



AUSTRALIAN VIDEO RENTAL RETAILERS ASSOCIATION

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Video stores predict top 2008 titles in games rental

Video store networks, who have their finger on the pulse of computer gaming trends around the country, predict a spike in game rental business on the back of a Christmas run on more affordable next-generation consoles.

The rental store networks' picks for most anticipated games in 2008 are: multiplatform games *Army of Two*, *Grand Theft Auto 4*, *Devil May Cry 4*, *Soul Calibur 4*, *Resident Evil V*, *The Last Remnant* and *Assassin's Creed*; PlayStation 3 games *F/Fantasy XIII*, *Little Big Planet*, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, *Ratchet and Clank Future: Tools of Destruction*, *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, *Guitar Hero 3* and *White Night Story*; and Xbox 360's *Halo 3*, *Clive Barker's Jericho*, and *Ninja Gaiden 2*.

"All of these will be irresistible when played on the powerful next-generation consoles and you can see that most of them are proven performers returning as sequels," says Thuy Nguyen, Interactive Buyer and Sales Manager for The Network Entertainment Group.

Nintendo's Wii platform has also surprised a lot of people with its popularity, says Rod Laycock, General Manager of Civic Video Group, who has recently returned from a U.S. trip to review trends.

"The Americans are predicting the Wii will continue to be the biggest console for the second year running, and I think the biggest games for the new year on this platform will be *Mario Galaxy*, *Mario and Sonic Olympic Games*, and *Rayman Raving Rabbids II*. "With the motion-sensitive Wii controller you get a real workout with these games, not to mention a chance to work off your Christmas lunch," says Laycock.

Store networks are also predicting a big Christmas for Nintendo DS hand-held consoles, which is expected to drive hand-held games rental in the holiday season. Games enthusiast Michael Howell of the Leading Edge Video Group's Showbiz Video Mart predicts brisk rental business for Mario games – in particular racing game *Mario Kart DS* and *Super Mario Brothers* – as well as the Pokémon series.

As next-generation games consoles become more of a home entertainment hub than simple games units, games distributors are bringing in more family-oriented games like *The Sims*, *Singstar* and *Buzz Quiz*.

"Although action and sports titles are still consistently the most popular, there has been a bit of a shift from the traditional male gamer. An increasing number of parents are renting games to play with their children, more females are getting into gaming, and seniors are renting strategy-type games," notes Nguyen.

"Personally, I love the *Sims* series. It is like living another life, testing out different life scenarios, and it is certainly a game you can play with your partner and have a laugh.

“The PlayStation 3 network is working on a similar ‘community’ game to the Sims series and the more complex Second Life. This interactive simulation experience is big business in gaming and taking an increasing chunk out of consumers’ entertainment spend,” says Nguyen.

Another anticipated release due out early next year in Australia is Rock Band, which simulates a rock band experience and is bundled with its own set of peripherals. It builds on the Guitar Hero range, which was a surprise hit for video store networks in 2007 for a single instrument simulator and will continue to be popular with the new Guitar Hero 3: Legends of Rock.

“The wide choice of games available now is mind-blowing, which I have to say makes rental very attractive because you can’t buy them all. Rental stores offer much more than just the high-profile titles; there’s so much more to choose from on video store shelves around the country than in retail, and you can try them all out!”

Media: interview opportunities available with Ms Thuy Nguyen, Mr Rod Laycock and other industry representatives via Debra Maynard of Hootville Communications on 0407 299 007.

About AVRRA

AVRRA is the industry body for Australia’s video and DVD rental industry. It represents more than 60 per cent of all video libraries in Australia. Visit: www.avrra.com.au