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E3 2010



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ACTIVISION



Something for Everyone

This was my favourite E3 ever. Third time is indeed the charm.

Last year, publishers were strained, anxious and stressed, bringing their "A" game and nothing else. Meetings were a production line; journalists crammed into tiny rooms as rapidly as possible, and then kicked out equally fast so as to make way for the next group of 20 sweaty bloggers. This year it was more like a holiday. Nobody was rushed and everyone had time for coffee and cookies.

This was also the *stupidest* E3 ever. Stupid doesn't mean *bad*, but stupid is as stupid does. After all, your dog is pretty stupid, but you love him anyway. And this E3 was definitely full of stupid pet tricks.

Perhaps it's *because* there was very little new to show that made the publishers casual to the point of slapdash. Most of what was on display had already been punted last year, either as video or demonstrations. Last year a lot of hyperbole was peddled as promises. Microsoft sold us a world without controllers. Sony boasted motion-controls without compromise. Nintendo cared about *blood pressure*. This year, press could get their own hands-on time with the titles and technology, which meant that the products had to speak for themselves.

Microsoft's Project Natal, now renamed to Kinect, could be awkwardly interacted with (as long as you were standing).

Sony's Move, could be waggled about as you pretend it's not a Wii remote. Nintendo's Vitality Sensor was nowhere to be seen, while their new hand-held, the 3DS, could be touched – if you wanted to stand in line for two hours.

Last year was broad stokes to capture the imagination of the industry. This year was *reality*; the truth several degrees less impressive than the slick picture painted by marketing's prior go-round. The awkward nature of fact colliding with fiction led to some darned goofy presentations: people who never looked quite sure they knew what they were selling, or how to sell it now that it was time to put up or shut up.

While the technology may have failed to impress, the games themselves have no trouble conveying their diversity and quality. There were no show-stoppers, no "best of show", but there was something great for everyone.

We cover the technology side of things in more detail in the magazine, and have a brief wrap up of the show (and its stupid fun) in this dead tree parcel you hold in your hands. The rest is filled with what's *important*: games, glorious games.

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Call of Duty: Black Ops

DEVELOPER: Treyarch PUBLISHER: Activision Blizzard GENRE: FPS
 RELEASE DATE: November 2010 PLATFORMS: PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

Another year means another *Call of Duty* that Activision can milk for millions of glorious monies. Treyarch is behind the controls for this year's iteration, but they're moving away from the World War II setting they got comfortable with in *World at War*. Instead we're headed to the 1960s, during the Cold War era. The single-player game details the denied covert operations that went down during the back and forth between the US and the Soviet Union. You'll be travelling to locales like the snow-capped Ural mountains and the jungles of Southeast Asia, all in the interest of making bigger, better and meatier explosions happen all over your monitor/television. That's all well and good, but what does this change of scenery and setting mean for the *CoD* series? Well, to put it simply: it means crossbows with explosive bolts.

Rather than reuse the refinements and tweaks that Infinity Ward made to the game engine for *Modern Warfare 2*, Treyarch has gone down their own path to refine what we saw in *World at War*, using that game's engine (which is in turn a refinement of the *Call of Duty 4* engine) to push our machines to their limits. Everything you'll see in *Black Ops* is Treyarch's work, with no Infinity Ward involvement. The result is a game that Treyarch promises will look and play even better than *MW2*, with more

enemies onscreen at any given time, hopefully making for a campaign that is even more intense, cinematic and packed with action than we're used to seeing in our *CoD* titles.

PC gamers have reason to smile and wipe away their tears (and the whiny clans won't have to stage a five-second boycott before buying the game anyway), because dedicated servers will make a return. We don't know much about the multiplayer yet, but Treyarch has doubled the number of multiplayer developers working on *Black Ops* than they had on *World at War*. Dan Bunting, multiplayer project lead, even had the balls to come out and say that *Black Ops'* multiplayer will be better than *MW2s*. Lofty claims, but we've got high hopes that they'll fulfil them.

With military advisors being brought in on the game, cool motion-capture techniques being used and plenty of excitement from the Treyarch crew, we're expecting good things to come of the next *CoD*. We're sure there'll be plenty of *CoD's* trademark cinematic action set in a new, interesting time period, but what about Cold War zombies? Other than word of a standalone cooperative mode for the game, nothing has been revealed regarding cooperative undead slaying. Treyarch, if you're reading this, we'll cry inconsolable tears if we don't get our zombie fix... We're just sayin'...



Did you know?
1,000
 Approximate number of workers it took to make E3's floor plan come to life.



Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
GENRE: Action Adventure
RELEASE DATE: November 2010
PLATFORMS: PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

Despite Patrice Désilets' departure from Ubisoft's Montreal development studio, we're still set to get another *Assassin's Creed* title this year with *Brotherhood* – the first *AC* to feature multiplayer. Set in the year 1499, shortly after the events of the first game came to a close, players once again take on the role of Ezio, who is now a Master Assassin in the Assassin's Order. This time around he's going to Rome to bring the fight to the Templars. New gadgets (like the parachute), new weapons (like the switchblade) and new gameplay elements will be included. Light management will feature with Ezio able to recruit and train young assassins and send them out into the world to complete (or fail to complete) assassinations. Improved combat, interesting multiplayer (complete with ranking system and character unlocks) and new abilities for the assassins should make this the best *AC* yet.



Halo: Reach

DEVELOPER: Bungie **PUBLISHER:** Microsoft Game Studios **GENRE:** FPS
RELEASE DATE: September 2010 **PLATFORMS:** Xbox 360

It's a scientific fact: games with jetpacks are automatically better than games without. Seeing as how *Halo* is already awesome, adding jetpacks will cause the world to silently implode due to an overload of awesome when *Halo: Reach* hits shelves. The game details the fall of the human world, Reach. Players don the big metal boots of Noble 6, member of a squad of supersoldiers known as Noble Team desperately trying to fight off the Covenant. Gone are the one-shot power-ups from *Halo 3*, which gave temporary offensive and defensive boosts. They're being replaced by reusable and persistent armour abilities (like the jetpack, active camouflage and a sprint ability), which you keep until you choose to replace them. Expect this game's multiplayer to be huge, both online and offline, with *Reach* adding new game modes and features in addition to all the brilliant game modes and multiplayer gameplay we've become accustomed to in previous titles.

Batman: Arkham Asylum 2

DEVELOPER: Rocksteady Studios **PUBLISHER:** Eidos Interactive **GENRE:** Action Adventure
RELEASE DATE: TBA 2011 **PLATFORMS:** PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

Last year *Batman: Arkham Asylum* proved that licensed games don't have to be utter crap. It wasn't the first licensed game to do so, but it surprised everyone, because not only was it an incredible *Batman* game, but it stands as one of the greatest games ever to grace the gaming world. *Arkham Asylum 2* widens its boundaries by taking us out of the titular asylum and into Gotham City itself. Kevin Conroy, renowned *Batman* voice actor (who voices *Batman* in the animated series and, as with the first game, will bring his talent to *AA2*), said that the sequel will be "really, really dark". He also confirmed that Two-Face will feature, along with other infamous villains like Mr. Freeze and Talia al Ghul. The Riddler will return, although it's unclear if he'll actually make a physical appearance this time. Sadly, Mark "Skywalker" Hamill has confirmed that *AA2* will be the last time he'll provide the voice of the Joker.

Mass Effect 3

DEVELOPER: BioWare **PUBLISHER:** Electronic Arts **GENRE:** RPG
RELEASE DATE: TBA 2011 **PLATFORMS:** PC | Xbox 360

Not much is known about the third game in the series that has been dubbed the *Star Wars* of a new generation, but we're fairly certain that there's no possible way that *Mass Effect 3* could disappoint us. If you keep your *Mass Effect 2* saves handy, the third title will ascertain the decisions you made throughout and apply them to the story of the final game in the trilogy. BioWare's Casey Hudson has stated that the third game will inject the fun and light heartedness back into things, to ease back on all the doom and gloom of *Mass Effect 2*. That doesn't mean the conclusion to this particular story arc (you didn't think they'd stop at three, did you?) in the *Mass Effect* universe won't boast a dark, depressing story: we're told it will definitely be darker, but with more humour to spice it up and provide some reprieve from all the gloominess. [That's not confusing at all, ED]

Fun Facts

Red vs. Blue is a popular, hilarious machinima* set in the *Halo* universe. The storyline so far spans over eight full-length seasons and three mini-series, with the show having gradually evolved over the years to utilise the *Halo*, *Halo 2* and *Halo 3* game engines to bring the LOLs. The show has been widely credited with bringing machinima to the mainstream, with some having called it machinima's "first big success." The quirky, memorable characters and the constant moments of hilarity make *Red vs. Blue* well worth watching. If you want more info, visit <http://redvsblue.com>.

