

Bethesda and Ubisoft at E3

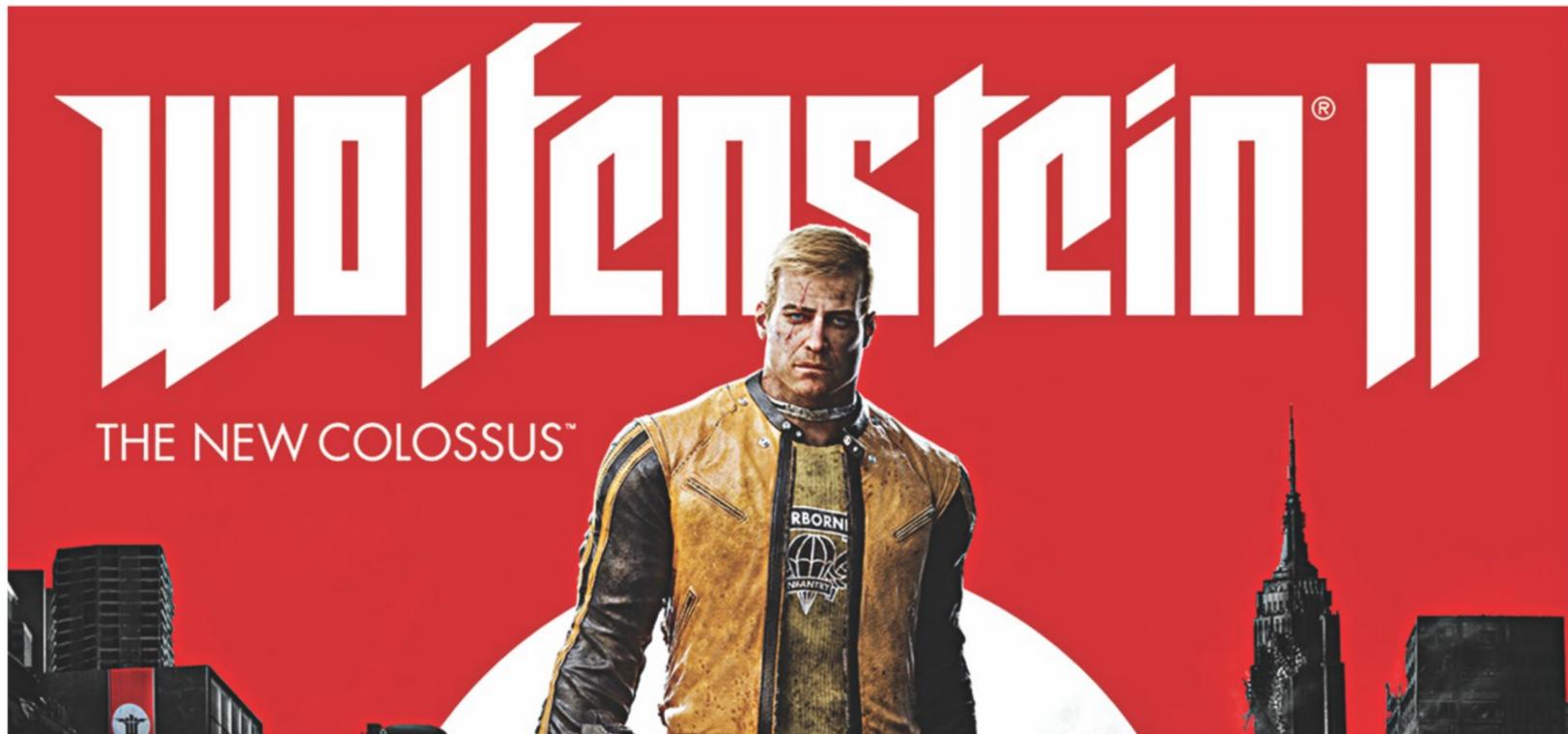
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Bethesda's brief but satisfying show on Sunday night was framed as a tour of a theme park called Bethesdaland. That clever structure gave the publisher a way to run through announcements for existing games, as well as whip the covers off two projects under construction which turned out to be sequels to *The Evil Within* and *Wolfenstein*.

Bethesda is putting plenty of eggs in the VR basket: *Fallout 4* and *Doom* will be entirely playable on the HTC Vive, and as later revealed during Sony's conference, *Skryim* will be coming to PlayStation VR. The motion controls on the latter look a lot like the Nintendo Switch port too, which Bethesda also demonstrated in more detail. In the midst of a fairly unsurprising event, the biggest surprise was probably *Dishonored: Death of the Outsider*. This new standalone adventure occupies the murky middle-ground between add-on and full game, and it's due as soon as September.

The publisher finished off with its two big reveals. *The Evil Within 2* was shown off through a dark, surreal trailer that feels like a bad dream. It's hard to figure out what's actually happening and how the game might play, but it certainly succeeds in setting the tone. And finally, *Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus* brings the alternate-history fight to Nazi-occupied America with an eight-minute grotesque trailer.

During the first few minutes of the Ubisoft show, legendary Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto emerged from a cloud



of smoke with a Bullet Bill gun in hand to reveal *Mario + Rabbids Kingdom Battle*. At a glance it sounds like an empty corporate handshake, but the gameplay video shows what appears to be a deep tactical RPG in the vein of *XCOM*. Exclusive to the Nintendo Switch, it's due in August.

Next up was confirmation of seemingly yet another poor entry to the series - *Assassin's Creed: Origins*. As the rumor mill suggested, this year's entry is a prequel set in ancient Egypt. The franchise's influence can also be seen in the newly-announced *Skull and Bones*. It's almost like the naval

combat of *Assassin's Creed: Black Flag* has been spun off into its own game, and that's definitely not a bad thing. *Far Cry 5* looks like a hoot as well, as players spark a revolution against a doomsday cult that's taken over rural Montana. A gameplay trailer shows off a mix of stealth, shooting and bossing around allies like a sniper, fighter pilot and a dog buddy named Boomer.

Like its predecessor, *The Crew 2* gives players an open-world version of the United States as a motorsports playground, but this time it throws in some

new toys, in the form of boats and planes. For its third year at E3, *South Park: The Fractured But Whole* got a new trailer that didn't really tell us anything new. However, the unexpected news out of the franchise is that a mobile game with a similar combat style is in the works.

And finally, Ubisoft wanted to remind us that there's still life in *Beyond Good & Evil 2*. The sequel to the cult classic was originally announced back in 2008 but there are still no details on gameplay or a release date, but it is known that the prequel project is in active development.

EA at E3

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Another year, another E3 and a new massive set of video games are now in the forefront of community discussion. EA's E3 conference is always hyped up, considering the number of franchises they have in their hands. This year's EA Play promised a number of thrills, but ended up delivering more than expected (minus Jesse Wellens' NFS announcement which was just weird to watch).

EA Play started off with a blast this year as EA Sports' premium franchise Madden now has a storyline too! After the success they found with FIFA's *The Journey*, it was about time EA branched out the concept to their other sports franchises. And boy, it looks good. Madden's Longshot seems very promising and only time will tell if the Devin Wade story is as interesting as it seems. And on the line of sports games, FIFA and NBA are also coming up. FIFA 18 looks really good as EA Sports seems to have worked on refining the gameplay in their second outing with the Frostbite engine and getting to continue Alex Hunter's journey makes it even more glorious and to top it all off, Cristiano Ronaldo is finally the cover athlete of the storied franchise. On the NBA front, EA has had a lot of catching up to do with their rivals NBA 2K. This time around, it feels like EA is putting up a genuine effort with NBA Live. And with an all new legacy mode known as 'The One', it will be an interesting buy but again there is no surety with the NBA Live series anymore. Here's hoping that this installment will indeed be the redeemer as the developers claim it is.

Battlefield 1 is another game where EA has been working hard to create a perfect experience. And the short montage of the moments shared in multiplayer was beautiful and also a show of respect towards the community that drives them

to create yearly releases. But they managed to top it off with new night maps and also a brand new DLC, *In The Name Of the Tsar*.

Two more franchises that also see a comeback this year are *Need For Speed* and the forever hyped up *Star Wars: Battlefront*. *Need For Speed Payback* seem promising with the year gap being fuelled up with some *Fast and Furious* inspiration. With the ability to control three players depending on the situation, the game play looked pretty solid. But again with EA, there is no surety on whether or not they will deliver as the last one in the series looked promising too but was massively underwhelming (Heads up! If you are into NFS, check out Shahrukh Ikhtear's article on the NFS wishlist from last week).

Star Wars: Battlefront 2 on the other hand looks very good. All the complaints have been addressed and the game play looks stellar. Definitely a must buy, in my opinion.

EA also presented us with two originals, *Anthem* and *A Way Out*. It was disappointing that we barely got to see anything about *Anthem* in the EA Play conference but the Microsoft conference dished out more on the game and BioWare is going all out on this gem.

A Way Out, on the other hand is the most original thing you will ever get to see from EA in some time, probably. It looks really good. And most importantly, it seems like a fun game to pick up. That being said, let's hope they do not make a franchise out of this possible classic in the making.

All in all, EA might be the most notorious company in the video game industry, but they do release some solid games. And this year's conference presented us with some stellar game play from all the releases that have been announced.

It's time we save up, people!

