

Price, launch dates, games... PlayStation 5 duels Xbox

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Calling the "next generation"—get ready to choose your console. Targeting system supremacy, gaming behemoths Sony and Microsoft are about to go head to head with their latest offerings—PlayStation 5 and

Xbox Series X.

Battle lines are being drawn up as the rivals prepare for the launch of products whose heady technical specs and exclusive game catalogue mix have been carefully honed to keep the fan hordes loyal.

With its new console and associated range of services Microsoft is out to get the jump on Sony which has shifted twice as many PlayStation 4 units as sales of Xbox One since their respective launches in 2013.

Here's how the two new game consoles measure up:

Date: Microsoft to leave the blocks first

Microsoft's offering, which stylistically looks much like a PC, will leave the starting blocks first with a November 10 launch with pre-orders being taken from September 22.

Sony's PS5 will go on sale from two days later in Australia, North America, New Zealand, South Korea, Japan and Mexico with other markets having to wait a week.

Pre-orders for the PS5 were slated to kick off from Thursday "at select retailers."

Sony said Wednesday it will be offering "premium" and "digital" incarnations of its console.

They take into account different budgets with the premium \$499 model offering 4K media rendition via an Ultra HD Blu-ray player. The digital-only version, costing \$100 less, allows playing downloaded and streaming games and media.

Microsoft likewise has a \$499 price point for its own "premium" offering whereas its "mini" version comes in at \$300.

"Sony, with its entry model, is allowing itself a price above that of Microsoft. As market leader it can allow itself to do that," gaming analyst Laurent Michaud told AFP.

"It would have been interesting for Microsoft to push its pricing strategy to come in a little lower on the top range" model, Michaud said.

Design: From futurist to contemporary

On design, the firms have taken radically different approaches. Sony's PS5 stands tall and sleek, a V-shaped white exterior on black with subtle blue lighting for a futurist style which some consider would not look out of place on a Star Wars set.

The controller retains the white-on-black look in a radical departure from previous incarnations.

Xbox sticks with sober black and a discreet logo on a black tower and a controller that remains essentially aesthetically faithful to previous generations.

Specs: Xbox feels the power

For the Xbox design team, their product is "the fastest most powerful ever" console. The company's website urges fans to come on in, fire up and "power your dreams".

The kit, which affords potential 8K video capabilities, boasts a 12-teraflop graphics processor—compared with 10.3 for the PS5 and

superior data crunching power overall.

In terms of memory the two consoles are roughly even.

For Michaud however, the battle over processing power misses the point.

"The more you widen the player base the less power is a criterion. Kids couldn't care less about power when they are playing Fortnite. What counts is the gaming experience," he said.

Sony goes all out on catalogue big hitters

In terms of exclusive titles Sony has pulled out a top-drawer selection to coincide with its launch.

The biggest include a sequel to Horizon: Zero Dawn, Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales and above all "Final Fantasy XVI," the last in the celebrated series which is due for a PC release next year.

Where the thorny old issue of compatibility is concerned, Xbox Series X buyers will be able to play games written for all previous consoles.

PS5 buyers should be able to play games written for PS4, but not earlier machines.

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