

Video Game Enthusiasts Flock to LA Expo

By Glenn Cravens
Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES – The Electronic Entertainment Expo last week in Los Angeles was the place to be to preview new products in the video game industry.

From new games to peripherals, video game fans and the media descended on the Los Angeles Convention Center to experience five days of near-gaming bliss.

Bay area companies made their mark at the trade show. Redwood City-based Electronic Arts received high marks for its upcoming titles, including “Madden 06” and “Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit.”

Santa Clara electronics company Nvidia showcased several new computer hardware products aimed at enhancing the game play of computer gamers. As a side event, competitors in the Global Gaming League competed for prizes using computers that had the new products.

However, the majority of the new games or products displayed at the event will not be available until later this year.

The three major video game makers, Nintendo, Microsoft and Sony, all displayed their next-generation consoles.

Microsoft's Xbox 360, an upgrade from its Xbox in terms of processing speed and ability to play high-resolution games, will be available this



Game On: Technology buffs mingle at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles last week.

Photo/ Glenn Cravens

winter.

Sony and Nintendo will make their products available in spring 2006. Nintendo's new product, code-named “Revolution,” will be able to play every Nintendo mini-disk and cartridge ever made in the more than 20-year history of the company.

Sony's PlayStation 3 is another multimedia console much like its predecessor. It will be able to play audio compact discs, DVDs and all the games in the PlayStation library.

Much like Nvidia, every company in attendance had an attraction to

lure spectators to their booth or area.

In an attempt to hype its new game, “World Championship Poker 2,” Crave asked three well-known poker competitors to showcase their skills. One of their guests was Palo Alto-native Phil Hellmuth, a nine-time World Series of Poker champion. Hellmuth delighted the crowd as he schooled novice competitors while giving tips on how to win at no-limit Texas Hold 'em poker.

Nintendo received top event honors for its game “Mario Kart DS,” a handheld version of the cartoon racing game featuring some

of the well-known stars from the “Super Mario Bros.” series.

Electronic Software Association President Douglas Lowenstein addressed reporters on Wednesday, hours before the event began, to talk about the state of the video game industry. While many people claim the industry has surpassed the film industry, Lowenstein said that has yet to happen.

The industry produced \$28 billion in global revenue compared to \$45 billion produced through the movie department.

“Now, \$28 billion in global revenue isn't shabby for a 30-year-old industry, and the outlook for continued growth is extremely rosy, especially if piracy can be cracked, thus opening huge new markets like China, Russia and South America,” Lowenstein said.

Lowenstein, who oversees the production of the Electronic Entertainment Expo, said he was not putting down the video game industry.

“I am proud and excited to be a part of it, and I think we have a great future ahead of us,” he said.



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‘Star Wars’ Ties up Loose Ends

By Anna Sanders
Staff Writer

At this point in history, you know whether you've contributed to the \$158 million in box office revenue this past weekend by seeing “Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith.”

And if you haven't seen the major motion picture, it's a safe bet you have friends who couldn't wait to tell you about it.

For those who have not worked the latest sci-fi phenomena into their schedule, here's the skinny: Darth Vader wasn't always the rotten guy he turned out to be.

In his earlier days, Anakin Skywalker (played by Hayden Christensen) was one of the good guys. His fall from grace, whether from his own character flaws or circumstances beyond his control, reveals a troubled young man who followed the wrong advice for the right reasons.

The core human element of the film reveals that his love for his wife and hope for their future together made him vulnerable and easily manipulated. Add in the special effects, classic battle of good-versus-evil and the movie is a heck of a ride.

The problem is anyone who has seen the previous films knows that Skywalker ends up as Darth Vader, so sympathies toward his plight become mixed. He starts out as a regular likeable guy; he loves his wife, Padme (Natalie Portman), he's happy to become a dad and he takes care of his friends.

He certainly is a force to be reckoned with when he's battling with the light saber. The opening sequence where, in his efforts to rescue Chancellor Palpatine (Ian McDiarmid) he also ends up rescuing Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor), reveal that saving Kenobi is something that he's done often in their adventures.

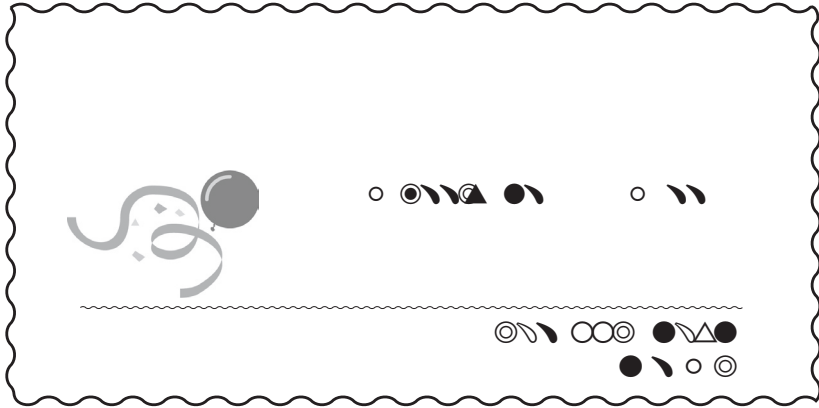
There's something about wanting to like the hero-turned-heel, but knowing who he becomes, you can't really be on his side. Sympathies for him quickly fade as he begins his inevitable fall to the Dark Side. But it is interesting to see just what sends him over the edge.

