

# Games giants gear up for E3 show

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Tens of thousands of people are expected to descend on the city for the Electronic Entertainment Expo, E3, which runs from 18 to 20 May.

This year Microsoft, Sony and Nintendo are all due to reveal details about the next wave of video game consoles.

The machines are expected to hit the shops over the next year and a half.

They will be the first new gaming machines since 2001 and they will herald a new generation of consoles.

With faster chips and better graphics, the machines have the potential to make games more realistic and involving.

The event also offers a showcase for games being released over the coming months, with 400 exhibitors from 80 countries.

Behind the brash sounds and flashy lights of E3, video games are a serious business. The global games market is worth some \$28bn (£14.5bn).

Last year, Americans spent \$7.3bn (£3.94bn) buying 248 million computer and video games. In the UK, gamers spent £1.22m on software and hardware in 2004.

"It's been a long time since there has been so much life in the industry," said Margaret Robertson, games editor of Edge magazine.

Microsoft kicked off the console frenzy last week, when it lifted the lid on its Xbox successor. Both Sony and Nintendo are planning to showcase their next-generation games consoles at the E3, though they are not expected to go on sale until 2006.

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