*TV show built using footage captured in games, in case you're wondering

Dead Space 2

DEVELOPER: Visceral Games **PUBLISHER:** Electronic Arts **GENRE:** Survival Horror
RELEASE DATE: January 2011 **PLATFORMS:** PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

If Visceral Games somehow manages to beat the odds and finds a way to make *Dead Space 2* suck, we're going to be very unhappy. We might even cry a little. We don't want our justified love of the first game to be sullied by an unhealthy dose of crap. Thankfully, that's not going to happen from what we've seen, read and heard about *Dead Space 2*, and it's easily one of NAG's most anticipated (if not **the** most anticipated) games of the year.

Isaac Clarke is back, but the unlucky engineer who didn't know how to hold a space pistol the right way up before heading onto the USG Ishimura is now a battle-hardened veteran after all the pants-pooing he was put through during his totally carefree first encounter with the Necromorphs. We're going to see new abilities and weapons in the sequel thanks to Isaac's newfound badass status. Isaac can use his Kinesis ability to impale enemies on their own severed limbs by grabbing them and creating an improvised, high-velocity meat spear on the fly. For really nasty situations, grab the Javelin Gun and turn those dirty Necromorphs into wall-hanging ornaments with giant, slightly less improvised metal spears.

Dead Space 2 begins with Isaac finding himself in a hospital aboard The Sprawl,

a massive space station. The poor guy's mind is still in pieces after the Ishimura incident, the Marker's extremely negative influence (that's an understatement, in case you were wondering) on his mental health apparently having become a permanent fixture in the dude's life. It's only fair though, because we experienced our own version of posttraumatic stress disorder after having finished the game in the real world. We'll apparently get to see the beginning of the Necromorph infestation on The Sprawl firsthand this time and the Church of Unitology will once again play a strong role in the game.

Isaac's new abilities aren't without equal. New, powerful enemy types like the Puker (a ranged attacker who can stun Isaac to give other enemies a chance to close in) and The Pack make an appearance. The Pack is particularly terrifying, because the last thing we want is a pack of mutated children gnawing at our ankles, kneecaps and... other bits. Big, cinematic battles will return, and the way that zero-gravity is handled in the game has changed. The gravity of certain spaces can be altered by turning gravity on and off. Turning it off will allow Isaac to use the boosters on his suit to initiate full, 360-degree flight. We really want *Dead Space 2* to make us whole again...



Bodycount

DEVELOPER: Guildford Studio
PUBLISHER: Codemasters
GENRE: FPS
RELEASE DATE: Q1 2011
PLATFORMS: Xbox 360 | PS3

The spiritual successor to *Black* is helmed once again by designer Stuart Black. You play a renegade (who calls himself John Doe) who gets caught up in some shady business with a shady organisation known as The Network to do shady things like assassinate people with lots of bullets and screaming. The world will supposedly be almost completely destructible, making your "mouth-watering selection of contemporary weaponry" (they said it, not us) useful for more than just putting holes in the heads of bad guys. Killing dudes will earn you rewards like air strikes that can be used to further decimate the environment. A unique cover system is being implemented, which will grant players almost complete freedom of movement while behind cover. In addition, competitive and cooperative multiplayer will let you test out the implications of bullet impacts to the faces of players around the world.



Shogun 2: Total War

DEVELOPER: Creative Assembly
PUBLISHER: SEGA
GENRE: Strategy/Management
RELEASE DATE: TBA 2011
PLATFORMS: PC

The latest game in the excellent *Total War* series takes us back to feudal Japan for a second time. Set in 16th Century Japan shortly after the Onin War, the player chooses from one of eight warlords, each with a unique starting position on the map and different political/military strengths and weaknesses. The scale of the game won't be global – instead you're battling for control over eight fiefdoms. New to the series is the ability to actually embody a character that roams the game world, rather than just be a disembodied cursor that magically inspires troops and agents to do your bidding. Hero units are also being introduced based on historical figures. We're guessing you'll have to deal with lots of family politics within your chosen clan.



Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

DEVELOPER: LucasArts **PUBLISHER:** LucasArts **GENRE:** Action
RELEASE DATE: October 2010 **PLATFORMS:** PC | Xbox 360 | PS3 | Wii | DS

Set six months after its predecessor and a year before *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*, *The Force Unleashed II* once again features Starkiller throwing stuff around with his brain and toying with Stormtroopers. The developers promise that they're refining the gameplay while adding new elements like puzzle solving. You'll even get to pilot a TIE fighter – hooray! New combat features like dual-wielding lightsabers, more combos and exciting new enemies to bash over the head, together with extra Force powers (such as mind trick and Force fury) will hopefully unleash the Force even more. One of the best bits of the original was the story and from the looks of things, the second game won't disappoint in that regard with the developer's assurance of a more personal story. Darth Vader will be in it. He's hunting you. That's scary.



Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Paris
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
GENRE: Tactical FPS
RELEASE DATE: Q1 2011
PLATFORMS: PC | Xbox 360 | PS3 | Wii | DS | PSP

The fifth full game (i.e. excluding expansions) in the *Ghost Recon* series aims to offer up a futuristic take on classic *Ghost Recon* gameplay. With a campaign set in locations like Northern Europe, Middle East and Asia, the Ghosts will be up against an ultra-nationalist force that have taken control of Russia and are slowly escalating their attacks to include neighbouring territories. Speculation is rife that the game will feature some very high-tech, futuristic toys like optical camouflage, miniature combat drones and shoulder-mounted rocket launchers to go along with the familiar tactical gameplay that we've come to expect from *Ghost Recon*. The series has yet to disappoint, so we're looking forward to this one.

Did you know?
45,600
 Number of industry insiders who passed through E3's majestic entranceway.



Quantum Theory

DEVELOPER: Team Tachyon
PUBLISHER: Tecmo Koei
GENRE: Third-Person Shooter
RELEASE DATE: Q4 2010
PLATFORMS: Xbox 360 | PS3

It's been justifiably compared to *Gears of War* with its cover-and-shoot gameplay mechanics, but *Quantum Theory* differs in an important way – the cover is constantly altered and rearranged by the living tower in which you find yourself with protagonists Syd and Filena. This living tower will constantly throw ever-changing obstacles at you, morphing the environment in real time. You'll take control of Syd while the AI controls Filena, allowing you to combine efforts throughout the game and perform two-person combos against gigantic enemies. Syd's packing massive firepower and can move in close to take out enemies in melee combat using his powerful gauntlets, while Filena uses a mythical sword that can transform to a long-range gun at will. *Quantum Theory* will also offer up numerous game modes for online multiplayer madness.



inFamous 2

DEVELOPER: Sucker Punch Productions **PUBLISHER:** Sony Computer Entertainment
GENRE: Third-Person Action/Sandbox **RELEASE DATE:** 2011 **PLATFORMS:** PS3

Anyone who played *inFamous* knows that there's really only one reason to get all super excited for its sequel: because it's more *inFamous*. Cole MacGrath, bike messenger turned gaming's own superhero, returns for a second round of saving kittens from burning trees. It turns out that when that mysterious package Cole was delivering exploded in his hands and granted him superpowers, the ability to manipulate electricity was only the beginning. E3 showed us that Cole will have ice-based powers in the sequel as well. Apparently the Ray Sphere (the device that gave Cole his powers) also has the side effect of gradually altering appearances/ personalities too, because Cole looks quite different. Not only are there tattoos and necklaces involved, but his actual face has changed and he's got brown hair. It's weird that we've somehow ended up with two Nathan Drakes in the PS3 stable, but we'll forgive Sucker Punch the drastic change in the look and personality of the protagonist if we can get more of the smooth, engrossing gameplay that the original offered.

inFamous 2 starts with Cole still in Empire City. It isn't long before The Beast (the world-ending monster that Kessler mumbled on about in the

first game) shows up and makes Cole wish he was a stronger superhero - which leads him to New Marais, a New Orleans-style city that's spread out over three islands. This is where the Ray Sphere was created and it's where Cole hopes to learn new abilities and gain the strength to defeat The Beast. New Marais is plagued by monsters and a character named Bertrand rises up to lead a militia (with a strict "no superheroes" policy and therefore no Cole) against the monsters. Obviously the plan is to ignore the policy and help out the people of New Marais, so Cole steps in.

The vibrant city of New Marais will offer up a living game world that Empire City cannot match, with more detail, interactivity, opportunities and, most importantly, destructibility than the original title's city ever had to offer. Cole has refined his parkour/gliding and has learned a few new travel powers useful for traversing the world. The game's power system is being overhauled, with new electrical powers and polished melee combat. It seems like the goal for the sequel is to take everything we loved about the first game, shine it up a bit and basically make it even better. We see nothing wrong with that.



During development of *inFamous*, the development team at Sucker Punch travelled to Starbucks approximately 18,200 times. That's a lot of warm beverages (not even counting coffee made in the office kitchen), with two groups of ten people having headed to Starbucks on each day of development, five days a week. They also consumed 17,472 cans of diet Coke and 13,104 cans of diet Pepsi. Ten *inFamous* babies were born during development, with one of the developers spawning two children in that time. We're going to start counting the number of cups of coffee it takes to bring you *NAG* every month.

Did you know?
21
 Miles of fiber optic cabling needed to sustain E3's network infrastructure.

