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Xbox updates enhance gaming

by ZACH BAKER

Staffwriter

On Nov. 19 the gaming community will welcome a new Xbox 360 experience. A system update, on Xbox Live, will change the Xbox's interface, making it more user-friendly, and adding loads of new features. Avatars, Netflix access, new theme looks, dashboard "parties", and internet marketplace access are a few of the additions this new update has to offer.

Probably the biggest change that users will notice is the new look of the dashboard, profiles, and accounts. Each profile can now be represented by a single avatar, or a human-like image, that is customizable to each person's preferences. Some games will now be able to use these avatars in the game to represent the characters or players. Also, each theme will get a makeover, some displaying moving scenes or actions while players are on the dashboard, and may even change when scrolling through different sections, like the Marketplace or Media Center.

The next addition is the connectivity. The Xbox will have to Netflix over the internet, with Xbox live connection required. If an Xbox user is also a Netflix member and has an "unlimited plan", then he or she will now have the option to upload movies or shows from the queue list on the Xbox system and watch them at home without the delay of shipping by mail.

Imagine being able to watch a new-to-DVD movie, with only a short wait and at the regular Netflix subscription price. With over 12,000 movies upon release, this feature will be one of the highlights of this update.

Although all the details of the update have not yet been released, the final major addition is the internet Marketplace. The Xbox Marketplace is a virtual store, where you can download new games, movies, and TV shows, for only a few dollars each. It requires an internet connection to access, and most downloads require a hard drive.

Previously, downloading content was only possible from the Xbox itself. Now users will have the option to select items to download from their computer by going to www.Xbox.com and selecting what they would like their Xbox to start downloading the next time they turn it on.

In the past, the Xbox 360 has been one of the leading game consoles, with great games, graphics, and internet content. This update will transform much of what we know as a "video game system" into an "entertainment system" by allowing you to communicate with friends like never before. This console will have 12,000 movies at your disposal to watch. All that is required is an Xbox 360 and an internet connection.

Holiday Gaming Guide

For those of you who are planning on



Photo courtesy: www.smarter.com

The Xbox 360 is the all time gaming system that can now be played live. A Nov. 19 update to Xbox's interface will vastly improve the systems functionality and features.

Holiday shopping soon, here's a list of a few Xbox games that are worth getting to add to your new Xbox360 experience:

- Gears of War 2: The game is Rated M and its starting price is \$60 dollars. This game is the sequel to the futuristic, action-packed, third-person shooter, where you, as Marcus Fenix, and some survivors must fight off the alien Locusts, to save the planet Sera from being invaded. Online Capa-

bilities over Xbox Live are included.

- Lips: The game's rating is pending, and its starting price is \$60 dollars. This is a Karaoke style game, where players can sing to their favorite tunes. When an iPod or Zune is connected, players will have the option to sing to those songs they already own as well those that are already on the disc. The game comes with two microphones, one black and one white.