



HEADING WEST

Lesley Smith on how gaming isn't just gaming anymore

The dust has settled on E3, the Big Three have returned to their offices after spilling their plans for the next six months, the press have returned to their respective Towers and the gaming populous – yes, you guys – are digesting all the juicy announcements.

So what did we learn from E3 2008? Well oddly enough, that gaming announcements are often the industry's worst kept secrets, like the new Xbox Live Dashboard, avatars and of course *Singstar* clone *Lips*. We also learnt that gaming is no longer a thing for geeks and otaku, oh no, it's not even just mainstream anymore. In fact, you don't even have to be a gamer to enjoy it. Just look at some of the new games from Nintendo, like *Wii Sports: Resort* and *Wii Music*, which are designed for everyone to enjoy. On top of Wii MotionPlus, an add-on to the Wiimote which will give you and your Mii extra mobility, there's also a proper voice chat system called, appropriately enough, *Wii Speak*, which is due to be released in time for the Wii title *Animal Crossing: City Folk*. The other thing to come out of E3 was the rise of media. Consoles aren't just for gaming anymore, they're also for watching movies, listening to music and communicating with your friends. Sony joined the media circus with its announcement of a new video store on PSN and, while two years late, it had the upper hand over Microsoft, as films can be downloaded and played on both the PS3 and PSP.

Of course, what this actually means is while the Americans can download movies to watch on their PS3s and PSPs, we here in Blighty have to wait a little longer. The service is region locked too, so we can't even do it sneakily. If Microsoft is anything to go by, it will be some time before we see the service; indeed SCEE have confirmed it will be activated in 2009, but exactly when remains to be seen. We'll get it eventually, but until then all we can do is ponder the massive steps gaming has taken into the public conscious over the past few years while we wait.

