

## GENRE FOCUS: FITNESS GAMES

# What's next for fitness?

Workout games have already established a market on the Wii, but with the rise of new motion controllers, could we see the sector migrate to Xbox 360 and PS3? **James Batchelor** reports...



**WII FIT ASTONISHED** retailers when it hit shelves in 2008, taking a whopping £16m in its first week.

Just two years later and the fitness market has become a prominent genre. While its titles may not grab the headlines in the same way as shooters or sports games, publishers have made a tidy profit from interactive workouts.

Now some are questioning how long this interest can last. Not only can games be a slow and experimental medium when trying to take the technology to new areas, the fitness industry itself is one comprised of fleeting success stories.

New celebrity diets and training regimes emerge almost weekly, and every Christmas sees an onslaught of workout DVDs – it's an environment that games firms must work hard to keep up with.

"Fitness and health are everyday concerns for most people and in that respect, interest in these subjects is unlikely to diminish," says Ubisoft's UK brand manager Ombeline Wallon.

"But how people tackle this issue can be subject to fads and until video games really break through as a proven method

to stay or become fit, there is a risk that it might be seen as a short-term trend. To avoid this, the publishers have to ensure their products actually answer people's needs."

### NINTENDO'S LEGACY

It started with Wii. The chart-topping triumph of *Wii Fit* caught the attention of publishers everywhere and soon a myriad of fitness titles were clamouring for shelf space.

And although these firms rejoiced at finding such a unique, broadly appealing source of revenue, everything has its limits.

Already scepticism has risen about how far the idea of fitness gaming can be taken on Nintendo's console, with the increasing range of titles becoming just as similar as the abundance of mini-game collections.

Publishers have taken it upon themselves to find new ways to sustain this market, whether this means moving to alternative platforms or creating their own devices.

"A year ago, there were only basic fitness video games, which were all on Wii," says Lightning Fish CEO Simon Prytherch, whose firm is responsible for the Fitness First-endorsed *NewU* series and the upcoming *Get Fit with Mel B*.

"We now have devices such as Microsoft Kinect and PlayStation Move that allow us to create much more

"This year, *EA Sports Active 2* will ship with the Total Body Tracking system, combining the user's heart rate with wireless motion tracking data to ensure the best possible workout," says EA Sports product manager Alice Brandvik. "And, of course, Kinect and Move present new opportunities to bring motion tracking to new consumers."

Going forwards, Microsoft and Sony's new controllers will likely have the biggest impact on the market, kick-starting a new era of fitness gaming.

Wallon added: "Like the Wii a few years ago,

Kinect and Move offer a fresh perspective on gaming. They renew the experience of playing video games, which can revive current console owners' interest in this activity but also ignite curiosity from people who haven't been attracted to gaming so far.

"Move's accuracy will encourage the user to perform the fitness moves in a more correct manner, while Kinect's controller-free abilities allow you to

“ **The fitness industry is a \$200 billion business and people are always looking for new ways to stay in shape.** ”  
**Simon Prytherch, Lightning Fish**

sophisticated experiences using camera-based tracking. We are also seeing other peripherals such as heart rate monitors being bundled with the titles in order to enrich the experience."

Heart rate monitors are an interesting avenue for the market to explore. Not only is it key to Ubisoft's efforts to bring fitness games to PC and Mac with the upcoming *Innergy*, it is also central to the highly anticipated *EA Sports Active 2*.

# GENRE FOCUS: FITNESS GAMES

**LEAPING AHEAD:** Fitness titles such as Ubisoft's upcoming *Your Shape: Fitness Evolved* are continuing to prove popular with consumers



integrate other items such as weights and its full body tracking enables more precise feedback on your moves."

### FITNESS' FUTURE

Motion controllers aren't the only reason why publishers are bringing their exercise games to the more powerful platforms.

"The graphical superiority of the PS3 and Xbox 360 allows us to show environments and your fitness coach in much more detail," says Prytherch. "Finally, we are now able to enhance the retail titles with a full range of downloadable content including new trainers, new workouts, new exercises and new environments."

Unfortunately, the fitness genre still faces some crucial problems. The most pressing is the issue of overcrowding (see *'Fat Fighters'*, below).

"Back-catalogue titles are still available, which means the shops are already busy with cheaper fitness titles," Wallon says. "The challenge is therefore to ensure they are coming up with innovative products at the right price point."

Prytherch adds: "As with all maturing markets, I think that the fitness genre

will consolidate. There will eventually be only a couple of really successful franchises that will dominate. We are currently developing an unannounced title which has the potential to be one of those franchises."

