

SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING GAMING, COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

NAG

PC

PLAYSTATION

XBOX

Reviewed

Gran Turismo 5 <

World of Warcraft:
Cataclysm <

Epic Mickey <

Splatterhouse <

TRON: Evolution <

+ MORE!

Crysis 2

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A decade in gaming

A summary of the last ten years – more or less, well more really.

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3DTV: 3D Gaming invades your lounge <

Tested: ASUS EAH6950 | Alienware M11x <



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WHILE STOCKS LAST

ALL ABOUT GAMING

What is Gaming Inc?

Gaming Inc is quite simply a club where anyone who has an interest or passion for gaming can reap the benefits of discounts and join in our discussions and forums. Gaming Inc members have a platform to tell us what they want, and to use this portal as a way to find out more information about the local gaming scene.

Why Should I Join Gaming Inc?

Gaming Inc has been created to give gamers a voice, where you can tell us what you are looking for and what you are interested in! This is a community driven portal for South African Gamers. But what exactly do you get? Let's look at the nuts and bolts.

- Gaming Inc will provide every user with a unique Gaming Inc card and welcome pack.
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FEBRUARY 2011

I need to buy a new webcam...

Oh, do you also sell candy? - Dane Remendes

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Time flies when you're having fun/pwning noobs and the last ten years disappeared in a flash of gibbs and cussing. We look back on an incredible decade in gaming, software and hardware to bring you all the highlights (and lowlights).
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Dane didn't get a Nanosuit for Christmas last year. This did not please him. He went on a vengeful quest to off those responsible and then disappeared into the South American jungle to live his life as a nomadic mercenary. We found this feature in our mailbox, handwritten and blood-splattered. Pretty cool, huh?
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We single-handedly (using Neo's robotic, liquid nitrogen-cooled hand) prove that your 3D-capable PC can safely move from your study to your lounge without too many hassles.

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Good old medicine

/begin rant/

SO, I'M WRITING THIS Ed's Note in the hope that it'll never be published. It's one of those Murphy's Law / karma things I'm a slave to. In this issue there was supposed to be a preview on the new [I better just keep my mouth shut] game. Through various third party channels and some backwards and forwards I was told I can't get any artwork for NAG for this game because the publisher has some 'plan' for the release of information. All lies of course because I've already seen the requested artwork somewhere else... Sigh.

Some pointless insight – there's a thing some game publishers do where they give exclusive features to big overseas publications first and then everyone else later. I can live with this because NAG doesn't have a few million 'readers' and this whole country doesn't even sell enough games to warrant them putting 'South Africa' in its own little Excel spread sheet tick box when it comes to total sales by region. We're usually lumped in with all the smaller places under something like 'emerging market'. I'm generalising again and do remember this isn't all the game publishers. The ones that do take us seriously are doing very well in this Country and when the market does explode will do exceptional while the others will keep struggling and wondering. I also see something new happening these days where the game publishers release 5 or 6 new screens and a piece of artwork with some press release to try and drum up free exposure over as many months as possible. This slow dribble of nothingness is what people call hyping and strangely it's those publishers with the

lowest of quality games that do this the most – generally speaking. I'm just saying, keep an eye out and remember that at NAG we can read through all their marketing malarkey to bring you the most honest look at the gaming industry. Right... I really feel better now. This will save me a few hours on the couch when I'm forced to get my own head doctor.

/end rant/

"THIS IS MY RIFLE. THIS IS MY GUN. ONE IS FOR KILLING. THE OTHERS FOR FUN." – MARK MAYSEY

Any day that starts off with a brief talk about firearm safety over coffee and croissants is going to be a good day. You just know it – there's something in the air. Some of the 'items' discussed included an AK-47, .357 Magnum, Glock 17, shotgun and a LM5. Yes folks, this was the NAG Christmas party. It was a sunny day of fun and bullets as the entire office gathered under a tent eagerly waiting their turn to pop off a few rounds. It was epic fun and really brings that first person shooter experience into the real world. What a day and a big thank you to everyone involved.

If anyone (over the age of 18) wants to 'get their gun off' here are the details – remember not to bug these guys with any bullsh1t – they have access to some serious firepower. **NAG**

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Michael James
[Editor]



COVER STORY

What!? Another game from Electronic Arts... There must be a local conspiracy – surely NAG must favour them or something (maybe we've even forgiven them for Bullfrog). Well no. I'll tell you why. While everyone else was burping and farting their way through their mince pies and Christmas pudding, the team at EA were busying working. Working on getting NAG artwork, screenshots, interviews and cover artwork. So, there's no story here just a big fat thank you to EA and everyone that helped me get these last few issues out the door. You guys are world class and if you need anything covered in NAG just give me a call. :)

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A NAG office discussion regarding the adding of new Master and Grand Master leagues in StarCraft 2: Every time they add a new level of awesome at the top we just suck a little harder... They should add a tin league at the other end.



The guys in the office said this is a politically correct representation of the office – idiots.

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Letter of the Moment

From: Garth
Subject: Question
HAVE A QUESTION AND I need an honest answer. Do you guys actually get copies of games to review before they are available on shelves (like most overseas gaming magazines do), or do you have to wait for the release date like everyone else. The reason I ask is because your reviews always seem to be way behind. I'm aware that deadlines must be the bane of your existence, and that playing and reviewing a game must take some time [I like it when people answer their own questions, Ed], but isn't the idea of a gaming magazine to give us your opinion of a game by the time it's available to us? I can't wait that long to find out if a game is worth getting. Even though there are plenty of reviews available online, I'd still like to know what my

trusty friends at NAG have to say. Anyhow, thanks for still being the one great South African gaming magazine.

We usually get the final boxed games before they're on-shelf (depending on the publisher/distributor anything from 1-2 weeks before) – now please bear in mind I'm generalising here. Sometimes we get games rather late, but that's usually because it's a rubbish game and the publisher doesn't really want honest reviews appearing in print as the game goes on sale. Anyway, at NAG we have a policy of only reviewing boxed games, so unlike a few other places that are happy to 'review' unfinished or beta code, we have to wait a little longer. I believe this is better and more accurate. Gaming journalism history is

full of bad examples of people rushing out reviews with incorrect information in them. I'd rather have a reputation for credibility than first to review. We do sometimes get 'gold masters' to review (this is around 2-3 weeks before on-shelf). These are versions of the game that have gone into/about to go into mass production already – the only odd thing is that the manual

comes as photocopied sheets (or a .PDF) and there's no fancy plastic case and box artwork. Then you have to consider that we finish each issue around 2-3 weeks before the magazine goes on-shelf making the timing even trickier. Regardless, we're still one of the fastest magazines in the country from last word written and page designed to on-shelf and in your hands. Ed.

The 'Letter of the Moment' prize is sponsored by Megarom. The winner receives two games for coming up with the most inspired bit of wisdom or cleverness.

IMPORTANT STUFF! PAY ATTENTION!
 Land Mail: P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158
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 Important: Include your details when mailing us, otherwise how will you ever get your prize if you win...



From: Sebastian
Subject: What's the point?
 I went through Look & Listen's selection of videogames and realised how many games there are that I would not even look at, and for good reason. Kung Fu Rider?, no thanks, Racket Sports? for Wii, umm... No. *Dragon Ball Raging Blast 2?* Heck no. Anyway, what I am trying to get at is that all of these games suck and there were a lot more in the shop. Nowadays many videogames do not seem like they have been worked on seriously, the developers do not even seem to care that the games that they release are just plain bad and sometimes I think they expect their games to be bad from the beginning. I do know that there are countless 'good' games out there too but the numbers of the poorly worked on games seems to be increasing. Why do these games even exist, what's the point of their existence? Not many people even buy them anyway. I would appreciate it if you guys could answer my question – I love your magazine so keep on writing.

The thing that fuels these low/medium cost, 'budget' games is the mass market (casual gamers or whatever they're being called these days). They don't know any better, they have simple expectations and if games made for them were super complicated they probably wouldn't like or play them. Also remember that the big blockbuster games you're yearning after can take years to create and are rather expensive to make versus the cheap and cheerful developments. There's a balance though and more than enough cool games should be arriving during the year to keep people like you happy – right? Casual games are on the increase thanks to the strong growth of the Wii and now the PS3 Move and Xbox Kinect have also entered the 'casual' market (they're different casual, but still casual). More importantly, these filler games keep the money rolling in so that the developers can keep making the games we love and we are the ones driving the whole market forward and growing the industry end of the day. Some people will argue this point but they don't know what they're talking about. Ed.