Homefront

DEVELOPER: Kaos Studios
PUBLISHER: THQ
GENRE: FPS
RELEASE DATE: February 2011
PLATFORMS: PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

Set in America in the year 2027, *Homefront* details a future where the Korean People's Army invades the USA and topples it from the world-superpower leader-boards. The story (which deals with not only the growth of the North Korean forces, but also the economic downfall of the US and the unrest of its people before the invasion) is being written by John Milius, co-writer of *Apocalypse Now* and writer of *Red Dawn*. The gameplay will be based around guerrilla tactics, and the game will supposedly have a "magnetism" feature, which will attract significant events in the game towards the player to intensify the experience. A helicopter that's about to crash, for example, will make its way towards the player so that you see the crash in all its glory and feel the intensity of every battle you find yourselves in. The game is in development at the same studio that created *Frontlines: Fuel of War*.



Gears of War 3

DEVELOPER: Epic Games **PUBLISHER:** Microsoft Game Studios **GENRE:** Third-Person Shooter
RELEASE DATE: April 2011 **PLATFORMS:** Xbox 360

Now with playable female characters in stupid amounts of body armour! Marcus and the boys return, and they're bringing some new toys with them. Controllable mechs, double-barrelled shotguns and Lancers without chainsaw bayonets (which just aren't as exciting as their chainsaw-bearing counterparts – regular bayonets are so boring) are just some of the lovely noisemakers you'll see in the game: there's also a gun that shoots exploding land piranhas. Or

something. The story is set 18 months after the fall of Jacinto and the Imulsion that previously powered Sera's cities has begun to infect and mutate some of the Locust, causing them to become Lambent. These Lambent are now evolving into a new enemy, one which threatens the Locust Horde, the Gears and what's left of humanity. Four-player co-op, familiarly awesome multiplayer and a new Beast mode (similar to Horde, but you play as a Locust killing COG members) will all feature.



NeverDead

DEVELOPER: Honami **PUBLISHER:** Rebellion **GENRE:** Action
RELEASE DATE: TBA **PLATFORMS:** Xbox 360

The world is ravaged by a demonic plague. It's been centuries since some blatantly evil stuff blanketed the world in heartache and crying babies, and a hero was made immortal by demons. Now, the demons have returned and are wreaking indiscriminate chaos. What do you do? Make an action videogame with lots of blood, guts and demonic forces and cast the player as the immortal hero who cannot die. Set in a universe inspired by

fantasy and horror (and littered with destructible environments), *NeverDead* hands players a badass sword, an arsenal of badass guns and a unique, badass healing mechanism, then sets them loose to be a badass and destroy waves of badass, unholy enemies. Being unable to die gives way to a health-regeneration system wherein players will have to collect, repair and reattach lost limbs to get all healthy and fully limbed again. Awesome.



F.3.A.R.

DEVELOPER: Day 1 Studios **PUBLISHER:** Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment
GENRE: FPS **RELEASE DATE:** October 2010 **PLATFORMS:** PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

A new developer (who previously put out *Fracture*, among other titles), new cooperative gameplay, a cover system and plenty of scares – these are all on *F.3.A.R.*'s feature list. The previously faceless Point Man has been unmasked and he and fellow Alma-spawn, Paxton Fettel (antagonist from the original game and Point Man's brother), kill lots of stuff using a combination of bullets, slow-mo and supernatural abilities like telekinesis. Point Man handles the muscle, taking on ATC's (Armacham Technology Corporation) soldiers using his, umm... advanced combat abilities, while Fettel prefers to hang back and stun, possess and toss enemies about using his mind to aid the Point Man. Players will take control of both characters and we're expecting the same glorious action that the series is known for.

E3 Fun Facts

Nintendo's Eiji Aonuma still feels remorse over the frustration that many gamers felt while working their way through *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time's* Water Temple. Aonuma admits that this section really wasn't much fun thanks to poorly planned controls. They plan to rectify this by implementing a new, more efficient item wheel for selecting items in *Skyward Sword*.



The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword

DEVELOPER: Nintendo PUBLISHER: Nintendo GENRE: Action Adventure
 RELEASE DATE: 2011 PLATFORMS: Wii

We've known this was coming for a long time, but Nintendo finally revealed Link's first Wii-exclusive adventure at this year's E3. Designed for use with the MotionPlus attachment (MotionPlus is mandatory to play the game), *Skyward Sword's* Link was born and raised in a land floating above the clouds called Skyloft. His ordinary life is thrown out the window when he discovers the Skyward Sword and heads to a previously unknown land beneath the clouds, one that is ruled by evil. Link can use the sword to travel back and forth between the two worlds until he eventually learns the reason for the separation of the two lands. The sword will eventually transform to become the Master Sword (totally didn't see that one coming..)

Sporting a new, really gorgeous visual style (that combines the more realistic look of *Twilight Princess* with the toon Link-style of *The Wind Waker* – Nintendo describes the style as that of a painting that has come to life), expect to see gameplay largely similar to that of the previous 3D *Zelda* titles, with some alteration to the traditional flow of alternating dungeon and overworld

exploration. All the familiar *Legend of Zelda* staples will be there, like bombs, a slingshot and a bow. New items like a flying, mechanical beetle that can fetch items from a distance for you and a whip will feature in the game.

Possibly the most important alterations to the *Zelda* formula (that we know of so far – and we really don't know much at this point) come by way of the MotionPlus-infused combat. It makes for a 1:1 translation between MotionPlus movement and the in-game sword (the shield is controlled using the Nunchuk). This has led the developers to add more depth to the combat than simply having to get the timing on your attacks right. Now the direction of attacks will also play a role in defeating enemies. An example of this is when you're fighting plant creatures called Deku Baba in the game. These have mouths that can open vertically or horizontally, and you'll have to choose the angle of your attacks accordingly in order to kill them. Shigeru Miyamoto has said that they're trying to correct one of *Twilight Princess's* flaws with *Skyward Sword* by easing off on the massive, vacant areas that the former was filled with.

Portal 2

DEVELOPER: Valve
 PUBLISHER: Valve
 GENRE: First-Person Puzzle
 RELEASE DATE: TBA 2011
 PLATFORMS: PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

If you're like us, you've pondered how awesome *Portal* would be with cooperative multiplayer. *Portal 2* will answer that question by putting players through puzzles designed by the nefarious, yet lovable GLaDOS to see how the results change when tests involve two subjects. The plot sees players returning to the lab some years later as Chell (protagonist from the original), where things go awry and the lab (together with GLaDOS) starts rebuilding itself. The *portal* gun will still offer the same functionality, but other environmental factors can be manipulated using the *portal* gun: for example, by creating portals to manipulate air currents to knock over turrets, or to draw objects into the current. You'll also be able to use a special gel/paint to coat surfaces and change their properties (such as one that will let players bounce off the surface when hitting it). We can't wait for more of *Portal's* special brand of puzzles, humour and meme-creating wonders.

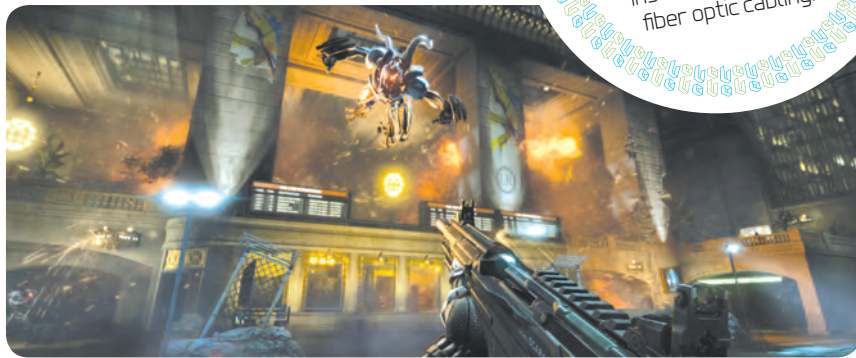




Crackdown 2

DEVELOPER: Ruffian Games
PUBLISHER: Microsoft Game Studios
GENRE: Third-Person Action/Sandbox
RELEASE DATE: July 2010
PLATFORMS: Xbox 360

Good for people who like throwing trucks at other trucks, *Crackdown 2* will be much like its predecessor: Pacific City is infested with crazy gang warfare and it's up to you, as the nameless Agent, to assist the Agency in taking back the city from the crime lords. To make matters worse, mutants also prowl the city streets (they mostly come at night... mostly...), ready to eat your face off. Bigger problems and meaner bad dudes require a stronger Agent to overcome and *Crackdown 2* is eagerly providing one, with levels of Agent customisation that surpass those of the original. The orb system for upgrades will return, together with new skills to upgrade and improvements to the old skills (the agility skill will let you jump much higher than it did in the first, for example). Four-player online co-op will be accompanied by sixteen-player competitive multiplayer for some super-powered competitive mayhem.



