

PUBLIC SPEC #1

Surface “Surprise Me”
at the System Level on Xbox

SURPRISE
ME

Scott Jellen

Author's Note (September 2025)

This public spec was originally drafted in June 2025 and updated in September 2025 for consistency with my other work. The core proposal remains unchanged, though future editions may expand visuals or references.

Public Spec #1: Surface "Surprise Me" at the System Level on Xbox

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Title

Surface "Surprise Me" on Xbox Dashboard & Guide

Problem

Xbox's "Surprise Me" feature is a smart, underutilized tool designed to help users quickly pick a game. But it's buried deep in the Library UI, making it effectively invisible to most users. This limits its ability to reduce choice fatigue and drive game engagement.

Insight

- Many users open the Xbox dashboard not knowing what to play.
- "Surprise Me" solves a real user problem but is hidden.
- Most engagement friction comes from *indecision*, not interface.

Proposal

Add system-level entry points to "Surprise Me":

1. Header Icon (Primary Recommendation)

- Add a "Surprise Me" icon in the Xbox top navigation bar (icon to match internal UI standards)
- Tooltip: "Not sure what to play? Surprise Me."
- Tooltip may also appear dynamically after a short period of inactivity

2. Xbox Guide Integration (Secondary)

- Add "Surprise Me" to the Guide (accessed via Xbox button)
- Position next to or below "My games & apps"
- Icon should either match the header icon or reuse the existing Surprise Me button from the Library
- Guide has ample space for inclusion without disrupting core navigation

3. Optional: Dashboard Tile

- Add a dedicated "Surprise Me" tile to the dashboard, similar in style and placement to existing system tiles (e.g., Game Pass, Store).
- Tile could be dynamic and context-aware — showcasing a randomly selected available title with a visual preview.
- Clicking the tile would trigger the Surprise Me modal.
- Complements the header icon while offering a larger visual affordance for discovery.

UX Considerations

- Consistent with Xbox's playful, assistive tone
- Offers layered entry points: always-visible (header), reflexive (Guide), visually engaging (dashboard tile)
- Dashboard tile aligns with existing system visuals and supports quick discovery
- Tooltip timing on header icon enhances discoverability without clutter
- Surprise Me modal remains unchanged, ensuring familiarity and no additional learning curve

