NEWS LESSON

When One Day of Sales Beats a Film Franchise



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What makes a launch an event for you, rather than just a product release?
2. How far do you trust the sales figures that companies publish about themselves?
3. Is it useful to compare different kinds of entertainment by how much money they make?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**retail**	☐	A	a film or product that is hugely successful
2	**boxed**	☐	B	given an official classification, such as by age
3	**pre-orders**	☐	C	sold as a physical copy in a package, not downloaded
4	**blockbuster**	☐	D	a sudden period of great demand or activity
5	**analyst**	☐	E	relating to the sale of goods directly to the public
6	**parent**	☐	F	an expert who studies information and gives opinions on it
7	**rush**	☐	G	a company that owns another company
8	**rated**	☐	H	purchases made before a product is released

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Take-Two says Grand Theft Auto VI generated about US$3.79 billion in day-one retail sales, a company estimate. The comparison with cinema is striking, but the figures measure different things.

1 When Grand Theft Auto VI went on sale on 19 November 2026, its publisher had already told the world to expect something enormous. By the following day, Take-Two Interactive, the parent of Rockstar Games, had a number to back it up: about US$3.79 billion in day-one retail sales, which it called the biggest entertainment launch in history. The game is rated Mature, meaning it is intended for adult players.

2 The details matter. The company says the figure is based on its own estimates up to the end of 19 November, worldwide, and no independent source has confirmed it. It also says the game sold 32.5 million copies before release, a record across all platforms, after pre-orders opened in June. Neither number splits the sales by console, by digital against boxed copies, or by pre-order against launch day, so we cannot tell how much of the total was a first-day rush and how much was demand built up over months.

3 Reuters offers a yardstick. GTA V made about US$800 million on its first day in 2013, so the new game made roughly five times as much. Cinema supplies a more dramatic comparison. Marvel's Avengers: Endgame took in about US$1.2 billion worldwide when it opened in 2019, a record at the time, and one day of GTA VI sales is well above that. That is the sense in which a game can be said to be worth more than a blockbuster.

4 It is also a sense that should be treated with caution, because the comparison risks comparing apples with oranges. Retail sales usually means the money customers spent, not the income the publisher keeps after shops and online stores take their share, and a game costs much more than a cinema ticket. A film's opening is counted over several days and shows how many people turned up, while a game's day one shows how much people were willing to pay. Even an independent estimate differs: Sensor Tower, an analytics firm, put the early figure at about US$2.36 billion, but it was measuring something different at a different moment.

5 The costs deserve the same scepticism. Reuters says Take-Two has spent an estimated US$1 billion or more on production, which would make GTA VI one of the most expensive entertainment projects ever. The word that matters is estimated. The company has not published a budget, and the number should be taken with a pinch of salt. High spending does not guarantee success, but it does raise the bar: a game that costs so much must keep earning long after the first day.

6 That is why the company's own tone is cautious. Take-Two's chief executive said earlier in November that it was not ready to declare victory, and an analyst quoted by Reuters says the most important question for the company's share price is the timing and size of the next GTA Online, more than unit sales. A record day is a remarkable result, but it is only the opening line of a longer story.

Sources: Reuters, Take-Two set to shatter sales records as 'GTA VI' launches to massive fanfare; Take-Two Interactive and Rockstar Games, Grand Theft Auto VI Shatters Entertainment Box Office Records with $3.79 Billion in Day One Retail Sales. Picture: Composite image, cover art © Rockstar Games.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer implies that GTA VI's day-one figure and Endgame's opening measure different things. T F NG
2. The Sensor Tower estimate is presented as proof that Take-Two overstated its sales. T F NG
3. Take-Two has said when the next GTA Online will be released. T F NG
4. According to the text, the day-one total may include demand built up before launch. T F NG
5. The writer argues that a big budget removes the need to keep earning after day one. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

generated	intended	revision	risks	scepticism	striking	supplies	yardstick

1. Without a common _____ , comparing the two industries is little more than guesswork.
2. Early forecasts deserve a degree of _____ until the accounts have been audited.
3. The resemblance between the two launches is _____ , but it does not survive a closer look.
4. The firm says the campaign _____ record revenue, though no outside body has checked the claim.
5. Anyone who relies on a single estimate _____ mistaking a guess for a fact.
6. The series was _____ for adult audiences, which limited how widely it could be advertised.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. The jump from US$800 million to US$3.79 billion is _____ by any standard. (DRAMA)
2. The figure has not been _____ confirmed by anyone outside the company. (INDEPEND)
3. The company is _____ about declaring a success so soon. (CAUTION)
4. Reuters says the _____ of the game cost an estimated US$1 billion or more. (PRODUCE)
5. A huge budget is no guarantee of _____ . (SUCCEED)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. At this level the preposition often sits inside a set phrase or a fixed pair, such as 'subject to' or 'regardless of'. Read the whole phrase before you choose.

at from in of over to with

1. The headline figure is subject _____ revision once independent data arrive.
2. A film's opening is usually spread _____ several days.
3. The estimate differs _____ Sensor Tower's, which measured a different moment.
4. The record day cannot be taken as proof of long-term success _____ itself.
5. Regardless _____ the final total, the launch has set a new yardstick.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Does a record set by money mean as much to you as one set by audience size?
2. How would you treat an estimate of a production cost that a company has never confirmed?
3. What risks come with a project that costs more than a billion dollars?

9 Role-play: buy it now or wait?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the fan

A big new game comes out today. You want to buy it now, on the first day. Explain why you can't wait and try to persuade your friend to buy it too.

Student B · the careful friend

You think it's better to wait. Ask about the price, the reviews and the other things you could spend the money on. Decide if you will buy it.

Useful phrases

I can't wait any longer, it's out today!
Why don't we read some reviews first?
It's a lot of money for one game.
That's a fair point, but I'd hate to miss out.
What would you do with the money instead?
Let's wait a week and then decide.

Afterwards, tell the class: who was more convincing, and did your friend buy the game on the first day?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 E · 2 C · 3 H · 4 A · 5 F · 6 G · 7 D · 8 B

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 yardstick · 2 scepticism · 3 striking · 4 generated · 5 risks · 6 intended

6 Word forms

1 dramatic · 2 independently · 3 cautious · 4 production · 5 success

7 Language focus

1 to · 2 over · 3 from · 4 in · 5 of

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