Crysis 2

DEVELOPER: Crytek
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
GENRE: FPS
RELEASE DATE: Q4 2010
PLATFORMS: PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

Now on consoles! Also, award-winning sci-fi novelist Richard Morgan is penning the story. This time around we're headed out of tropical island paradises and into the urban jungle that is New York City. Urban environments mean increased verticality and new tactical options. Nanosuit 2 is the fashion accessory of choice in the game, an improvement over the original Nanosuit (with new abilities tied to it), which the main character is not

supposed to be in possession of, leading Crynet Systems to hunt the player down. Crytek promises more freedom of choice, more gameplay options and more tactical combat. They're packing all of this into a game that will have lower system requirements (for the PC version) than the original and will run effortlessly on consoles, thanks to the CryEngine 3. Crytek has stated that the combat will be "catastrophically beautiful." We like the sound of that.

Rage

DEVELOPER: id Software
PUBLISHER: Bethesda Softworks
GENRE: FPS
RELEASE DATE: 2011
PLATFORMS: PC | PS3 | Xbox 360

id Software's first new IP in many, many moons, there's a lot riding on *Rage*. We have infallible faith in John Carmack and his team of tech wizards, however, so we know that great things will come from *Rage*. The first game that we'll play built on id's Tech 5 engine, *Rage* will be more than just a pretty, mutant-filled FPS – the game will feature insane driving elements too, with races and the like. The driving and racing elements

were inspired by the *MotorStorm* and *Burnout* school of racing, and players will be able to upgrade their chosen cars with money won from races. The game is set in the near future, after the asteroid 99942 Apophis hits the Earth and leaves it looking like something out of *Fallout*. Notice how we haven't mentioned anything about the shooting bits? That's because we don't care about details – we just know this game is going to be amazing.



Did you know?
17,000
 Number of man hours it takes to install and test E3's fiber optic cabling.



The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings

DEVELOPER: CD Projekt RED Studio
PUBLISHER: Atari
GENRE: Action RPG
RELEASE DATE: Q1 2011
PLATFORMS: PC

The critically acclaimed first game, with its mature themes, brilliant RPG elements and interesting story, has done enough to warrant a sequel. For the second game's story, the developers are going the non-linear route, promising the same sort of captivating, mature storyline that the first featured. A new combat system will hopefully make for a much smoother experience and will reportedly allow for a greater variety of tactical opportunities. Adam Kicinski, CEO of CD Projekt RED, said that their aim is to create "one of the best RPGs people have ever played." The new technology behind the game (designed from the ground up by CD Projekt RED to aid in developing RPGs with non-linear storylines) will deliver stunning visuals to create a memorable RPG universe.

Medal of Honor

DEVELOPER: EA Los Angeles | DICE (multiplayer) PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
 GENRE: FPS RELEASE DATE: October 2010 PLATFORMS: PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

Could this reboot of the *Medal of Honor* franchise finally be the game that will wean us off our *Call of Duty* addiction? We really, really hope so and having recently played the multiplayer beta has given us reason to get very excited for *Medal of Honor*. The single-player storyline will be told from the perspective of Tier One Operator soldiers fighting it out in Afghanistan, as well as casting players as a US Army Ranger (the story will be split up, with gamers playing as multiple characters throughout). Expect to raid terrorist hideouts, rescue many hostages and blow up many superfluous things in the game, with the developers placing emphasis on realism (EA went so far as to bring in consultants from the US military). Both the single player and multiplayer will feature driveable vehicles like tanks and quad bikes. Multiplayer matches will earn you experience towards unlocking new weapons, gadgets and other useful stuff, with a number of cool game modes available to play.



Did you know?
 Number of football fields that could be covered by E3's carpeting



Killzone 3

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla Games
 PUBLISHER: Sony Computer Entertainment
 GENRE: FPS RELEASE DATE: February 2011 PLATFORMS: PS3

Picking up right where *Killzone 2* left off, this third title in the series once again casts players as Sev in the fight against the Helghast. The developers have compared the game's story to a David and Goliath-style affair, with Sev and his buddy Rico trapped without reinforcements in the middle of the power struggle that the Helghast Empire is engaged in following the death of their dictator. New, deadly environments like icy wastes and alien jungles (there'll also be space battles) will mix things up a bit. Melee combat is being refined and improved, with brutal new attacks and the ability to string together combos. New to *Killzone 3* is fully destructible scenery and the ability to play the game in 3D (it was built from the ground up to feature 3D support). The game will also be playable using the PlayStation Move motion controller. Jetpacks!

Enslaved: Odyssey to the West

DEVELOPER: Ninja Theory PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai
 GENRE: Action Adventure RELEASE DATE: October 2010
 PLATFORMS: Xbox 360 | PS3

Developed by the same bunch that brought *Heavenly Sword* to the PS3 in 2007, *Enslaved* is set 150 years in the future. War has left the Earth devastated, the human race a tattered remnant of its former glory. Robots roam the world, still following orders to eradicate any humans on sight. Nature is reclaiming its former territories and a dude named Monkey (he has a tail - it's a long story) has spent his entire, solitary life evading the machines. This all goes pear shaped when he is captured, put on an airship and meets a tech savvy woman named Trip. They escape, but Trip fits Monkey with a dodgy little headband that keeps him under her control. She needs Monkey's help to get home, and players take control of the acrobatically adept Monkey, who lives up to his namesake and is able to ambush enemies, steal their weapons and use gadgets to traverse the treacherous world. Trip is not so versatile, and it's up to Monkey to protect her.



Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine

DEVELOPER: Relic Entertainment PUBLISHER: THQ
 GENRE: Action RPG RELEASE DATE: TBA PLATFORMS: Xbox 360 | PS3

As Relic's first departure (unless you count *The Outfit* - which we don't) from their usual habit of creating some of the greatest RTS titles we've ever had the pleasure of playing, there's reason to be both excited and apprehensive about this one. We're not sure how Relic will handle action RPG territory, but despite the annoying lack of info on the game, it's looking good so far. What little we know of the plot at this point is that an Imperial Forge World is being invaded by Orks, so you and your Space Marine buddies step in to burn the green horde. You'll take control of your four-man squad of Space Marines (trailers have shown Assault Marines, Tactical Marines, Sergeants and Devastator Marines as being featured in the game), completing missions and earning upgrades for you and your squad so you can customise them a bit as the game progresses.



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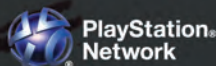
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PS3
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XBOX
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Brink

DEVELOPER: Splash Damage PUBLISHER: Bethesda Softworks GENRE: Team-based FPS
 RELEASE DATE: 2011 PLATFORMS: PC | PS3 | Xbox 360

Did you know?

50,000

The population of Ark prior to the brink of civil war.

Have you ever thought to yourself "self, wouldn't it be great if someone, somewhere, created a first-person shooter that combined movement elements from *Mirror's Edge* or *Assassin's Creed*, team-based play from *Team Fortress 2* and the customisation of an MMO?" Okay, so it's not the most likely thought to occur, but for those few people out there who have experienced that exact thought, *Brink* is the game you've been waiting for all this time.

The game takes place in a futuristic utopian city that's taken a beating from over-population. When the watery apocalypse hit planet Earth, those not on The Ark's limited guest-list decided to take matters into their own hands and move in regardless. The people of Ark eventually give in to the invasion and allowed them to live as Guests – second-rate citizens who were permitted to attach a flotilla of junk to the edges of Ark and live out their lives in its slums. Soon after, with the population of Ark at breaking point (the city wasn't designed to support so many inhabitants), a resistance was formed among the Guests and Ark's militant, anti-terrorist police force rose up to meet the impending civil war.

Throughout the game the player will experience a number of different missions and mission objectives, some of which will involve moral decision-making that will affect the overall story

and their progression through it. Some missions will see you breaking into government facilities, planting explosives or hacking computer terminals, while you'll often be tasked to move around using the S.M.A.R.T. system to manoeuvre through pipes, crevices and difficult-to-reach locations. As you accomplish your goals, the experience points that you earn can be used to customise your weapons, clothing, skills and abilities, and even your character's accent. While there are 24 base weapons to choose from, each can be adjusted to suit your needs and will ultimately result in much variety between players and their play styles.

Brink will see players take on a number of classes as members of either The Resistance or The Security Forces through two storylines. Players will also be able to compete against other players in up to 8v8 objective-based missions that form part of the campaign. In addition to the game's RPG elements, *Brink* also features a unique movement system called S.M.A.R.T., or Smooth Movement Across Random Terrain, that allows players to perform parkour-like stunts such as sliding, wall-running, leaping over and through objects and everything in between. The end result of this mash-up of gameplay elements will be a hardcore action experience unlike anything else, and you can do it all online or against computer-controlled bots.



E3 Fun Facts

Brink's S.M.A.R.T. system will allow players to move quickly and fluidly through the many obstacles you'll find in Ark. The idea is simple: point your cursor at your intended destination and hold in the sprint key. Your character will automatically jump, slide, climb and dive however is needed to reach that point, while you concentrate on the action.