However, the games industry remains highly optimistic.

"The fitness industry is a \$200 billion business and people are always going to be looking for new, convenient ways to stay in shape without paying for a gym membership or expensive home equipment," says Brandvik.

"Products that deliver real, measurable results will stand out. *EA Sports Active* has been developed in collaboration with certified fitness experts, and incorporates the science and philosophy of exercise that will help keep consumers on track for a healthier lifestyle.

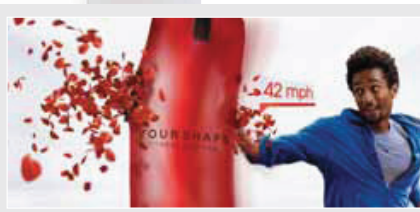
"As the highest-rated interactive fitness program for the Wii, *EA Sports Active* proved itself as the industry leader and provided the foundation for our fitness franchise. The success stories we've received from our users show that *EA Sports Active* is changing lives and we're so proud to be part of it."

## FAT FIGHTERS The biggest contenders for the fitness crown this autumn...



### EA SPORTS ACTIVE 2.0

**Released:** November 19th  
**Publisher:** EA Sports  
**Formats:** Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, iPhone, iPad  
 The sequel to EA's fitness phenomenon takes the franchise multiformat.



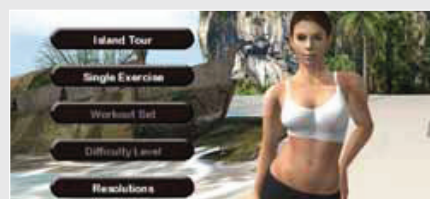
### YOUR SHAPE: FITNESS EVOLVED

**Released:** Q4 2010  
**Publisher:** Ubisoft  
**Formats:** Xbox 360  
 Ubisoft's camera-centric franchise makes its Xbox 360 debut thanks to Kinect.



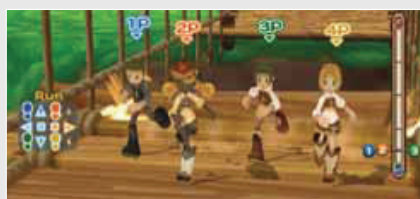
### GET FIT WITH MEL B

**Released:** Q4 2010  
**Publisher:** Black Bean  
**Formats:** Xbox 360, PS3, Wii  
 The former Spice Girl headlines Black Bean's latest workout game.



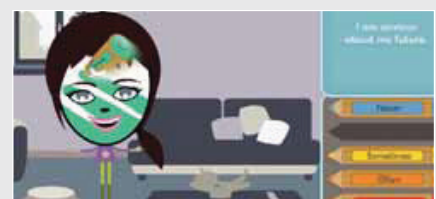
### JILLIAN MICHAELS' FITNESS ULTIMATUM 2010

**Released:** Out Now  
**Publisher:** 505 Games  
**Formats:** Wii  
 The latest title based around the US fitness icon, as seen on *The Biggest Loser*.



### FAMILY TRAINER: TREASURE ADVENTURE

**Released:** October  
**Publisher:** Namco Bandai  
**Formats:** Wii  
 More mat-controlled mini-games that help players shed the pounds.



### INNERGY

**Released:** 2011  
**Publisher:** Ubisoft  
**Formats:** PC, Mac  
 This title comes bundled with a biofeedback tool that measures heart rate and pulse.

### MY FITNESS COACH:

**DANCE WORKOUT**  
**Released:** Out Now  
**Publisher:** Ubisoft  
**Formats:** Wii  
 This dance-based title continues Ubisoft's successful *My Fitness Coach* series.

### FAMILY PARTY:

**FITNESS FUN**  
**Released:** October  
**Publisher:** Namco Bandai  
**Formats:** Wii  
 A kids' mini-game collection from Namco Bandai that uses the Balance Board.

### THE BIGGEST LOSER:

**ULTIMATE WORKOUT**  
**Released:** Q4 2010  
**Publisher:** THQ  
**Formats:** Xbox 360  
 The TV-licensed THQ franchise debuts on Xbox 360 with Kinect controls.

### THE BIGGEST LOSER

**CHALLENGE**  
**Released:** Q4 2010  
**Publisher:** THQ  
**Formats:** Wii  
*Challenge* builds on the success of previous *Biggest Loser* outings on Wii.

### UFC TRAINER

**Released:** 2011  
**Publisher:** THQ  
**Formats:** Xbox 360, PS3, Wii  
 A fitness-focused iteration of the fighting series that uses Kinect, Move and the Wii's motion controls.