduced the much-anticipated Xbox One X, called Scorpio during development, at a Microsoft event ahead of the official opening of the major Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles.

Aiming at the hearts of gamers, Microsoft also showed off 42 coming games, with 22 titles being tailored for exclusive play on Xbox One consoles.

As broad an audience as possible

Independent publishers tend to make blockbuster titles available for play on Xbox, PlayStation and personal computer hardware in an effort to sell creations to as broad an audience as possible.

Keenly-anticipated new games shown off here include a new instalment of "Assassin's Creed" from France-based Ubisoft, intended to reboot the long-running franchise by taking players back to the "origins" of the storyline in ancient Egypt.

Gameplay on 4K screens, whether they be televisions or personal computer monitors, is expected to be among themes at E3 this week. Enabling ultra-rich visuals also tunes into the budding trend toward virtual reality games.

Sony PlayStation 4 has dominated the latest generation of consoles, outselling Xbox One by 2-to-1, according to industry trackers.

PS4 consoles from the outset could power virtual reality, and Sony sells headgear for those experiences.

PlayStation prime driver of revenue

PlayStation has also become the prime driver of revenue and profit at Japan-based entertainment giant Sony, according to executives.

"We are selling every single one we can make," Sony Interactive Entertainment worldwide studios chairman Shawn Layden said of PS4.

Nintendo's recently-launched Switch has been a winner, with fans snapping up the console and a "Legend of Zelda" game that has become a must-play title for fans.

Demand for Switch consoles has been so intense since its launch early this year that the consoles are tough to find in stores and Nintendo has reportedly doubled production.

Switch launched at the start of March and some 2.74 million were sold by the end of that month, according to Nintendo.

Shares boosted

Hot Switch sales also boosted shares of the Japanese company, which ran into a tough patch after it failed to build on the popularity of the first generation of Wii consoles.

PS4 and Xbox One are both performing better in the market than their respective predecessors, and Nintendo "is back in a big way" with Switch, according to NPD analyst Mat Piscatella.

Sony has sold close to 60 million PS4 consoles and will reveal its latest innovations and offerings at a press event on Monday, according to executives.

"We are in the 4K world already," Layden told AFP. "That is what the future of gaming is going to look like."

Microsoft is also courting players by working to make more popular games from earlier Xbox console versions playable on its latest hardware. Microsoft also just launched a subscription service for Xbox, letting players pay a monthly fee for access to a video games library for its console.

Sony makes a library of video games available as part of a subscription service for PlayStation consoles.

Source: AFP