

## Microsoft links Xbox with smartphones, tablets

LOS ANGELES, US: Microsoft on Monday, 4 June 2012, stepped up its quest to be at the heart of home entertainment by syncing Xbox 360 videogame consoles to smartphones and tablets while adding more blockbuster content.



**Microsoft**

Microsoft unveiled Xbox SmartGlass software for linking the world's leading consoles to iPhones, iPads, Android-powered gadgets and, of course, devices powered by the US technology titan's new Windows 8 operating system.

"Your devices aren't so smart because they aren't working together," Marc Whitten of Xbox Live online entertainment service said at a press event on the eve of the start of the premier E3 videogame gathering Los Angeles.

"Xbox Smartglass transforms devices you already own and love... movies are more immersive; games are more thrilling," he continued. "I can now take my phone and use it as the world's best remote control."

The Smartglass application to be released worldwide by the end of the year could drain some of the enthusiasm that rival Nintendo has been working to build for its next generation Wii U console featuring a tablet-style GamePad controller.

GamePads, the price of which is expected to be revealed at a Nintendo press conference Tuesday, are an extra gadget gamers would need to incorporate into their lives while Smartglass will let them use gadgets they already own.

### **Nintendo advantage**

Nintendo has an advantage in that major publishers such as France-based Ubisoft are readying hot titles to release with Wii U GamePad consoles while Microsoft on Monday invited game developers to begin imagining possibilities.

"We are opening the door for creative multi-screen entertainment," Whitten said. "Game makers can envision brand new ways to make all our games better."

Smartglass also capitalises on the growing popularity of using Xbox Live to stream movies, music and other entertainment from the Internet.

The application lets people start watching a film on a tablet and then easily switch to home television screen without breaking continuity, a demonstration showed.

After a film routes to a television, the tablet automatically begins displaying supplementary information about

actors or other topics related to the movie being watched.

"Xbox is on a mission to make the entertainment that you love even more amazing," Microsoft Interactive Entertainment Business president Don Matrick.

"With Xbox SmartGlass, we are lighting up entertainment across your phone, tablet, PC and TV in a completely new way."

## **Tailored for the Xbox**

Microsoft has also tailored a version of its Internet Explorer Web browsing program for the Xbox to let people roam online using the videogame consoles as easily as they might using a personal computer.

Blockbuster games and expanded services showed off by Microsoft showcased voice command and gesture-sensing capabilities of Kinect accessories for Xbox 360 consoles.

Ubisoft wove voice commands and even being able to distract enemy sentries with whispers in a new version of "Splinter Cell" inspired by author Tom Clancy espionage novels.

Videogame colossus Electronic Arts brought legendary US football quarterback Joe Montana on stage to a Madden NFL 13 title that lets people literally call plays, with on-screen team-mates following commands.

"This is actually pretty sweet," Montana said after getting the virtual ball into the end zone in three downs.

Microsoft also expanded the content available at Xbox Live, adding partnerships with Paramount Movies, ESPN, Univision and others, and creating a music service that challenges Apple's lucrative iTunes shop on a new front.

Some analysts believe that Microsoft's vision is for Xbox to replace cable service boxes in homes; perhaps even with alliances in which cable companies subsidise hardware the way telecom service carriers do for smartphones.

Blockbuster videogames have long been at the core of E3, so Microsoft premiered trailers for hotly-anticipated new instalments to franchises such as "Tomb Raider," "Call of Duty," "Resident Evil," and "Gear of War."

The press event, which was for the first time streamed on Xbox Live, was topped off with a live performance by musician Usher who dazzled the audience with choreography captured in a coming "Dance Central 3" videogame for Kinect.

"We are taking the franchises you love in new directions, but also investing in new franchises," said Microsoft games studio head Phil Spencer.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge