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26 Aug 2010

Xbox 360 vs. PlayStation 3: The Hardware Throwdown

Share.
We compare both systems to see which has the most power under the hood.

ED SHEERAN - MAKE IT RAIN

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TO BUFFALO, NY

By Jesse Schedeen The console wars continue to rage on. Ever since the PlayStation 3 arrived on the market to challenge the Xbox 360 in 2006, gamers have argued about the merits of each system. Even as console-exclusive game titles have become less and less common, gamers remain convinced that their system of choice is the superior one.

We've decided to examine the war from a technical perspective, comparing which system sports more power under the hood and which offers a superior set of features. We've broken the console war into ten technical categories, including CPU, GPU, hard drives and so on.

In the end, only one system can emerge victorious.

This throwdown is based on the most recent versions of both consoles – the 'Slim' variations of both the Xbox 360 and the PlayStation 3, disregarding previous feature sets.

THE CPU

Xbox 360

PS3

3.2 GHz Xenon processor	3.2 GHz Cell processor
3 dual-threaded cores	7 single-threaded cores (plus 1 backup core)
Maximum 77 GFlops	Maximum 230 GFlops

Note – Gigaflop performance numbers determined by Forbes.com

The verdict: The processors for the Xbox and PS3 are unique enough in their respective architectures that it can be difficult to make direct comparisons. However, the numbers don't lie.

The two CPU chips run at the same GHz speed, but the PS3's seven individual cores beat out the Xbox's three dual-threaded cores. And in terms of performance measured in gigaflops, the PS3 tops out at nearly three times that of the Xbox.

Interestingly, the new combined CPU/GPU chip used in the new Xbox 360 is theoretically faster than the individual chips in older models. But in order to ensure proper functionality, Microsoft was forced to install a "frontside bus replacement block" that introduces latency and forces the chip to run at the same speed as the older model. This new combined chip may edge out the PS3's CPU in terms of reliability and temperature control, but no long term tests have been performed yet.

Winner: PlayStation 3

Xbox 360

PS3

ATI Xenos	NVIDIA RSX "Reality Synthesizer"		
Up to 512 MB GDDR3 RAM (shared w/ system RAM)	256 MB GDDR 3RAM (additional 224 MB can be shared w/ system RAM)		
10 MB eDRAM		21.6 GBps bandwidth (256 GBps via eDRAM)	22.4 GBps bandwidth

The verdict: Both the Xbox 360 and PS3 rely on custom-designed graphics cards. The Xbox's Xenos card features more video RAM, but this RAM is shared with the console's system RAM. The PS3 has 256 MB of dedicated video RAM in addition to being able to share up to an additional 224 MB from the system RAM.

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