

Video Game Newsletter

October 2008

Around this time each year, the ritual of making Holiday shopping lists begins, including checking them twice and thinking about who's been naughty or nice. With "The List" comes anxiety, especially if shopping is put off until the last minute and budgets are tight. To help everyone get a head start and prioritize, this month's newsletter will list the most notable games that kids big and small are sure to enjoy the most. The attached table is meant to help guide your decisions, by platform and title. Aside from the personal guidance, the list affords insights into which video games are worthy of participating in Holiday activations.

With so much to choose from, the need to make educated, informed decisions about which games to buy becomes critically important, especially to parents of Tweens and Teens. Also, with economic uncertainty in the forefront of consumer thoughts, saving money may afford even greater opportunity for brand alignment and co-marketing. To jumpstart ideation, consider the following when confronted with the decision of how to approach gamers and new game releases for the Holiday season.

Unexpected places for holiday gift guides

Like last year, video games will be pervasive this holiday season. However, the opportunity exists to give the Holiday gift guide a much needed makeover by taking a unique approach to addressing the need for contextual relevance while maintaining video game association and adjacencies. For example, a healthy living magazine could include an area on Active Gaming and discuss Wii games that are exercise-based such as Jillian Michael's Extreme Fitness and Wii Fit. A men's magazine or website could carry a "for her" section that proposes games or accessories for the special woman in your life – Mom, sister, girlfriend, wife or daughter. The Nintendo DS, for example, will be available in fashion colors and fits easily into a purse or pocketbook, without breaking your wallet. Rather than create an advertorial, publishers are most likely writing about video games for the holidays, which means the wall between advertising and editorial will remain intact. All the publisher needs is a nudge – and a check – to modify what already exists. With Print deadlines fast approaching, the web might be the more flexible medium. And if you cannot find a publisher, look to a company like Studio One to create and syndicate the sponsored article for you across a series of highly regarded websites, as they've done for Johnson & Johnson for years.

Brand + Retailer = holiday discounts on video games

Consider a promotion offering discounts based on purchases. In a time of financial strain, every \$1 matters. One possible approach: buy a necessity like a particular brand of men's deodorant at a specific retailer and get \$5 off any sports game from Electronic Arts at checkout. Aside from the obvious in-store and FSI elements, Local Radio offers a great way of supporting the promotion in key markets using on-air mentions and other bumpers to drive foot traffic and generate awareness of the promotion without breaking the bank.

Parting Shot: are video games an affordable luxury?

Cost-conscious consumers are likely to focus inward on home entertainment. Though big screen TVs could be too expensive, video games may be seen as an affordable luxury and a distraction. Following that train of thought, don't be surprised if the top video game makers and retailers like GameStop come out of the Holidays faring better than others. If the economy deteriorates significantly, then the movement to free online games will likely become exacerbated. Ironically, this scenario presents opportunity for marketers to capitalize in the short term with online advertising and other relevant game-related advertising and co-marketing opportunities through the likes of Electronic Arts, Wild Tangent, Double Fusion, Massive and IGA.

Happy Halloween everyone!



