

Amazon puts heat on eSports giants with 'Crucible'

May 20 2020



Amazon's first big-budget video game title, Crucible, became available this week

Amazon launched an assault on Fortnite and other eSports giants Wednesday with team shooter "Crucible," aiming to expand its territory in the world of game playing.

Release of the free online title by Amazon Game Studios comes as people staying home to avoid the deadly coronavirus turn to video games for entertainment and social contact.

"Crucible" will challenge the dominance of "Fortnite," "Overwatch" and "League of Legends," which have won legions of fans, with online matchups pitting characters with various abilities or weaponry against one another.

It is tailored for play on Windows-powered personal computers, playing to the strength of Amazon-owned Twitch, a popular platform for streaming games and commentary.

The "Steam" gaming website promised the title would be available midday (2000 GMT) Wednesday in California.

It is the first major title from Amazon Game Studios, which is also working on a multiplayer online game based on the "Lord of the Rings."

The developers call "Crucible" a "team-based action shooter driven by the choices you make," featuring alien adversaries.

The launch comes as other tech giants make their own game moves.

Google recently launched its streaming game service Stadia, and Apple Arcade offers titles for iOS-powered devices.

Facebook last month launched a stand-alone app allowing users to create and watch livestreams of games.

And Microsoft recently offered a glimpse at games for its new Xbox console, coming this year, which it hopes will help it compete with Sony's leading PlayStation devices.

Microsoft has not yet announced a release date.

Sony is also to release its PlayStation 5 model later this year. PlayStation 4 consoles have trounced Xbox One in sales since the rival gaming systems launched in late 2013.

Amazon Game Studios two years ago pulled the plug on development of "Breakaway," which was to be its first new title in the hot e-sport arena of video game play as spectator sport.

US online retail giant Amazon snatched up Twitch and its huge audience for live-streamed gaming in 2014 for nearly \$1 billion.

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Citation: Amazon puts heat on eSports giants with 'Crucible' (2020, May 20) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-05-amazon-big-budget-gaming-space-crucible.html>

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