From: Tim
Subject: What is it about NAG?
 I started writing this letter on a scrap piece of paper during the end of my science exam (because I was bored). Anyway it was almost time to leave and everyone was faced with boredom [the government should close down your school by the sounds of things, Ed]. The next thing I know everyone started to crowd around this guy who had the latest copy of NAG [typical hey, Ed]. It was weird almost everyone was reading that one NAG magazine and most of them are not even gamers. So I started asking myself what is it about NAG. What makes NAG so interesting? Is it the game reviews? Is it the adverts on what's new in the world of computers? Is it the awesome game pictures or the prizes to be won? What makes NAG so popular to people who are not even gamers? Just tell me what is it!

It's me. Everyone wants a little bit of the awesomeness of me. It's easy to understand really. Like this response to your letter, a lot of people will think I'm just being an arrogant d1ck, be shocked and tell their friends about this magazine Editor that doesn't care about this readers and only picks letters that he can reply smart to (clever English there). But it's not like that at all – see the tongue in my cheek and feel the love I have for all you guys and girls. Ed.

From: Micha
Subject: PS3 vs. Wii
 Hi, all you awesome people there at NAG, thanks for the great mag every month. I know you really hate this subject but I am writing about it anyway. I am currently in G7 going to G8 and in the beginning of this year we went on a trip to Zululand. During the trip my friends and I began arguing about which is better, Wii or PS3 – me and my Indian friend for PS3 and my other 2 friends for Wii. To this day we are still arguing about it. My friends (for Wii) think that it's awesome and that it has better graphics and it makes you strong and so on and so forth. They just won't get it into his head that PS3 is better. I am writing this just so that you can back me up and prove to him PS3 is better in every aspect.

Shorts [extracts of LOL from NAG reader letters]

"But my parents did not have the Xbox 360 or the PS3 when they were my age! So they do not have the experience. I want to be a gamer but I can't!! So my point is... HELP!" – Alec

"I mean, it obviously can't be NAG's fault - the computers that you used must have been faulty - obviously." – Michael

"Hey guy's at NAG, the obligatory and pleasuring great magazine :), keep up the great job!" – Cameo

"I'm totally discussed my Blizzards professionalism as they should of check for all bugs before sending the game out for sale." – Shane

The first thing you need to do is to start shopping for friends that don't go to your 'special' school (the one for clinically stupid and idiotic people). After that, kill yourself. I hope this has been helpful. Ed.

From: No idea really
Subject: Soundtrack
 Hey there NAG. I was wondering why they never incorporate the soundtrack of a game into the games extras so you don't have to download the song or get it from another source.

That's a good idea... I hope someone is listening. They do sometimes add the soundtrack with special edition versions of games on CD – but then you're paying extra for it. Ed.

From: Arne
Subject: Visuals and Gameplay
 Hi there NAG. I was reading the December edition a week ago when it struck me, most of the games we play today focus more on good visuals than a good story or gameplay. For example:

- In *Fable 3*'s review we read,
 - Visuals: Looks good
 - Gameplay: Shallow story, too easy, shoddy second half

- In *Medal of Honour*'s review we read,
 - Visuals: Good visuals and audio
 - Gameplay: Seriously short campaign, unbalanced multiplayer

I don't understand why the developers have lost so much interest in giving us good gameplay to keep us entertained for days. All the gamers out there know how good you feel when you have completed a good and difficult game. The last good difficult game I've played was *Tomb Raider: Underworld*, and the tomb raider series has also turned into an easy 3rd person shooter. Think about it! *Medal of Honour* with a good long difficult campaign! This is my opinion I don't know how the other gamers feel about it. Please tell me what you think about it, do you guys at NAG prefer visuals over gameplay?

I know I'm supposed to say that I prefer

NAG Fan artwork

This is the best of what we received during the month. If you can insert, use or create a piece of gaming artwork incorporating the NAG logo you might also end up here for your three lines of fame.



Richard Cilliers: "The Nag Wall of Fame 2010."