Platform	Title	The “Down Low”
X360 or PS3	<p>Fallout 3</p> <p>Guitar Hero World Tour (PS2, Wii versions available)</p> <p>Rock Band 2 (PS2, Wii versions available)</p> <p>Prince of Persia</p> <p>Endwar</p> <p>The Force Unleashed (Wii version available)</p> <p>Mirror’s Edge</p> <p>Call of Duty: World at War</p> <p>Other Games of Note</p>	<p>Long-awaited sequel was named “Best of E3” by many website and magazine editors. If you liked BioShock, you’ll love this. If you’re squeamish with M-Rated shooters, you might want to pass.</p> <p>The next edition of Guitar Hero adds drums and a microphone, the ability to make your own playable music tracks, and band vs band head-to-head competitive online play. All peripherals are Rock Band compatible.</p> <p>This is what the original Rock Band was meant to be, as Harmonix strives to keep the experience authentic. RB2 adds weekly Battle of the Bands challenges, new songs available for download and the ability to create band posters, apparel and even figurines will bring your game-based aspirations into real life. Don’t forget to buy drum cymbals, and yes, even DLC for the Wii is coming.</p> <p>This re-invention of the classic franchise brings illustrative graphics, a partner in Ellika and a next-gen adventure. If you’re a fan of the franchise, you won’t be disappointed.</p> <p>Tired of using your controller to guide troop deployment? Play this real-time strategy game like a true General using only voice commands.</p> <p>If you have always wanted to use the Force in a non-violent way, and love Star Wars, then TFU is for you.</p> <p>Arguably the most innovative game this year, the Parkur (free-running) themed, color-activated, Action/Shooter game will most certainly have a cult-like following.</p> <p>This year’s COD edition goes back to its heritage of World War II. The twist is the battles are fought in the Pacific based on actual strategies and tactics. May not sell as many units as last year’s Modern Warfare, but another victory for Activision is certain.</p> <p>Dead Space, Far Cry 2, Tomb Raider: Underworld</p>
Playstation 3	<p>Resistance 2</p> <p>Little Big Planet</p>	<p>60-person multiplayer, improved game play and graphics makes this a must-buy for every lover of shooters.</p> <p>May be the game of the year. Sack Boy might be cute or creepy, but if you love the Mario franchise, then this 3-D game is Mario on steroids. Feel free to build and share your own levels and play among friends online.</p>
Xbox 360	<p>Gears of War 2</p> <p>Fable II</p> <p>Lips</p>	<p>Another contender for Best Game of E3 and certainly builds upon the original game’s success. A must-have for any Xbox’er that has a tolerance for M-Rated shooters.</p> <p>Open-world sequel to the original Fable enjoyed by millions of role-playing-game fans. Expectations are high and destined for classic status.</p> <p>Microsoft is entering the karaoke space with this title. Oddly enough, they see Rock Band & Guitar Hero as competitors, not other karaoke games like Karaoke Revolution or SingStar. If you purchased any of the aforementioned titles, then there’s little need to buy Lips unless you want to sing along with your iPod or Zune music tracks.</p>

Platform	Title	The “Down Low”
Wii	Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	A little off-center but tons of interactive fun for the whole family. Balance Board is a must-have for certain game challenges and sequences.
	Shawn White Snowboarding	May not be as graphically sharp as the PS3 & Xbox versions, but the Balance Board gives gamers the ability to board like the Flying Tomato. Shawn White ensured the game maintained an authentic experience making this a must-buy for any boarder or boarder-wanna-be
	Wii Fit	Though it's been out for a while and not always easy to find, the controller/game combo and the fitness titles coming on-market makes Wii Fit a long-term winner.
	De Blob	As Blob, you are the hero who restores color to a gray world. High review scores and low profile might sneak this game under everyone's radar.
	Wii Music	At E3, Wii Music was central to overall disappointment with Nintendo's lack-luster news. But, it's hard to bet against Nintendo so don't count this "game" out yet.
	Fitness "Games"	Titles like My Fitness Coach and Jillian Michael's Fitness Ultimatum are intriguing. These will test the Wii's Balance Board as a fitness tool, not just wellness.
PC	Spore	Creature creators have been successful with millions of them developed. However, gamers are unhappy with some decisions made to counter piracy by EA and creator Will Wright (also known for Sim City and The Sims). With over 1 million copies sold to date, sales contradict negative posts made by disgruntled bloggers.
Nintendo DS	LEGO Batman	A nod to the Caped Crusader with the newest LEGO-branded game in the series following up kid-friendly smash hits with Star Wars and Indiana Jones franchises.



Contact:

If you would like more information please contact:

Jay Krihak
 Senior Partner, Group Director
 MEC Interaction
 Tel: +1 212 474 0207
jonathan.krihak@mecglobal.com

www.mecglobal.com