

Client/Product: Game Stars Live
 Media: MCV
 Circ/Audience: 15,000
 Publication Date: 10th September 2004



SHOW ANALYSIS: GAME STARS LIVE

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ExCeLlence all round for Game Stars Live

The first multi-format consumer exhibition for many years was hailed by most as a great success. Visitor figures were yet to be announced when this feature was filed, but the weekend in particular saw the show buzzing with gamers. **Chris Maddox** offers his views on the event...



The Game Stars Live event gave consumers the opportunity to check out forthcoming products. Major draws included Halo 2, with the punters queuing for over an hour and a half to see the Xbox title. The Nintendo, EA and Gizmodo booths, amongst many others, also proved popular

IN MY OPINION the event organisers couldn't have chosen a better location for Game Stars Live than ExCeL. The opulent apartments which lined the length of the Docklands and the calm waters seemed to be the perfect backdrop to proceedings.

The Game Stars effect hit you as soon as you passed through the security-guarded entrance – it was loud, brash and covered a large expanse of floor space.

Obviously the event drew

Wandering around the event, there were kids of varying ages and parents too, looking to get first sight of the latest games. This was the publishers' chance to crank up interest in their upcoming Q4 titles.

In terms of the publishers exhibiting you had to start with EA. The number one publisher in the world fittingly dominated the centre of the show. The stand boasted a sports area where visitors could not only

themselves at home and settle down on the floor cushions, competing against strangers on *Burnout 3: Takedown*. EA also gave people the chance to get their face in the game by taking digital pictures of volunteers, which were then placed onto backdrops of *The Sims 2*, *Need for Speed Underground 2* and *Medal of Honor*.

GAME got into the spirit of things by doing what it does best, and placing a complete

taken with eager visitors who may not have had their eyes fully on the screens showing the game. Ubisoft also hired a huge 12ft screen which showcased its big releases such as *Prince of Persia 2*, *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory* and *Rocky Legends*.

It wasn't all just for the kids however, as an adults-only area showed off Eidos' *Shellshock*, *Second Sight* (Codemasters) and *MK Deception* (Midway).

Other highlights of the show included Vodafone's Ferrari-themed stand including pit girls, the Nokia stand complete with the new N-Gage, a *Splinter Cell* themed lazer quest, the Gizmodo 'Under Construction' stand and the Nintendo seaside stand. There should also be a special mention of the *Donkey Konga* Championship hosted by gaming mistress Emily Booth.

All in all, Game Stars Live must surely be viewed as a success. The first event should form a great foundation on which to build the show's format over the coming years. ■

The first Game Stars Live event should certainly form a great foundation on which to build the show's format over the coming years.

comparisons to PlayStation Experience which was initially expected to feature at the event (as reported, it's taking place at Alton Towers later this month). But, whereas the PlayStation Experience used dark moody lighting, Game Stars Live went in the opposite direction, with a bright, spacious environment.

play the latest EA Sports games such as *FIFA 2005* and *Tiger Woods*, but also participate in actual one-on-one football matches and keepy-uppy competitions. There was even a real driving range for golfing fans to practice their swing.

A Network Play section allowed gamers to make

store into the middle of the event, offering gamers 10 per cent off all marked prices.

Another big publisher with a big presence at the show was Ubisoft. The firm had a four-poster bed on its stand, pushing its upcoming *Playboy Mansion* game. A few Playboy lovelies were on hand to have photos

BUT WERE THE PUNTERS IMPRESSED?

Mike Smedley, 17

I queued up for 20 minutes to watch the *Halo 2* preview, it looks amazing and I can't wait until November to get it. I didn't expect Game Stars Live to be this big. I just wonder if they could have crammed more stands into the event, in some ways there is a lot of open space. Still, I hope there's another one next year.

Michael Baxter, 16

I've just played *Prince of Persia 2* and it's fantastic. It really is great fun to play, it made up for getting lost on the way here and being three hours late. There's loads of babes walking about too which is definitely a bonus in my book.

Alex Jones, 13

I've enjoyed myself; it's good that there are other things to do other than play the games, and I've just seen the Master Chief square up to a Storm Trooper.

David Evans, 14

It's been cool; most of the games I've been waiting all year to play are here for me to get my hands on. *Sims 2* looks good and so does *Prince of Persia 2*.

Shaun Newton, 15

A friend gave me his ticket because he couldn't make any of the days so I jumped at the chance to go to the first Game Stars Live event. I really enjoyed the TV show and this event has definitely met my expectations.