This month, NAG is giving away a mystery prize, oooohhh mysterious...

gameplay over graphics and for the most part I do. I will however sacrifice gameplay sometimes for great graphics. It's the same reason why I loved the movie Avatar – I couldn't give a royal one if the story is similar to another or this tiny thing didn't match up with that tiny thing. Just look at the movie and the world you can explore – only people with no imagination can look at something like that at nit-pick about which side the bow was slung. The same applies in games. I'll forgive a lot in terms of story and gameplay if the game is technically (graphics, sounds, control, etc.) sound. But that's just me. Ed.

From: Elias

Subject: Mac games

I don't understand why they don't make games for Mac. Is it because they are harder to make for Mac than for PC, is it because they have a bad graphic system or is it because Macs are more expensive and less people will buy it.

There's no easy way to break this to you... Macintosh is sh1t. Ed.

From: Gareth

Subject: A promise to myself

A promise to myself... Damn it, I did it again! I promised myself I wouldn't and yet for the umpteenth time here I am. I looked at my budget, I couldn't afford to buy any new games and yet as the hype built around the "next best thing" I fell into the trap... again. How many titles have I bought as a direct result of getting sucked into the hype machine? "Better graphics, unexpected story twists, new weapons, zombies with lasers, improved cover system, revolutionary new blah", I fall for it every time. OMG the new COD Black-Craft 2: God of Gears is coming out in 219 days! Pre-Order NOW... and I get a free key ring! What? And an oversized T-shirt? WIN! At this stage, if I don't immediately pre-order the game due to a rare moment of lucidity, I will sit and ferment in my ever-maddening brew of insanity. Every forum will be abuzz with "strategically" leaked details about new features, speculation as to how the story will end; and purposefully vague press releases about how this game will "revolutionise" the way we see gaming. And if I manage to get through this stage, as we get closer and closer to the launch or "what will surely be the greatest day of mankind", the previews and hands-on demos will appear. Magazines and gaming websites will be filled with reviews about how this game "has

everything". "It will change your life, make you happy and even do your taxes". At this point I am either rocking myself to sleep as consolation for the fact that I haven't bought the "biggest thing in gaming since electricity", or I have removed myself from all media that may inadvertently remind me that my life is going to remain a soulless void unless I have this game. Release day... today! And guess what?

Damn it, I did it again! I promised myself I wouldn't and for the umpteenth time here I am again. Don't get me wrong – when I first held the game in my hands I felt an immeasurable "oneness" with the Universe. For in that moment... there was nothing but pure bliss. I tore off the plastic covering and, shaking with anticipation, inserted the game ever so cautiously into my console. After the mind blowing opening sequence of pre-rendered awesomeness concluded, I was left with a weird sense of "that looked awesome" and yet "that made no sense". It is at this point that a familiar little voice piped up from deep within me – the voice of bitter disappointment.

The game is buggy; the story is contrived; the game is essentially more of the same only rushed and is over far too soon, leaving a bitter taste in the mouth and emptiness in my soul and my wallet that lingers long after it should. The hype machine takes another casualty. I go back to the forums to see if my feelings are shared and lo and behold, the former followers are all up in arms about how "fail" this game is. At least they would be if it weren't for the fact that details about "War Creed 7: Uncharted Warfare" are out and if I pre-order now I get a pencil sharpener!

LOL! If you read the Ed's note you'll get some idea of how the hype process is a carefully crafted beast with Excel spread sheet planned releases of things as mundane as new screenshots. It happens to us all the time here at NAG. As an example, we get some beta code for the 'bus stop' level and a pile of screenshots and artwork to go with it. Now we all know there's more to the game and when we ask it's oh no – you can only talk about the 'bus stop' level now and in a month you can talk about the 'mansion' level. It's starting to get much worse lately and very annoying so I've decided in NAG to only feature a preview once regardless of the PR machine's inane little plans and tricks. So yes, wait for NAG to talk about it – at least we're 93.7% honest. ;) Ed. NAG

On the Forums

QUESTION: You are your opposite sexual preference for a night; which videogame character would you sleep with?

Chevron: Myself. Obviously.

Zoop: Marcus Fenix. Or maybe I'd do him anyways. I'm confused about my sexuality now.

echo: John Marston. Like a cowboy. I feel dirty.