Bulletstorm

DEVELOPER: Epic Games | People Can Fly
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts **GENRE:** FPS
RELEASE DATE: February 2011 **PLATFORMS:** PC | PS3 | Xbox 360

People Can Fly developed *Painkiller* and Epic Games have *Gears of War* and *Unreal* under their belt. If that isn't enough to convince you that this is going to be an awesome frag-fest then there may be something amiss with you. The game sees you take on the role of Grayson Hunt, exiled ex-mercenary with revenge on his mind and lots of monsters trying to kill him. You'll have to deal with the threat that inhabits the dangerous world you've been sent

through a series of bloody, violent and over-the-top action sequences by upgrading your character, unlocking weapons and killing opponents in lots of varied and interesting ways. The more chaos and mayhem you incite, the bigger your reward will be, and with bigger rewards you gain access to the bigger toys. This is definitely one to look out for if you're at all a fan of the *Painkiller* or *Serious Sam* enemy dispatching methodologies.



APB: All Points Bulletin

DEVELOPER: Realtime Worlds **PUBLISHER:** Realtime Worlds
GENRE: MMOG **RELEASE DATE:** July 2010 **PLATFORMS:** PC

When it comes to open-world action games, few people know the genre better than *GTA* and *Crackdown* creator David Jones, who just so happens to be the lead developer on *APB*. This massively-multiplayer action game sees the future cities of the world torn apart by violence and crime, with little help from the boys in blue. To combat this, the newly-elected mayor of fictional city San Paro legalises vigilantism to let the people police themselves. The result is the Criminals and the Enforcers – two halves of the brutal war for dominance; which side will you choose? Kit out your character with tons of customisation options, hit the streets in your pimped-out ride to either cause mayhem or attempt to fight back against the endless gangs.



DeathSpank

DEVELOPER: Hothead Games **PUBLISHER:** Electronic Arts **GENRE:** Action RPG
RELEASE DATE: Q3 2010 **PLATFORMS:** Xbox 360 | PS3

When the co-creator of *Monkey Island* and the studio that had the guts to develop a game based on *Penny Arcade* come together, you know one of two things will happen: complete disaster or masterful, humorous glory. We've scryed the latter, and from the looks of things, our crystal ball is still in tune. Described as "*Monkey*

Island meets *Diablo*," *DeathSpank* is an action RPG that plays much like any hack-and-slash you could think of. Except players will explore a bizarre, cylindrical world not simply by maiming lots of monsters, but also through deep character interaction and dialogue similar to what you'd find in an adventure game. Expect good things to come of this title.

Did you know?

15

Ron Gilbert's age when he began programming.

Battlestar Galactica Online

DEVELOPER: Bigpoint **PUBLISHER:** Bigpoint **GENRE:** MMO
 tactical space combat **RELEASE DATE:** Q4 2010 **PLATFORMS:** PC

If you're tired of all those frakking toasters and Gaius frakking Baltar always frakking things up for everyone, and maybe you think you could do a lot frakking better, then here's your chance. *BSG Online* will be a browser-based game, but don't think that this means it'll suffer in the visual department. The game is being developed in the Unity engine – a powerful, multi-platform engine that can run on anything from an iPhone to a frakking toaster, and will give players the choice of playing as either humanity's last survivors or the powerful Cylons. The game will loosely follow the series' story, and will borrow a number of assets directly from the show, but will allow you to carve out your own destiny however you see fit.

Fallout: New Vegas

DEVELOPER: Obsidian Entertainment **PUBLISHER:** Bethesda Softworks
GENRE: First-person RPG **RELEASE DATE:** October 2010 **PLATFORMS:** PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

Obsidian Entertainment might be the guys that everyone goes to when they need an RPG sequel, but the company has one important piece of pedigree backing it up: it was formed from the ashes of the original *Fallout* development studio, Black Isle Studios. It seems only fitting, then, to give them access to the assets from Bethesda's successful *Fallout 3* and see what

they can cook up. The result of that experiment will be *Fallout: New Vegas*. It's still in the first-person, and it looks very similar to *Fallout 3*, but the game is guaranteed to have that classic *Fallout* flavour that Bethesda emulated well, but Obsidian should be able to do better. Gambling, gunning, slavery and causing all sorts of a ruckus in a post-apocalyptic Sin City—you know this sounds perfect.



Devil's Third

DEVELOPER: Valhalla Game Studios
PUBLISHER: THQ **GENRE:** Third-person shooter
RELEASE DATE: TBA **PLATFORMS:** Xbox 360 | PS3

Dead or Alive and *Ninja Gaiden* creator Tomonobu Itagaki left Tecmo in 2008 to form Valhalla Game Studios. This is the title he's been working on since, together with a number of former Team Ninja employees. While there isn't much known about the game at this stage, we do know that it'll be a third-person shooter with a deep melee and fighting system. We wouldn't expect any less from Itagaki, to be honest. The story is based on the Kessler syndrome theory, which means little to us other than it's probably futuristic, with a tendency to lean towards the apocalyptic. Other than that, we know that the game will take place in multiple locations on Earth, including Asia, Europe and America. There will also be tanks, and possibly bullets.

Black Mirror III

DEVELOPER: Cranberry Productions
PUBLISHER: dtp Entertainment **GENRE:** Point & click adventure
RELEASE DATE: November 2010 **PLATFORMS:** PC

If you haven't yet experienced the *Black Mirror* series, then you've got a few months to make up for this terrible mistake. Go out and play the first two games. Then play the completely unrelated but nonetheless excellent *Still-Life* and its sequel. There will be a test. The third title in this series is on its way, and promises to tie up the loose strings from *BM2*. The game will feature the same 2.5D visuals (real-time 3D characters on a pre-rendered background) and will return to the Black Mirror castle from the first game. You can expect 62 lovingly-created environments to explore as well as two playable characters. The publishers claim that the game will have a deep, mysterious story, and if the first two titles are anything to go by, you can sleep easy knowing that you're likely to get just that.

Disciples III: Renaissance

DEVELOPER: Akella **PUBLISHER:** Halypso Media
GENRE: Turn-based strategy **RELEASE DATE:** Q3 2010
PLATFORMS: PC

It's been five years in the making and, if you're a fan of this type of game, that's five years too many. *Disciples III* continues the same format as the previous two titles, but adds a number of new features that fans of the series have been begging for. The game sees each player choose a distinct and highly customisable leader for their army who will assemble troops and attempt to take over various worlds by claiming resources, upgrading troops and buildings and transforming the land to match their faction: be it the Empire, the Elven Alliance or the Legions of the Damned (future races are planned to be released with the expansions). Combat has received a major overhaul and units can now move freely about the battlefield, as well as use terrain for cover, thanks to the new fully-3D engine

E3 Fun Facts

Classic point 'n' click adventure-gaming might not be on everybody's radar, but the genre has been steadily churning away since its near-death experience in the early '90s. One publisher that's been leading the front is The Adventure Company, which is a subsidiary of DreamCatcher Interactive (the publishers behind the original *Painkiller*). TAC has released dozens of classic adventure games, including *Still Life*, *Sam & Max Season 1*, *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon* and *Syberia*. If this is a genre you're interested in, pay attention to anything released by this publisher.





Hunted: The Demon's Forge

DEVELOPER: inXile **PUBLISHER:** Bethesda Softworks
GENRE: Action adventure **RELEASE DATE:** Q1 2011
PLATFORMS: PC | PS3 | Xbox 360

Everything is better with co-op: shooters, RPGs, and even puzzle games benefit from having a couple of friends on the couch to help you out when the going gets tough. *Hunted: The Demon's Forge* will take the co-op gameplay we've come to expect from titles like *Gears of War* and bring it into a fantasy hack-and-slash world. In this two-player game, players will take control of the Elven ranger E'lara and her brutish fellow adventurer Caddoc to explore dungeons, slay the undead and get the loot at the end of the tunnel. Customisable skills, magic powers, weapons and all of your favourite hack-and-slash mainstays will be present to give even the most hardened *Diablo* fans a good time.

Journey

DEVELOPER: ThatGameCompany **GENRE:** Adventure
PUBLISHER: Sony Computer Entertainment **RELEASE DATE:** 2011 **PLATFORMS:** PS3

Not many gamers will know the name Jenova Chen, but for those who do, you'll know this game designer is the man behind the excellent, despite their lack of mainstream appeal, *Flow* and *Flower*. His next title, *Journey*, is a game that focuses on just that: a journey; travelling through the massive world with particular attention to making the player feel "small" – which gives them the means to appreciate the world that they're in and how they can affect it. Occasionally you'll come across other players in this desolate world, and there you can choose to travel with them, see them as an adversary or completely ignore them.