The rating (PG-13) is justified between the multiple beheadings and lopping off of limbs. The later scenes show severe burns. The film overall contains more violence against all ages and species than you might expect from the trilogies.

Parents are going to have a tough call when they decide if the younger set can see the flick. There are a few lighthearted moments, but overall the feeling is dark and brooding. Even so, the battle scenes are amazing and seeing Yoda wielding his skills with the light saber may be worth the price of admission alone.

Visually, between the battle scenes and special effects, it's simply incredible and everything you might hope for from a George Lucas film. Emotionally, you'll probably get out of it what you came into the theater with.

If you are a tried and true “Star Wars” fan, it answers a multitude of questions, and the satisfaction of seeing just how Darth Vader ended up in his ebony ensemble will be worth it. If not, at least you'll be able to keep up with the rest of the crowd around the water cooler this summer, because we've already seen that this will be the movie everyone is going to be talking about.





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❖ **Monster-In-Law(PG-13)**
11:45, 1:15, 2:15, 3:45, 4:45, 6:20, 7:15, 8:45, 9:45

❖ **Unleashed(R)**
12:15, 2:40, 5:05, 7:30, 9:55

❖ **House Of Wax(R)**
Fri.-Tue.:1:10, 4:00, 7:05, 9:50

❖ **The Interpreter (PG-13)**
1:10, 4:00, 7:05, 9:50

❖ **The Hitchhiker's Guide to The Galaxy(PG)**
11:50, 2:20, 4:40

❖ **Kung Fu Hustle (R)**
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❖ **KYA KOOL HAI HUM**
(With Dolby Digital Sound)
TUE - THU: 4 & 8

❖ **KAAL**
(With Dolby Digital Sound/with English subtitles)
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SAT - MON: 1, 3:30, 6, 8:30, & 11
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❖ **The Longest Yard (PG-13)**
11:40, 12:45, 2:15, 3:25, 4:45, 6:15, 7:10, 8:55, 9:35

❖ **Kicking & Screaming (PG)**
11:45, 12:50, 1:55, 3:05, 4:10, 5:20, 7:05, 7:40, 9:20, 9:55

❖ **Crash (R)**
11:35, 2:00, 4:30, 7:20, 9:45
11:50, 2:25, 4:40

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❖ **The Longest yard (PG-13)**
11:50, 12:55, 2:20, 3:40, 4:50, 6:20, 6:50, 7:20, 9:00, 9:25, 9:50

❖ **Star Wars: Episode III Revenge Of The Sith (PG-13)**
11:30, 12:00, 12:30, 1:00, 1:30, 2:00, 2:40, 3:20, 3:50, 4:20, 4:50, 5:25, 6:15, 6:40, 7:10, 7:40, 8:10, 8:45, 9:35, 10:00, 10:30

❖ **Monster-In-Law (PG-13)**
Fri-Tue.:12:10, 2:35, 5:10, 7:25, 9:45

❖ **Kicking & Screaming (PG)**
12:40, 2:55, 5:10, 7:25, 9:45

❖ **Unleashed (R)**
11:20, 1:50, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30

❖ **House Of Wax (R)**
11:40, 2:25, 5:00, 7:30, 10:10

❖ **Sahara (PG-13)**
Tue. 2:20, 7:30

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❖ **The Longest Yard (PG-13)**
11:00, 11:35, 11:50, 12:15, 12:50, 1:35, 2:20, 2:40, 3:00, 3:30, 4:10, 4:50, 5:15, 5:40, 6:15, 6:50, 7:20, 7:55, 8:20, 8:50, 9:30, 9:50, 10:30, 11:00, 11:40, 12:10

❖ **Star Wars: Episode III Revenge Of The Sith (PG-13)**
11:25, 12:00, 12:30, 12:55, 1:10, 1:30, 1:45, 1:55, 2:45, 3:10, 3:45, 4:05, 4:30, 4:45, 5:10, 5:25, 6:20, 6:40, 7:05, 7:30, 7:45, 8:05, 8:45, 9:35, 10:05, 10:25, 10:50, 11:10, 11:30, 11:45, 12:00

❖ **Monster-In-Law (PG-13)**
11:20, 12:25, 1:50, 2:50, 4:20, 5:20, 6:55, 7:40, 9:20, 11:50

❖ **Kicking & Screaming (PG)**
12:05, 2:35, 4:55, 7:10, 9:40, 11:55

❖ **Crash (R)**
11:45, 2:15, 4:40, 7:25, 10:00

❖ **Unleashed (R)**
12:35, 3:05, 5:30, 8:00, 10:35

❖ **Kingdom Of Heaven (R)**
12:40, 3:55, 7:00, 10:10

❖ **House Of Wax(PG-13)**
11:40, 2:25, 5:00, 7:35, 10:40

❖ **Dominion: A Prequel To The Exorcist (R)**
Fri. Tue.: 10:25

❖ **Sneak Preview ❖**
Cinderella Man(PG-13)
Sun. May 29th 7:10 P.M.

G: Material suitable for general audiences

PG: Parental discretion may be advisable

R: Under 17 must be accompanied by adult

PG-13: Parental guidance 13 & under

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