Miz3r: War from Darksiders, cause his sword is very long and u know what they say about men with big swords :)

Die Jason: Gordon Freeman. The strong, (very) silent type. But just shave man, nobody likes a rash.

vii: TF2 Pyro. What can I say, He knows how to light a fire in my heart...

Nferno: Duke Nukem. If you're going to get laid by a video-game character, do it properly.

Darranged: Alex Mercer from Prototype. Bet he knows exactly what to do with all those extra tentacles sprouting out of him.

{G}Zulu: The Witcher. He gets all the girls, not just the sorceresses.

Daz mataz: Kirby...

sualk: Nathan Drake.

ZoRPA: Daniel from Painkiller, he fought through Purgatory, found Eve (hawt), fought through hell and back and didn't get laid. He needs to get laid. :-P

CaViE: "He's Commander Shepard, and I'm his favourite whore on the Citadel."

Machine: Raiden from MGS2. He'll be my bitch for the night, hell yeah!

Ro\$hi: Batman. Think of all the things we could do hanging upside down.

Wah: Starkiller. He'd forget in the sequel anyway.

KaosLord: It cost 400 000\$, to have sex with Heavy Weapons Guy, for 12 seconds...

wisp: Cpl Caine from quake...cyborg sex o.O ... he could last a while.

Tankiouse: Packman obviously, just look what he can do with that mouth.

brazed: Opposite? ... Damn... uhm... Manny Calavera?

Error: Duke Nukem, well because he'll take forever to come...

massacre_101: Sam Fisher, because he always sneaks in from behind. That or Master Chief, because he must have a machine of a body carrying that Spartan armour all the time.

Pixieman: Captain Price from the Call of Duty series. Don't know if the Price from COD 1, 2 and from Modern Warfare 1, 2 is the same guy or father and son... Maybe a little father-son double team?

Kharrak: As shocking and socially unacceptable as it is, I'm going to have to go with a female. Fran, from FF12. : Guilty of having her lead the party so I could watch her walk from behind >_>

Changsta 187: Garrus Vakarian. He has 'the reach'.

Dave: Commander Keen because I love the size of his helmet.

James Donaldson:  "Whoo hoo hoo hoo hoo"

Harder eggs can boil and toil – everyone is welcome: <http://www.nag.co.za/forums/>

I, Gamer



by Miklós Szecsei

Chaos theory

A REMARKABLE THING HAPPENED TO me over Christmas. Well, a series of remarkable things actually but they all stemmed from one particular thing. It's a thing that I met with initial scepticism, but a scepticism which was interlaced with a suspicion that it might turn out to be a lot of fun.

The remarkable thing that kick-started this cavalcade of further remarkable things began when my future in-laws bought me *Kinect* for Christmas. The sensor isn't the proliferating "remarkable thing" although it is a remarkable thing in its own right. The fact that they bought it for me in the first place, however, is the root of this sequential string of remarkable things. It was an unprompted purchase, which means a completely separate remarkable thing: Microsoft's advertising is working very, very well.

"About ten minutes later the two of us were jumping around in tandem, trying to guide a riverboat downstream..."

The second remarkable thing happened when I was setting it up in my parents' living room. My fiancé and I spent Christmas with my folks in Cape Town and, well, I don't travel without a console – don't you dare judge me.

My dad has always been into technology and computers so I figured if I made enough surreptitious, attention-seeking gestures while hooking up the peripheral, then his curiosity would get the better of him. It worked flawlessly: about half-way through me contorting myself behind the TV cabinet he pointed at the oblong sensor at the base of his shiny new LED TV and asked: "What's that?"

I grinned inwardly at how easy he was to goad, but then laced my response with suitable amounts of restraint and cynicism: "Microsoft's vision for the future of Xbox 360". The pun was totally intended.

"Does it work?" he probed further. I replied that I hadn't tried it yet, which was enough to ensure his continued audience.

About ten minutes later the two of us were jumping around in tandem, trying to guide a riverboat downstream in *Kinect Adventures*. We were both out of breath and laughing like crazy. Yes the game was shallow and puerile, but it was fun as hell and the first time we've played a videogame together since LANing the original *Doom* about fifteen years ago. He's now planning on buying an Xbox 360 with Kinect... remarkable.

