

Head-to-Head: Xbox 360 vs. Sony PS3

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For Fresh Magazine

(Original Print Date - September 2007)

Well, I finally caved in and bought myself a Sony PS3. I have never been a PlayStation user, opting instead for both the original Microsoft Xbox, and subsequent Xbox 360.

I would consider myself a casual gamer, but one who always needs to have the latest blockbuster game such as Halo I, II and on September 25th – Halo III. I find myself compelled to purchase the latest and greatest game to demonstrate the power and capability of my console.

I wrote a previous article on Blu-Ray (Sony) vs. HD-DVD and my conclusion was to stick with gaming console options as they were the cheapest way to go. For another \$199 you could have an HD-DVD attachment for the Xbox 360, and for the price of \$650 you could buy a PS3 with built in Blu-Ray.

Getting back to the reason I am the proud new owner of a PS3, the simple reason was that back in early August Sony decide to drop the price by \$100. At \$550, the PS3 suddenly looked attractive to me as a Blu-Ray player, with the “bonus” of being able to play some really cool games, as well as a few PS2 games I had my eye on over the years. But as I connected the unit to my plasma TV and began to explore its features more, I was pleasantly surprised by the capabilities of my new “toy”.

The PS3 is a powerful media device, which not only offers some very cool, very beautiful looking games, but as mentioned earlier, it is a full-featured Blu-Ray player allowing you to watch high-definition movies at the highest resolution possible (1080p). I am now able to watch either format of HD movies available and loving every minute of it.

But beyond these two key features, the PS3, which includes built-in wireless Internet capability, offers a slew of other neat features. These include streaming video and music from your PC, web browsing, access to the soon-to-be released Playstation Home environment (similar to Second Life) where you can create your own character and explore the online virtual world. The unit plays regular DVD and CDs as well, and performs quite well as a media hub, which Sony truly envisioned for the system.

To be fair, I still use my Xbox 360 more for gaming, as I find that PS3 still somewhat lacks those killer franchise games we see with the 360 including Gears of War, BioShock and Halo 3. I did purchase Resistance: Fall of Man with

my PS3, and was quite impressed with the game, but I still give the edge to the Xbox 360 for gaming.

As far as the comparison of HD media goes, I really can't see a difference between HD-DVD and Blu-Ray as they both look fantastic. The main difference is going to be the quality and selection of movies which are released for each format. If you have been keeping up with the HD format war, it would appear that Blu-Ray may be winning the fight. But although I haven't seen the same movie in both formats, so far I would tend to be more impressed with movies I have seen in the HD-DVD format. But then again, I have been impressed by the picture quality of movies such as King Kong (which came free with my HD-DVD player) but not so much with the newly released 300 – which I found rather disappointing as the film effect of a “grainy-type” image really didn't make the movie appear as brilliant as I had hoped in HD format.

Back to my review of Xbox 360 vs. PS3 -- I really can't see how you could go wrong with either system. The one major factor for deciding on which player to get may be whether or not you already own a number of PS1 or PS2 games, as the PS3 is back-ward compatible allowing you to play your favourites on the new console. This wasn't the case for me, but the idea of getting to play a game I was eyeing up several years ago actually influenced me a bit.

Back in 2004 when they released the X-Files game for PS2, the Xbox version was to come out shortly after, but the release was actually cancelled. So I never did get to play the game. As it turns out I was able to purchase a brand-new copy of the X-files on Ebay for a whopping \$12 including shipping! My new purchase suddenly opened a new library of thousands of titles both new and old.

I'm not going to bother going over technical specs of both machines, as each are very capable of offering truly next-gen graphics and game play. I think that the Xbox 360 currently has the edge as their “second-generation” of games are on shelves, displaying the true capabilities of the system's power. It will take a while longer before game developers reach that point with the PS3, but when they do I think games will look equally as impressive as Xbox 360 games.

So once again I find it difficult to crown a winner. I think that both consoles are truly capable of amazing graphics and game play, although the 360 has the current advantage here, with more and better games. The HD quality of each is also quite similar, although the format war could change the balance here in the next year or so. Both systems allow you to play games online and stream media from your existing PC.

In terms of online game play, however, I think the Xbox 360 has the current edge once again, as their Xbox Live service works great, and has been around much longer than Sony's comparable online capabilities. One thing the PS3 has that the Xbox 360 doesn't is the ability to surf the Net through the console. Although

it is a bit hard to read and a bit clunky, the feature could come in handy, and I have always wondered why the 360 did not have this capability...on the other hand this may easily be added in the near future with one of their periodic software updates to the 360's operating system.