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M$ Previews Xbox 360 Games

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Microsoft showed in Tokyo on Monday some of the latest previews of games being worked on for its Xbox 360 console. The Xbox 360 is scheduled to launch in Japan, North America, and Europe before the end of this year.

Headlining the game previews at the event was Bizarre Creations' "Project Gotham Racing 3." The Liverpool, England, games house showed a stunning preview that was quite unlike any current computer game in terms of graphics, sound, and level of detail.

The game includes a number of circuits based on real streets in real cities. Shown on Monday were clips from New York and Tokyo, the latter of which is based on the city's Shinjuku district and looked just like the real thing thanks partly to the console's high-definition graphics and partly to the use of thousands of reference photos that enable the game to include the same shops, road signs, buildings, and other features as the real Shinjuku.

The higher performance hardware enables improvements in this and other games. Nick Davies, design manager at Bizarre, said each car is made up of 80,000 polygons versus 10,000 in previous generation games. It also enables the company to offer authentic engine noise for 80 types of car.

Another groundbreaking feature is Gotham TV. Looking just like TV coverage of a motor race, Gotham TV allows users the ability to watch race replays of their own races--but it doesn't stop there. Through the Xbox Live online service, users can watch live races being played by other people and switch between circuit cameras, in-car cameras, and views from helicopters for a totally new experience.

Also on Display

Another game based on the streets of Tokyo, Genki's Tokyo Metropolitan Expressway Battle, also displayed an impressive amount of realism and a level of graphics that, like Bizarre's "Project Gotham Racing 3" will soon make existing console games look tired by comparison. One other racing game under development, Namco's "Ridge Racer 6," was mentioned but only a handful of still images of cars were displayed.

Other big names games on show included "N3 Ninety Nine Nights," the action strategy game co-produced by Tetsuya Mizuguchi of Q Entertainment and Lee Sang-Youn of Phantagram. The two showed video of live game play of the game and revealed some of the characters. They also named two of them: a brother and sister called Inphyy and Aspharr.

Yoshiki Okamoto from Game Republic took the stage to reveal details of a new title he's working on. Called "Every Party" (the title is a shortened version of 'everybody's party') the game attempts to meld the world of board games with that of video games. Character design was by popular Japanese designer Momoko Sakura, who is known to millions in

Japan for the "Chibi Maruko Chan" TV animation series. It may not excite North American or European audiences but it's the kind of game that could go down well in the local market and help Microsoft's chances in Japan.

Among action titles several were shown including Namco's "Frame City Killer" and Capcom's "Dead Rising," both of which contained large amounts of death and destruction. The latter title perhaps more than the former because the vast majority of characters are zombies awoken from the dead.

Several sports games were also shown, including Konami's soccer game "Winning Eleven," women's wrestling game "Rumble Roses XX" and professional baseball title "Proyakyu Spirits." Namco also showed short clips from its "Love Football." And for beach volleyball fans everywhere, Tecmo said it is working on "Dead of Alive Xtreme 2" that should see Kasumi-chan and her friends playing volleyball and an unspecified number of other sports--presumably in bikinis.

Tecmo is also producing "Dead or Alive 4" and "Dead or Alive Code: Cronus" for the Xbox 360 and demonstrated the former of the two titles at Monday's event.

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Gaming

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