Hope springs eternal

Civ V's lead designer working to improve *Elemental*.

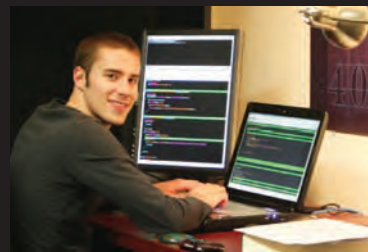
STARDOCK, PUBLISHER AND SDEVELOPER of great games like *Galactic Civilizations* (and its sequel) and *Sins of a Solar Empire*, took a bit of a knock when they released their newest game, *Elemental: War of Magic*, in August last year. Reports indicated that the game was buggy, messy and basically broken. Thankfully, since then Stardock has been hard at work tweaking, improving and apologising for the problems.

The future is looking even brighter for *Elemental* since the recent announcement that Jon Shafer (lead designer on the absolutely brilliant *Civilization V*) has been snatched up by Stardock to work on *Elemental* and an unannounced future project. Big Download uncovered this news soon after Mr. Shafer announced his departure from *Civ* developer Firaxis Games late last year. Shafer said he'd gotten a few offers from other studios, but chose Stardock because he has long been an admirer of Stardock's games. He also stated that he felt the need to work with a company that provided him the freedom to make the kind of games he wanted to make.

In October last year, Stardock spread the news that they'd also hired Derek Paxton, designer behind popular *Civ IV* mod *Fall From Heaven*. Paxton will

serve as senior producer on *Elemental*. Then there's Dave Stern, acclaimed fantasy author who's penned a number of *Star Trek* novels as well as novelizations of the *Tomb Raider* and *Blair Witch Project* films. Stardock hired Stern to enrich *Elemental's* lore, which Stardock CEO Brad Wardell admits was "one of the things we felt was weak." Two expansions are already in the works for *Elemental*, for which "lore implementation will be essential."

Shafer says that Stardock has "lots of awesome stuff" planned for the future of the game. According to the official message board, sales of the game have continued to rise since its rocky launch. *Elemental* showed a ton of potential before its release. It's a shame that it was held back by numerous issues, but we're hoping that Stardock's continued efforts will turn it into the game it promised to be.



» DON'T ROCK THIS BOAT

The tech that Nintendo has packed into their upcoming 3DS may be very impressive with all its no-glasses shenanigans, but it seems there might be some fine print scrawled in a deep, dark corner of the handheld's feature list.

We now know that in order for you to experience the 3DS' awesome 3D magic at its full potential, you've kinda, sorta got to hold the device in exactly the right way to find that coveted 3D sweet spot. Any sudden movements will cause issues that'll detract from the 3D effects.

Basically, try not to shake the thing about while in the middle of heated gaming sessions. This warning is brought to you not by Nintendo themselves, but was instead

Tweeted by the director of *Kid Icarus: Uprising*, Masahiro Sakurai. If you plan to use your 3DS while travelling or commuting, pray your bus, train or car is incredibly stable, or that your plane doesn't hit crazy turbulence in the middle of a visually spectacular boss battle. You wouldn't want to let all that cool 3D stuff go to waste, would you?

The 3DS won't melt children's eyes

SHORTLY AFTER THE 3DS was announced and shown to the public, Nintendo went on record to say that the device could damage young children's eyes owing to the 3D effects. Their reasoning was that the eyes of kids under the age of six years old are still developing, and prolonged exposure to 3D imagery could permanently damage their eyesight. 3D imagery tricks eyes into perceiving two separate 2D images as one three-dimensional one; Nintendo has fears that "tricking" the developing eyes of kids might upset the natural development of their darling little sparkly peepers.

Fortunately team USA has come to the rescue of 3D loving six year olds across the globe. The American Optometric Association has since issued a statement saying that Nintendo and hyper-concerned parents have nothing to worry about; there is no conclusive evidence that 3D effects will wreck children's eyesight. Moderation is still recommended however.

What's interesting is that the AOA has said that the 3DS might actually help in picking up eye-related problems in children that ordinary eye tests would be unable to. Standard eye tests check each eye individually, but 3D video technology

requires both eyes to work in tandem. Should a child be unable to perceive the 3D images on a 3DS, it could mean some visual abnormality is present. If this sort of thing is caught while the child's eyes are still developing, then corrective procedures are possible. Once eyes have finished developing however, then that window of opportunity closes.

