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# Flaws don't stop Xbox 360 retail craze

BY KRISTOFER BUGAS  
 FREELANCE REPORTER

With the Nov. 22 launch of the Xbox 360, Microsoft's sequel to the popular Xbox video game system, the company promised to revolutionize the video game market. So far, relatively few fans have been able to get their own system, and some of those with a coveted Xbox have found that the system is still buggy.

Microsoft said it has received isolated reports of technical problems with the new console.

"It's a few reports of consoles here and there not working properly," said Molly O'Donnell, spokeswoman for Microsoft's Xbox division. "It's what you would expect with a consumer electronics instrument of this complexity. ... Par for the course."

Some owners complained that their systems were crashing during game play, sometimes with error messages popping up. On [www.xbox-scene.com](http://www.xbox-scene.com), one member reported that he could not even finish the first lap of "Project Gotham Racing 3."

O'Donnell urged anyone with Xbox problems to call 1-800-4myXbox or go to [www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com). If the problems can't be immediately resolved, Microsoft will pay to ship the console overnight to a repair center, overnight it back once it's fixed, or ship a replacement.

"They'll be playing again in three to five days," O'Donnell said.

Gaming fanatics lined up for hours to be among the first to purchase the next-generation system, which was in short supply despite its starting price tag of \$299. Microsoft planned to sell 2.5 million to 3 million of the new systems in the first 90 days, but demand has outstripped supply.

Attempts to locate an Xbox 360 in local retail stores proved fruitless since store branches were given limited shipments.

"We sold out two hours before we opened," said Issac Carlson, an electronics specialist at the Target store in Eugene. "We handed out coupons for the 12 consoles we had to the people who had lined up. When we opened they came in and took them all."

The new Xbox 360 prices at an initial retail price of \$299 for the core package and \$399 for the premium package.

Carlson said the store received six of each system package and said Xbox 360s are sold out indefinitely.

In online auctions, one of the few



TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTO EDITOR

The Target store in Eugene sold out of their stock of Xbox 360s two hours before they opened their doors. Retailers around the country are unable to meet demand for the system.

places consumers can still find a console, prices have more than doubled. Premium Xbox 360 systems are listed on eBay.com with prices as high as \$790.

The Xbox 360 is the first in a wave of next generation video game systems being released next year.

Microsoft and Sony, which is set to release its next PlayStation console next year, are pushing newer, slicker graphics capabilities as the reason to buy these new consoles, as well as the enhanced realism in physics and the way people and things behave in game worlds.

Sony Computer Entertainment CEO Ken Kutaragi said Sony's goal is for "consumers to think to themselves, 'I will work more hours to buy

one.' We want people to feel that they want it, irrespective of anything else," according to the official PlayStation 3 announcement.

Microsoft and Sony both have guaranteed high-definition resolution in all of their games. PS3 will use Sony's new Blu-Ray disk format which uses blue light waves rather than the wider red ones allowing disk manufacturers to pack more data on the disks and thus HD content. Xbox 360 will launch with DVD drives installed, and some feel this will leave it at a disadvantage with games taking up progressively more space and HD movies on the horizon.

Members of the technology com-

XBOX, page 14B

## Sony announces parental controls

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Sony Corp. has become the latest of the video game console makers to announce parental controls in its newest machine, according to the Entertainment Software Association.

Now, all three major console makers are promising parents the means to help restrict their children's access to violent video games.

Sony will place the controls on its forthcoming machine, PlayStation 3, according to the ESA. Users of PlayStation 2 could limit access, but only to movies, not games.

The company wasn't immediately prepared to comment.

Microsoft Corp. had already placed parental controls in its new Xbox 360, which debuted last week. The machine lets users restrict access to video games and DVDs that carry certain ratings, such as "T" for "teen" or "M" for "mature." It also offers parental controls on the company's Xbox Live online gaming service, limiting who their children can interact with.

Earlier this month, Nintendo Inc. announced similar plans for its next-generation machine, Revolution, due out in 2006.

Sony, which leads the worldwide market with more than 102 million PlayStation and PlayStation 2 consoles sold, also introduced parental control for games in its PlayStation Portable, launched earlier this year.

The video game industry has been under tougher scrutiny in recent years as lawmakers enacted legislation restricting sales of violent video games to minors. "With the average age of game players now 30, our industry naturally creates content appropriate for a wide range of audiences," said Doug Lowenstein, president of the Entertainment Software Association.

—The Associated Press

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