Visual Mockups

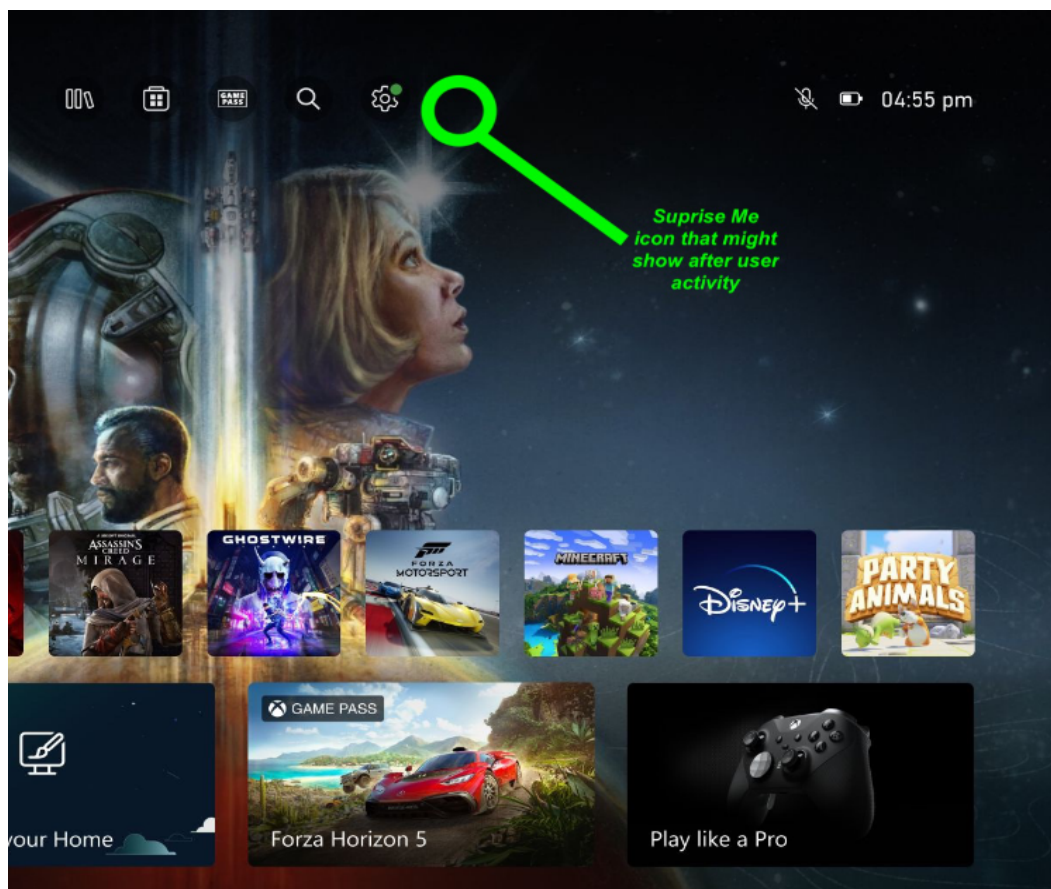


Figure 1: Proposed header icon placement in Xbox top navigation

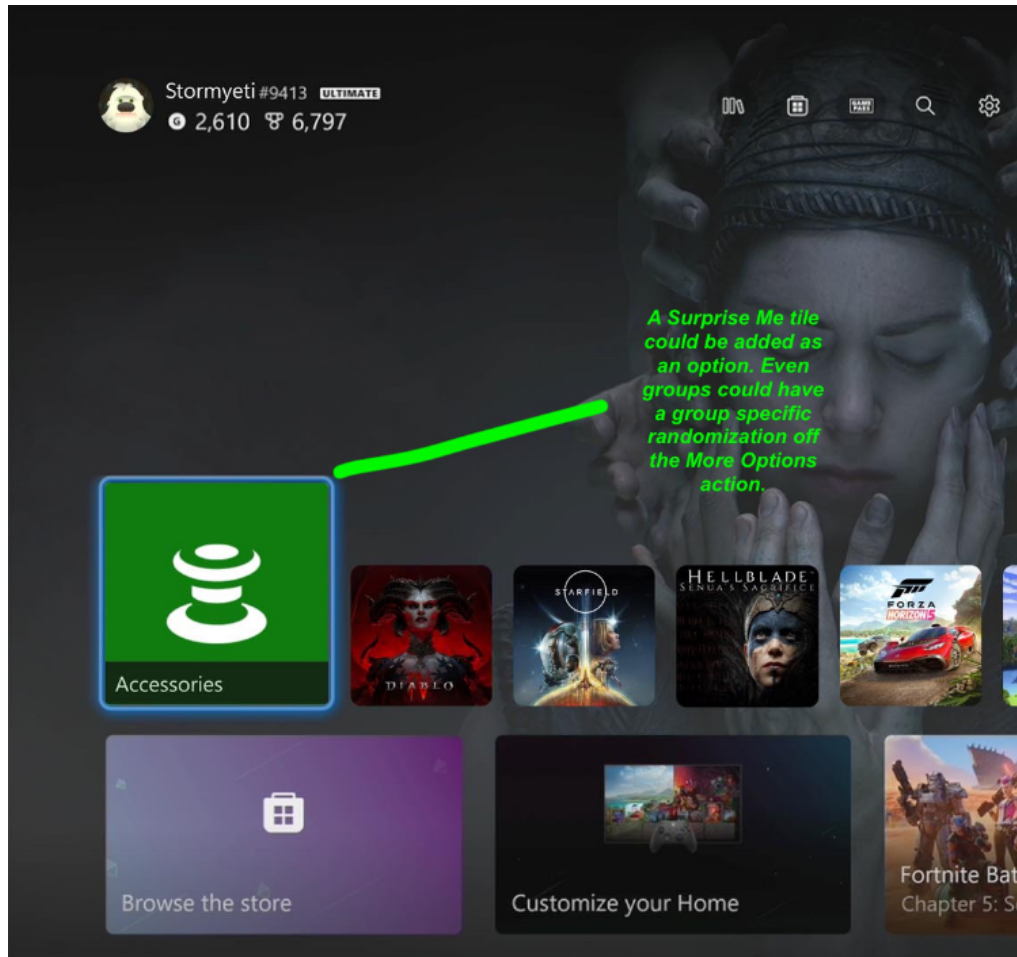


Figure 2: Dashboard tile showing Surprise Me entry in context

Note: All visuals are real screenshots with annotations for clarity. Images from Xbox.com.

Success Metrics (Proxies)

Feature Discovery

- Increase in clicks to Surprise Me from header or Guide
- Comparison of Library-initiated usage before/after launch

Behavioral Lift

- Increase in number of games launched via Surprise Me
- Time-to-play reduced (for users who previously idled on dashboard)

Cross-Sell Potential

- Store clicks driven by Surprise Me → “See in Store” button
- Discovery of Game Pass titles through random surfacing

User Feedback Signals

- Improved perception in dashboard feedback
- Organic mention pickup on Reddit or forums

Open Questions / Dependencies

1. Library Access at Surface Level

- What subset of the user's game library is available to system-level UI components like the dashboard, Guide, or header?
- Is there parity with the Library version of Surprise Me, or does surface-level access require scoped logic (e.g., installed games only)?

2. Iconography and UI Standards

- Is there an internally approved icon or visual standard for Surprise Me that aligns with Xbox design system conventions?
- Should the tile, header, and Guide entry share the same visual asset?

3. Guide Menu Extensibility

- Can the Xbox Guide support persistent or context-aware entries like Surprise Me without disrupting current user flows?
- Are there platform constraints or user testing considerations that would affect adding new options at this level?

4. Tooltip Behavior and Timing

- Can tooltips or soft prompts be triggered based on idle time on the dashboard or Guide?
- If so, what is the system's current threshold for interpreting inactivity?

5. Existing Feature Tracking

- Is Surprise Me currently tracked for usage metrics internally?
- If yes, do logs distinguish between library-initiated use and other entry points?