Nintendo: making awesome platformers and looking after your family's eyesight since 2011.



Fortune and glory

Imaginative blockiness, immersive horror and some South African goodness at the IGF's 2011 awards

THE INDEPENDENT GAMES FESTIVAL has unveiled its list of finalists for the IGF's 2011 awards ceremony at the end of February. Among the titles nominated are the ridiculously popular, time-destroying megahit Minecraft (created by Markus "Notch" Persson and his new company, Mojang Specifications) and the immersive, incredible and unrelentingly terrifying *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* (developed by the small team over at Frictional Games). Those two games are each nominated for three of the coveted awards, including the \$20 000 Seumas McNally Grand Prize. Then there's *Desktop Dungeons*, the surprise hit that's developed right here in South Africa by QCF Design, but was originally designed by Rodain Joubert – whose words you'll find somewhere on these pages.

"From scrappy single person start-ups to more robust indies, and from surprising debuts to surprise successes, this year's finalist line-up is a perfect showcase of the breadth and diversity of what it means to be 'independent,'" said Brandon Boyer, IGF Chairman. "I'm excited to see all the developers represented gaining more recognition from a wider audience for what they've worked so hard to create, as the importance of the independent games community grows even further."

Just to throw in our opinion: we hope *Amnesia* comes out on top here. *Minecraft* is fantastic fun, but it's only in beta after all. *Amnesia* is a full release that deserves the highest honours, because it's truly an unforgettable experience. All the best to the QCF Design team as well, because local is lekker and all that sh1t. Don't get us wrong though: every nominee in this list

is a game that is absolutely worth your time. Here's that list:

SEUMAS MCNALLY GRAND PRIZE:

- Amnesia: The Dark Descent** (Frictional Games)
- Desktop Dungeons** (QCF Design)
- Minecraft** (Mojang)
- Nidhogg** (Messhof)
- SpyParty** (Chris Hecker)

Honourable mentions:

- Bit.Trip Runner** (Gaijin Games); **Neptune's Pride** (Iron Helmet Games); **Recettear: An Item Shop's Tale** (Carpe Fulgur); **Retro City Rampage** (Vblank Entertainment); **Super Crate Box** (Vlambeer)

EXCELLENCE IN VISUAL ART:

- Bastion** (Supergiant Games)
- Bit.Trip Runner** (Gaijin Games)
- Cave Story** (2010 Edition) (Nicalis)
- The Dream Machine** (Cockroach)
- Hohokum** (Honeyslug & Richard Hogg)

Honourable mentions:

- Cobalt** (Oxeye Game Studio); **Faraway** (Steph Thirion); **Flotilla** (Blendo Games); **Helsing's Fire** (Ratloop); **Retro City Rampage** (Vblank Entertainment)

TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE:

- Amnesia: The Dark Descent** (Frictional Games)
- Confetti Carnival** (SpikySnail Games)
- Miegakure** (Marc ten Bosch)
- Minecraft** (Mojang)
- Neverdaut:8Bit** (Robot Loves Kitty)

Honourable mentions:

- Achron** (Hazardous Software); **Cobalt** (Oxeye Game Studio); **Hazard: The Journey Of Life** (Demruth); **Overgrowth** (Wolfire Games); **Swimming Under**

Clouds (Piece of Pie Studios)

EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN:

- Desktop Dungeons** (QCF Design)
- Faraway** (Steph Thirion)
- Minecraft** (Mojang)
- Nidhogg** (Messhof)
- Super Crate Box** (Vlambeer)

Honourable mentions:

- Bo** (Mahdi Bahrami); **Brutally Unfair Tactics Totally OK Now** [B.U.T.T.O.N.] (Copenhagen Game Collective); **Flotilla** (Blendo Games); **Helsing's Fire** (Ratloop); **Recettear: An Item Shop's Tale** (Carpe Fulgur)

EXCELLENCE IN AUDIO:

- Amnesia: The Dark Descent** (Frictional Games)
- Bastion** (Supergiant Games)
- Bit.Trip Beat** (Gaijin Games)
- Cobalt** (Oxeye Game Studio)
- Retro City Rampage** (Vblank Entertainment)

