

The New Consoles from Microsoft, Nintendo and Sony

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NEW YORK (AP) — Microsoft is the last of the three big video game console makers to unveil its latest gaming system. The unveiling comes nearly eight years after the Xbox 360 went on sale. It follows last fall's debut of Nintendo's Wii U and a preview in February of the upcoming PlayStation 4 from Sony.

Each machine has a set of features designed to draw gamers away from rival consoles. There's one thing all three have in common, though: They are about more than gaming and include entertainment services such as television, movies and music.

Here's a closer look at the three systems. More details are expected at the E3 video game conference in Los Angeles next month.

— Wii U (Nintendo)

The Japanese gaming company launched the Wii U, the follow-up to its popular Wii, in November, making it the only new console out for last year's holiday season. The console features a tablet-like controller with a touch screen, called the GamePad, which can be used to control games on the TV set or to play games separately, as you would on a regular tablet computer. It also allows someone with a GamePad to have a different experience with a game than someone playing it at the same time with a regular Wii controller.

The GamePad also serves as a fancy remote controller to navigate a TV-watching feature called TVii. The service groups your favorite shows and sports teams together, whether it's on live TV or an Internet video service such as Hulu Plus. And it offers water-cooler moments you can chat about on social media.

Unlike the Wii, the Wii U features high-definition graphics. In doing so, Nintendo's

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system catches up to the years-old Xbox 360 from Microsoft and the PlayStation 3 from Sony.

Sales of the Wii U have been disappointing, with 3.5 million sold as of March 31, the end of Nintendo's fiscal year. Nintendo Co. had originally expected to sell 5.5 million units and later lowered the forecast to 4 million, but it still fell short.

Price: Starts at \$300 but some retailers have offered it at lower prices.

— PlayStation 4 (Sony)

Sony shared some details about the PlayStation 4 in February, but it didn't show what the console would look like. The company said the PS4 would essentially be a "supercharged PC," much like the Xbox. That's a big departure from the old and idiosyncratic PlayStation design and should make it easier for developers to create games.

But the adoption of PC chips also means that the new console won't be able to play games created for any of the three previous PlayStations. Players will have to stream older games over the Internet.

Other new features revolve around social networking and remote access. With one button, you can broadcast video of your game play so friends elsewhere can watch. You can also run a game on the PS4 to stream over the Internet to Sony's mobile gaming device, the PlayStation Vita, which debuted last year.

The PlayStation online network will have access to Sony's video and music services, as well as Netflix, Hulu and Amazon — as long as you have subscriptions to those services. You'll also be able to access Facebook.

The PS4 will have a Blu-ray disc drive for movies, just like the PS3. The console will go on sale this holiday season, though Sony Corp. has not disclosed an exact date.

Price: Not yet announced.

— Xbox One (Microsoft)

Microsoft's new console seeks to deliver the Holy Grail of home entertainment — an all-in-one device that lets you watch television, play movies, listen to music and browse the Internet as well as play video games.

The Xbox One lets you use voice commands to switch between watching TV and playing "Call of Duty," or ask "What's on HBO?" to view a TV channel guide. Simply connect your cable or satellite set-top box to the game machine with an HDMI cable.

A new version of Microsoft's camera-based Kinect controller offers better motion and voice detection than the one currently available. Unlike the Xbox 360, the Xbox One will require Kinect, which will come with the package.

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Microsoft also reached a multiyear deal with the National Football League to develop new interactive viewing experiences, such as the ability to watch games, chat with other fans, view statistics, access highlights in real time and gather fantasy information about players and teams — all on a single screen.

Although Nintendo's Wii was the most popular of the three at first, the Xbox 360 has outsold its rivals in recent years largely because of its robust online service, Xbox Live, which allows people to play games with others online for as much as \$60 a year with annual plans. Activision's "Call of Duty," has been a driving force behind Xbox Live, and Microsoft said players will be able to download new content for upcoming titles in the series on the Xbox One before any other system.

The new console will also add the ability to play Blu-ray discs, matching what Sony has in its older PlayStation 3. What it won't play are games for the Xbox 360.

Microsoft said the system will launch this year, but it did not give a date during Tuesday's unveiling.

Price: Not yet announced.

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