Front Mission Evolved

DEVELOPER: Double Helix Games **PUBLISHER:** Square Enix
GENRE: Action **RELEASE DATE:** September 2010 **PLATFORMS:** PC | PS3 | Xbox 360

Here the Western gaming industry had *MechWarrior*, the Japanese had *Front Mission*. Both had big robots fighting each other, but *Front Mission's* focus was turn-based tactical gameplay with a strong RPG component. Now, the series is moving over to US-based developers Double Helix, and with that move west comes a departure from its tactical roots and a dive into the action genre. The game will follow the series' storyline, and is set approximately fifty years after

the events of *Front Mission 5*. Square is working closely with Double Helix to ensure that the story is as solid as it has always been, and also to bring the tactical RPG elements to this new format without alienating either new or veteran players. It's a tough balance to achieve, but both parties are confident that they've nailed it. Time will tell, but this one to keep an eye on if you've played previous *Front Mission* games or are looking for a new shooter with lots of big robots beating each other up.



Did you know?
500,000
 The number of active subscribers still playing Final Fantasy XI Online.

Final Fantasy XIV Online

DEVELOPER: Square Enix PDD 3 **PUBLISHER:** Square Enix
GENRE: MMORPG **RELEASE DATE:** TBA 2010 **PLATFORMS:** PC | PS3

The recently-released *Final Fantasy XIII* may not have hit every button you had hoped it would, and *FFXI* had only a small following locally, but this next game in the *Online* sub-series has been developed with player feedback as its most important source of inspiration, so it may be just what you're looking for. The game will do away with the traditional class system found in most RPGs and replace it with an open-ended weapon-dependent job system, called The Armory System, that will

allow players to change tactics and jobs with comparatively little penalty. If you equip your character with a blacksmith's hammer, they'll become a blacksmith; a bow makes them a ranger and a spell book will change them to a mage. This innovative system (which is what we've come to expect from the series), combined with an extensive crafting system and a better balance between solo and group play should help make *FFXIV* a true *Final Fantasy* in every sense, even if it requires an online connection.

Driver: San Francisco

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Reflections PUBLISHER: Ubisoft GENRE: Racing
 RELEASE DATE: Q4 2010 PLATFORMS: PC | PS3 | Xbox 360 | Wii

If you haven't played and finished the appallingly-named *Driv3r*, then head over to the second paragraph right now. At the end of the game, the protagonist, detective John Tanner finds himself at odds with his long-time nemesis Jericho, who does him a rather nasty injury that results in Tanner winding up in hospital in a coma. In *Driver: San Francisco*, you'll once again play as detective Tanner; you'll still hit the streets in search of bad guys and break every law while doing so, but you'll never even leave the hospital. *Driver: San Francisco* takes place entirely within the mind of John Tanner.

Owing to the afore-mentioned situation (just leave it be; if you're spoiler sensitive you'll thank us later), Tanner has developed the uncanny ability to "Shift" his body to almost any other car on the road. Hey, it's his world, after all. This ability will add a definite kooky-factor to the game, but other wise, it'll remain as thoroughly *Driver* as ever before. In fact, the original developer is back to work on this new title. The Shift system will add a new depth to the game, however. If you're cruising along in pursuit of some good-for-nothing, and catch sight of a handy-looking 18-wheeler inbound but it looks as though the driver is one of those "stop if you see a car in your way" kind of goody two-shoes, then it's a simple matter of hitting the Shift button, which pulls your body out of your current vehicle to hover above the traffic for a bird's-eye view, then diving into the truck to finish the job and wipe your prey off the road. It's an interesting-sounding system, and we hope that it'll effectively add more to the game than the simple but rewarding

feeling of a lengthy car chase.

Another first for the series is the welcome addition of licensed vehicles. But not just a handful or two; oh no, the developers have gone all-out to bring you over 120 fully-licensed, fully-destructible and faithfully-recreated cars to throw at your pursuee. Alfa Romeo, Aston Martin, Dodge, Pagani and almost every manufacturer in between has given Ubisoft permission to use their vehicles. The developers have also gone out of their way to ensure that any vehicle from your favourite car chase film is in the game, including the 1974 Dodge Monaco from *Blue's Brothers*, *Dukes of Hazard's* 1969 Charger and the Challenger, which you may recognise from *Death Proof*. There's also going to be an appearance of the legendary DeLorean DMC-12, although it's not yet been confirmed what happens if the car reaches 88 miles per hour.

Did you know?
 1999
 The year of release for the first Driver game.



Project Dust (working title)

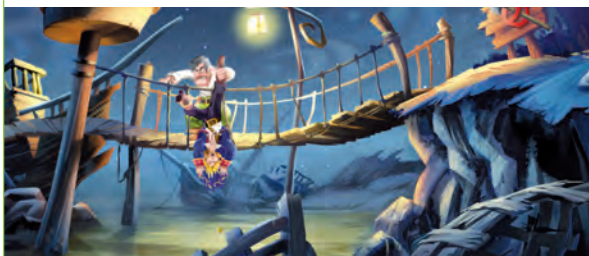
DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montpellier
 PUBLISHER: Ubisoft GENRE: Strategy
 RELEASE DATE: Q2 2011 PLATFORMS: PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

Conceived by Eric Chahi, creator of 1991's masterpiece *Another World* (Out of this World in North America) and 1998's amazing *Heart of Darkness*, *Project Dust* has been described by its creator as "the spiritual heir to *Populous*." Another of its inspirations is *Rez*, because the game will apparently have strong musical themes. The mention of *Populous* alone has us crazy excited for this one, a download-only (for Xbox LIVE, PlayStation Network and PC) title which sees you trying to lead your tribe of people to safety in a version of Earth constantly devastated by epic natural disasters much worse than the ones we're accustomed to. You do this by manipulating the world's elements, controlling the flow of water and lava, shaping and reshaping the land - pretty much moulding the world as you see fit to help your people expand and migrate.

Monkey Island 2 Special Edition: LeChuck's Revenge

DEVELOPER: LucasArts PUBLISHER: LucasArts GENRE: Adventure
RELEASE DATE: July 2010 PLATFORMS: PC | PS3

Guybrush is back in this recreation of the second title from the bizarre minds of Ron Gilbert, Tim Schafer and Dave Grossman. Our beloved but ill-fated hero will return to the Caribbean, several months after the events of *The Secret of Monkey Island*, in search of the treasure known as "Big Whoop." Like the special edition of *Secret*, *LeChuck's Revenge* will feature high-resolution, hand-drawn visuals but once-again players will have the option to quickly switch between the new and original graphics. Additionally, the game will have support for control with an analogue stick, and will include voice commentary from the game's original creators, as well as the return of Dominic Armato as the voice of Guybrush.



Mortal Kombat

DEVELOPER: NetherRealm Studios PUBLISHER: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment
GENRE: Fighting RELEASE DATE: 2011 PLATFORMS: Xbox 360 | PS3

The last few *Mortal Kombat* titles didn't go down quite as well as everyone had hoped, and the series was declared all but dead. Now, the original creators are back under the guise of a new development studio, but they're attempting to bring the *MK* series more in line with other modern fighting titles like *Street Fighter* and the like with a thoroughly revised combat system and a return to their

2D roots (the visuals will remain 3D, but the fighting plane will be 2D). Many of the characters from the series will return, but there will also be a few new-comers. The returning fighters include Johnny Cage, Kung Lao, Nightwolf, Scorpion, Reptile, Sub-Zero and Raiden, and you can expect to see familiar combat zones such as The Living Forest, The Temple, The Pit and Kahn's Arena.

Fun Facts

Swashbuckling is an important part of every pirate's life, but the swordplay in *Monkey Island* adds that LucasArts wackiness that we all know and love (or should, at least). Insult Sword-fighting is the order of the day, and involves armed opponents hurling insults at one-another; sufficient retort will allow you an opportunity for a real attack, but if you find yourself shy of a comeback, it's a skewering for you. Examples include: "Soon you'll be wearing my sword like a shish kebab!" To which the ideal response is "First you better stop waiving it like a feather-duster." As well as "You fight like a dairy farmer." Which is best dealt with by a lethal blow from "How appropriate. You fight like a cow."

Rock Band 3

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: MTV Games | Electronic Arts
GENRE: Rhythm RELEASE DATE: Q4 2010
PLATFORMS: Xbox 360 | PS3 | Wii | DS

Harmonix continues to innovate in this all-in approach to the rhythm game genre that declares mindlessly mashing on coloured buttons a thing of the past. The next title in the popular *Rock Band* series makes two large changes to the line-up – the addition of the new 17-key keyboard peripheral, and the new multi-button guitar – as well as many smaller ones. Available in training or pro versions (the latter of which uses actual strings, just like the real deal, and will be manufactured by Fender under the Squier brand), the new guitar requires players to get a lot closer to the real-life experience of playing a guitar. The vocal harmonies system from *The Beatles: RB* and *Green Day: RB* will make a return, allowing up to three vocalists to perform at once and the addition of a new Pro Mode will allow players to step up their game more so than ever before.



