

By: ~~March 2008~~ Andre Nitrescu, Games Editor

Is Activision Going to Shut Sierra Down?

Rumors abound, no clear answers

When [Activision](#) and [Blizzard](#) decided to merge late last year the industry took the news with amazement and with a kind of reserved joy. After all, this was not Electronic Arts gobbling up another independent studio (where are you Bullfrog and Westwood?) just to dismantle it after a few years. Both Activision and Blizzard had good track records of innovation and respect for developers. What most people overlooked at the time was that Activision was in fact merging with Vivendi Games, parent company of Blizzard and part of Vivendi Universal. What this means is that the Vivendi Games division, with all assets other than Blizzard, will fold into Activision. The new Activision Blizzard will be financially controlled by Vivendi Universal, with a 52% stake. But creative control will rest with Activision top man Bobby Kotick. And this might mean a less than bright future for another part of former Vivendi Games, Sierra. Under Vivendi control, Sierra, a name with an established pedigree in the games industry, had modest results. Its biggest hit yet was last year's strategy title [World in Conflict](#), developed by Massive, but although critics loved the game, sales were not spectacular. 2008 looks like a much better year for Sierra with titles like The Bourne Conspiracy, Prototype, Brutal Legend or Ghostbusters in the pipeline. The problem is that if these perform like previous Sierra games there's a real threat to the label existence. Variety gaming blog editor Ben Fritz is the main proponent of the theory that Activision will review and then dismiss most of Sierra's projects because of the simple fact that Activision didn't want Sierra as part of the Vivendi deal. They only wanted Blizzard and [World of Warcraft](#). Officially, Activision states that it has no plans to get rid of Sierra as a brand and that all on-going projects will be reviewed after the merger is finalized later this year. So I guess we'll have to wait and see if Activision turns up to be a another EA or a different beast whatsoever.