Magic: The Gathering - Tactics

DEVELOPER: Sony Computer Entertainment PUBLISHER: Sony Computer Entertainment
GENRE: Turn-based strategy RELEASE DATE: TBA 2010 PLATFORMS: PC | PS3

There have been a number of videogames based on the popular collectible card game, *Magic: The Gathering*, but only a couple have successfully managed to capture the essence of the game well enough. Usually, those games have made a direct translation of the card system to the console or PC, but *Tactics* is adopting the less-successful (but arguably more interesting) approach of dressing the existing system up in a new format. This particular attempt will see the game play out like a regular turn-based tactics game, like *Final Fantasy Tactics* or *Jagged Alliance*, but instead of giving the players access to decks, they'll use customisable spell books that increase in power the more they play. The game will support both on- and offline play, and will be a free download. Players will need to spend money on acquiring booster packs if they wish to expand their spell books, however.



Did you know?
16
 The number of Resident Evil videogames and films.

Resident Evil: Revelations

DEVELOPER: Capcom **PUBLISHER:** Capcom **GENRE:** Survival horror
RELEASE DATE: TBA **PLATFORMS:** 3DS

With the upcoming arrival of Nintendo's 3D hand-held, the 3DS, you can expect a number of remakes and special "3D editions" to come in droves. Along for that ride is *Resident Evil: Revelations*, which will be a 3DS-exclusive RE title that features Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine. It forms part of Nintendo's claim that they're out to make "serious" titles for the 3DS, which will include *Metal Gear Solid*, *Dragon Quest*, *Pro Evolution Soccer*, *Dead or Alive* and more. The game will make use of Capcom's powerful (and highly scalable) MT Framework engine, which was last seen used in *Resident Evil 5*.

Star Wars: The Old Republic

DEVELOPER: BioWare **PUBLISHER:** LucasArts
GENRE: MMORPG **RELEASE DATE:** 2011 **PLATFORMS:** PC

As the release date for this highly-anticipated MMO romp in the *Star Wars* universe draws closer, fans of the series and genre alike are soaking up any drops of information like a sponge. The game allows players to choose between the Galactic Republic and the Sith Empire, and choose their class from among a selection of faction-specific options (which are: Bounty Hunter, Sith Warrior, Imperial Agent, Sith Inquisitor, Trooper, Smuggler, Jedi Knight and Jedi Consular) which are all highly-customisable and not reliant on conventional class archetypes that limit play-style. While few new details were revealed as this year's E3, we now know that each player will eventually be able to have their own spaceship, which will act as their home. Players will be able to walk around their spaceships, invite other players aboard and customise the space-faring vessel.

Fallout Online

DEVELOPER: Interplay | Masthead Studios
PUBLISHER: Interplay | Bethesda Softworks
GENRE: MMORPG **RELEASE DATE:** 2012 **PLATFORMS:** PC

The idea of *Fallout Online* has been floating around for a long time. Interplay originally planned to develop the game some years back, but lengthy legal battles with the company that currently owns all *Fallout* IP, Bethesda, has pushed the game back countless times. With this year's E3, the company finally released a teaser trailer for the game, as well as a few bits of info on their website, that showed that the game is finally on its way. The legal battles are still not completely over with, but the teaser material contains a Bethesda logo so we can assume that things are at least a bit more civil at the moment.



Splatterhouse

DEVELOPER: Namco Bandai Games **PUBLISHER:** Namco Bandai Games
GENRE: Horror beat-'em-up **RELEASE DATE:** Q3 2010 **PLATFORMS:** Xbox 360 | PS3

In this remake of the 1988 classic, players once again take on the role of Rick, in search of his kidnapped girlfriend, Jennifer. *Splatterhouse* is a beat-'em-up with survival horror elements, and loads of blood and gore. Players will be able to dismember the hordes of enemies, use limbs as weapons and even lose the occasional arm or leg themselves, only to have them grow back over time. The game will return to the West

Mansion, but will also allow players to visit other areas through a hub-and-spoke mission system. This title was originally under development by Bottlerocket Entertainment, but after issues of poor performance, Namco pulled the rights and funding from the studio to hand development over to one of their internal studios - the same team that developed the (also incredibly gory) *Afro Samurai* videogame.



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Fable III

DEVELOPER: Lionhead Studios PUBLISHER: Microsoft Game Studios GENRE: Action RPG
 RELEASE DATE: October 2010 PLATFORMS: PC | Xbox 360

Fifty years have passed since the events that transpired in *Fable II*. The hero of *Fable II*, who rose to power and eventually took the throne of Albion, has been the victim of "nefarious deeds" (we're not sure at this stage if that means death, but anything should suffice), and it's up to their offspring, the new hero and your player character in *Fable III*, to undo the injustices performed by the evil Logan, overthrow him and once again claim their rightful place as the leader of Albion. You might think everything we just mentioned was a spoiler, but that's only half of the game; from that point onwards you'll actually have to rule the land of Albion and decide its fate in times of war, poverty and industrial revolution.

The regular part of the game will play out in a similar manner to that of *Fable I* and *II*, although with a huge reduction in the amount of RPG "clunkiness" (according to the developers) and a greater focus on action. The contentious human interaction system will make a (much made-over) return, but will be streamlined to give players interactions such as Expression Touch and Dynamic Touch, which will be contextual, with less focus on the micro-management of conversations. Player characters will once again be able to marry, fall pregnant by or impregnate their NPC lovers, and run a household. Homosexual characters will be able to adopt.

To add to the simplicity of the game, Lionhead has all-but done away with

the idea of menu systems: players will have to interact with their environment to change appearance and customise their hero. Items and weapons will change based on how they're used to add to the character morphing system; for example, if a character slays many undead with a particular weapon, that weapon will start to look as though it's made of bone; kill too many squishy humans and it'll begin to drip with blood.

Once all the song and dance of getting to the top of the hierarchy of Albion is out of the way, you'll have to rule the land. You can choose to be a fair and just leader, or a corrupt bastard who likes nothing more than to steal from the national coffers to pimp out the royal castle. Much like the hero, the environments of Albion will also change based on the player's actions. Over-taxing a town will result in their buildings falling into disrepair, but return the peoples' gold to them and the land will flourish, albeit at your personal expense.

The first two *Fable* titles were interesting, and stood out from the action RPG crowd thanks to their quirky nature and different spin on conventions like questing and even purchasing from the local stores. If those two titles are anything to go by, and if Peter Molyneux would stop promising the world with every title that Lionhead is set to release, this might just be the *Fable* we've all been waiting for.

E3 Fun Facts

The character of Reaver from *Fable II* will make a return to the world of Albion, and once again he'll be voiced by British actor Stephen Fry. Other note-worthy voice talent includes John Cleese, who will play as the player's butler; Jonathan Ross has been cast for an as-yet unannounced role; Sir Ben Kingsley is playing as the King of Mist Peak and Bernard Hill will play as Sir Walter Beck.



Spec Ops: The Line

DEVELOPER: Yager Development PUBLISHER: 2K Games
 GENRE: Third-Person Shooter RELEASE DATE: 2011
 PLATFORMS: PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

Set in Dubai after the once magnificent city has its opulence torn out from under it by a series of devastating sandstorms, you play Captain Martin Walker, leader of a Delta Force team sent into the ruined city to rescue Colonel John Konrad. Konrad was presumed dead when he chose to stay behind when the sandstorms hit to help the people left in the city. Walker and his team are sent in after a distress signal from Konrad is received. The plot is based on the novella *Heart of Darkness* (written by Joseph Conrad), which also inspired *Apocalypse Now*. In addition to squad-based tactics, a cover system and all the usual action you'd see in most third-person shooters, *The Line* features a unique element: Dubai's desert sands. These obscure the environment, get in every possible bodily orifice and can be manipulated to defeat enemies (as an example, shooting massive glass windows with sand piled up against them will send sand streaming onto enemies, engulfing them).

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TrackMania 2

DEVELOPER: Nadeo PUBLISHER: Ubisoft GENRE: Racing
RELEASE DATE: TBA 2010 PLATFORMS: PC

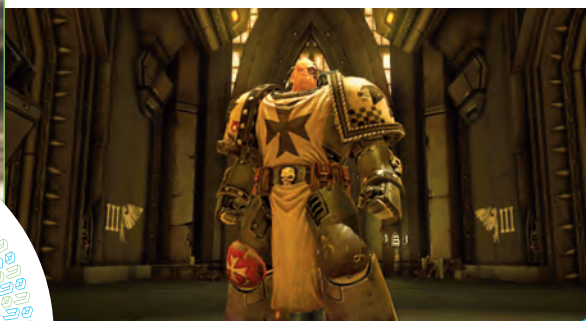
As the user-generated content bandwagon continues to thunder through the gaming landscape, Paris-based Nadeo, the team that brought us *TrackMania*, *Sunrise*, *Nations* and all its other iterations, is preparing to attempt something quite interesting with the concept. *TrackMania 2* will fall under their new *ManiaNations* brand – a development and deployment platform for user-generated racing content, as well as separate titles for shooters (named *ShootMania*) and RPGs (*QuestMania*). It's a huge undertaking, but one that we can envisage working quite well if the content creation tools are solid and easy to use, and allow for the same type of instant gratification (or, as was often the case, frustration) that the millions of insane *TrackMania* tracks gave players. *TrackMania 2* will feature much the same content as the first title: building tracks, sharing them with the community and competing to take the fastest lap time. New additions include a split-screen mode and the ability to create new geometry and textures, instead of being restricted to predefined assets.

Warhammer 40,000: Dark Millennium Online

DEVELOPER: Vigil Games PUBLISHER: THQ GENRE: MMORPG
RELEASE DATE: TBA 2012 PLATFORMS: PC

It might only be Vigil Games' second title (after *Darksiders*), but *Dark Millennium* has a lot going for it already. The title will be the first *Warhammer 40K*-based MMO, and will be based on a Hive World (a densely populated planet completely covered with cities) in the 41st Millennium. While few details exist at the moment, we know that of the number of classes to choose from, some will be non-combat oriented.

Players will be able to visit alien temples, Chaos shrines, battlefields and ruins, as well as the ominous drifting space hulks. The developers will be using a rebuilt version of the engine used for *Darksiders*, which means that players can expect an action-focused experience, one that incorporates squad-based combat, cover and flanking mechanics for use in both the PVE and PVP components in the game.



Did you know?
2,000
The total length of driveable road in TDU2.

Test Drive Unlimited 2

DEVELOPER: Eden Games PUBLISHER: Atari GENRE: Driving
RELEASE DATE: September 2010 PLATFORMS: PC | Xbox 360 | PS3

Despite a few flaws and bugs in the first *Test Drive Unlimited*, released in 2006 and 2007, the game managed to find its niche in the racing market and make quite a decent home for itself with its free-roam mode and interesting multiplayer aspects. Now, *TDU2* is on its way to take everything that made the first title good, and made them better. The sequel retains the game's semi-MMO online mode that allows multiple players to cruise

around the massive driving area, race against each other or simply explore, but now lobbies, in the form of shops and clubs, allow even more players to join together for a bit of socialising while they walk around. Players can ride shotgun with other players, visit other players' garages and share vehicles. In addition, *TDU2* will feature a larger world, bigger vehicle selection and much more customisation of both the vehicles and player character.

The Last Guardian

DEVELOPER: Team Ico PUBLISHER: Sony Computer Entertainment
GENRE: Action adventure RELEASE DATE: 2010 PLATFORMS: PS3

From the team that developed the excellent *Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus* comes *The Last Guardian* – a story about a boy and his giant eagle/griffin/thing. The player will have to navigate a world and complete puzzles, using a combination of the boy's abilities and those of the griffin-like creature, called Trico. Trico won't be under the player's command, however, and they'll have to use the boy to influence it to perform certain actions, and even let him ride on his back to fly around. If Team Ico's past titles are anything to go by, *The Last Guardian* will look fantastic, play brilliantly and give the player that warm squishy feeling from beginning to end.

All games from E3 will be available at Top CD.



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YOUR 'TOP' GAMING DESTINATION



What a crazy, fun, stupid and weird E3 this was!



The Best of E3

As determined by the Game Critics Awards (www.gamecriticsawards.com)

- Best of Show**
Nintendo 3DS (Nintendo)
- Best Original Game**
Dance Central (Harmonix/MTV Games/Microsoft for Xbox 360)
- Best Console Game**
Rage (id Software/Bethesda for PC, PS3 and Xbox 360)
- Best Handheld Game**
God of War: Ghost of Sparta (Ready at Dawn/Sony Santa Monica for PSP)
- Best PC Game**
Portal 2 (Valve)
- Best Hardware**
Nintendo 3DS (Nintendo)
- Best Action Game**
Rage (id Software/Bethesda for PC, PS3 and Xbox 360)
- Best Action/Adventure Game**
Portal 2 (Valve for PC / Mac, PS3 and Xbox 360)
- Best Role Playing Game**
Star Wars: The Old Republic (BioWare Austin/LucasArts/EA for PC)
- Best Fighting Game**
Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds (Capcom for PS3 and Xbox 360)
- Best Racing Game**
Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit (Criterion Games/Electronic Arts for PC, PS3 and Xbox 360)
- Best Sports Game**
NBA Jam (EA Canada/EA Sports for Wii)
- Best Strategy Game**
Civilization V (Firaxis/2K Games for PC)
- Best Social/Casual Game**
Rock Band 3 (Harmonix/MTV Games/Electronic Arts for PS3, Xbox 360, and Wii)
- Best Motion Simulation Game**
Dance Central (Harmonix/MTV Games/Microsoft for Xbox 360)
- Best Online Multiplayer**
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood (Ubisoft Montreal/Ubisoft for PC, PS3 and Xbox 360)
- Special Commendation for Graphics**
Rage (id Software/Bethesda for PC, PS3 and Xbox 360)

We're totally not going to be able to cover it all, so instead here is a mostly coherent ramble from NAG's only survivor of this year's show.

Over 300 exhibitors displayed in excess of 1,000 games to more than 45,000 attendants at this year's E3. That's a lot of stuff, shown by a lot of people, to an even larger number of people. Most of which smelled either like Old Spice, man-sweat or pulled-pork sandwiches – or in our case, all three.

STAGED SHOWS

When the citizens of Los Angeles weren't busy rioting in the streets, burning and breaking things, because their basketball team won some stupid national basketball tournament, E3 was centre-stage – on that E3 stage, played out some of the most bizarre press conferences in the history of the show.

KONAMI has to take the cake for their choice of presenters, namely, a bunch of Japanese game designers who couldn't speak a lick of English. Words do not do it justice. Watch the "Worst of E3" video on the DVD instead. Konami was mostly about their new dancing games, singing games, wrestling games and killing-lots-of-stuff games.

MICROSOFT tried their best to shock and awe with spectacle, going so far as to hire Cirque du Soleil to show off their Kinect look-ma-no-hands person-jiggling-recognition device. With Kinect, you can pet animals, stand in wacky poses, play "family games" and get fit! At least they had *Gears of War 3*. They even gave out free Xbox 360 Slims to attendees of their conference. We're told they're in the mail.

SONY trotted out their (American) advertising folk-hero Kevin Butler, who made a rousing if awkward speech about worshiping some dubious deity in the name of gaming. They probably did it to wipe the embarrassing Sony Move golf demonstration from our minds, where an ageing man tried to pretend he wasn't playing *Wii Golf*. Badly. With Sony Move, you can pet animals, stand in wacky poses, play "family games" and get fit! At least they had *Hillzone 3*. Sony didn't give out anything for free, except tasty tacos.

ELECTRONIC ARTS shocked by opening their conference with the new *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit* by Burnout developers Criterion (a merciful change from last year, where their CEO just yammered on and on for two hours and then... *Star Wars!*) After a lot of good game trailers, their CEO yammered on a little and then... *Star Wars!* It's becoming a habit, EA. You must have those Jedi actors on retainer. The new *Medal of Honor*, which takes place during a war that's happening *right now*, seems to tread the fine line of what's considered socially acceptable. Then again, gamers don't care about politics, just lots of guns and shooting, right?

UBISOFT hired that funny comedian guy Joel McHale again who, while the jokes felt forced, still made the audience genuinely laugh. Their line-up was by far the most imaginative and creative. Ubisoft continues to show interest in expanding their range of titles beyond just their tent-pole franchises like *Assassin's Creed*. They even teased us with *Dust*, a spiritual successor to *Populous*. Does anyone else think skateboarder Shaun White, if you remove all his gold medals, is indistinguishable from comedian Carrot Top?



NINTENDO decided that their best bet would be to trot out Shigeru Miyamoto, have him play the new *Zelda* a bit (which failed due to IR interference from the crowd's cameras), and then send out a fleet of girls, each with a 3DS chained to her hip, so that the attendees could try out their new 3D handheld. Good first-party line-up, Nintendo. Now stop putting Reggie, Iwata and Miyamoto in those bizarre videos – they make us feel awkward in places we didn't know we could feel awkward.

ACTIVISION didn't even bother with a conference – they just put on a rock show with free beer. Good! We couldn't get seats, so we didn't see any of the performances by Usher, will.i.am, Eminem, and Rihanna, to name a few. Bad!

FODDER FROM ANOTHER MOTHER

All those games shown at last year's E3, that were mature into development and looking awesome, looked even more mature into development and even more awesome this year. Most of them were playable, so the booths were packed with people getting their paws on the party. The Microsoft stand had Kinect "bubbles" where you could watch people dance and jiggle with their whole body, and then tap on the glass to annoy them. The *Mortal Kombat* booth was impossible to get into. Less booth-babes this year, less attendants on the show floor in general, it felt like. Still, plenty of spectacle and swag (t-shirts, buttons and stickers), and the pulled-pork sandwiches were delicious.

We even got some tubs of keyboard-cleaning putty that smells like lemon-lime, but airport security confiscated it all when we tried to leave Los Angeles. They probably just wanted it for themselves.

Miktar Dracon



PES 2011

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PLATFORM: PS3, PS2, PSP, Wii, DS, XBOX360, PC

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PLATFORM: PS3, XBOX360, PC

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PLATFORM: PS3, PS2, PSP, Wii, DS, XBOX360, PC

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PLATFORM: PS3, XBOX360, PC

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