Honourable mentions:

- Bit.Trip Runner** (Gaijin Games); **Cave Story (2010 Edition)** (Nicalis); **Jamestown** (Final Form Games); **NightSky** (Nicalis); **Planck** (Shadegrown Games)

BEST MOBILE GAME:

- Colorblind** (Nonverbal)
- Halcyon** (Stff)
- Helsing's Fire** (Ratloop)
- Shot Shot Shoot** (Erik Svedang)
- Solipskier** (Mikengreg)

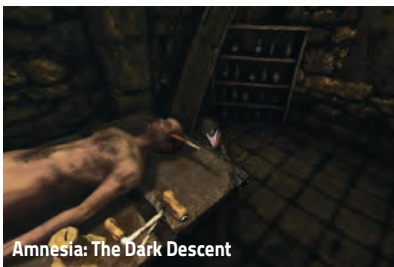
Honourable mentions:

- Flick Kick Football** (PikPok); **Shibuya** (Nevercenter); **Spirits** (Spaces Of Play); **Tentacles** (Press Play); **Trainyard** (Matt Rix)

>>

NINTENDO 3DS STOLEN BY FACTORY WORKER

Mere weeks before the 3DS officially hits stores across Japan, a Chinese factory worker in one of the many production facilities has stolen one of the handhelds right off the assembly line. What would any self-promoting hardware/game thief do? Upload pictures and videos to the internet of course! A gaming forum called A9VG.com is allegedly the site where the pictures were first uploaded, but all trace of such evidence has been expunged by moderators. They weren't fast enough though as the pictures and videos were saved by dozens of users and uploaded elsewhere, thereby immortalising the sticky-fingered factory worker's efforts. Shortly after the initial batch of pictures went live, two more batches of stolen 3DS images found their way online leading some people to question whether or not this was a publicity stunt on behalf of Nintendo. In case you're wondering, the final product has not undergone any noticeable changes since it was originally shown off at last year's E3. However, the "Select", "Home" and "Start" buttons have been flattened into the touchscreen's boarder and are no longer raised buttons.



Amnesia: The Dark Descent



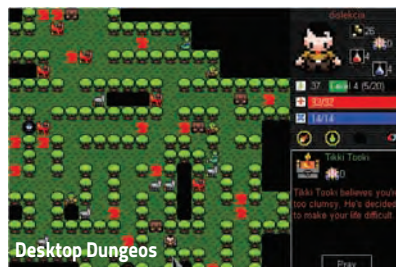
Bastion



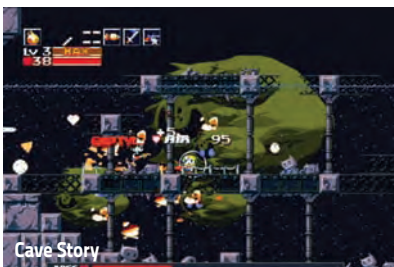
Minecraft



Retro City Rampage



Desktop Dungeons



Cave Story

The Indie Investigator

by Rodain Joubert



The Indie Games Blog

OUT ON THAT SPAM-SWOLLEN wasteland of The Broader Internet, it can be really difficult to find a central, reliable site that speaks for indie games on a fully representative level. Usually they either fall into the category of "will feature indie games but not really that often" or "dredges up too many 1-day prototypes from the sweaty armpit of the WWW."

This may be good enough for, say, somebody who doesn't really care about indie games all that much. But I worry that this attitude is sometimes the result of people only ever running into sites like these. They scrape the surface without getting into the satisfying meat of the industry: a true, global representation of what indies are getting up to nowadays.

I consider IndieGames.com to be a charming exception. With the backing of multiple sister sites such as Gamasutra, Game Career Guide and Game Set Watch, the Indie Games Blog provides multiple daily updates

"Unlike most other news peddlers, however, the Indie Games Blog doesn't just pick up on the syndicated hype of the big titles..."

on what's happening in the world of "bedroom coders", paying attention to major events, various indie developer interviews and -- of course -- lots and lots of indie games.

Unlike most other news peddlers, however, the Indie Games Blog doesn't just pick up on the syndicated hype of the big titles: they're responsible for hunting down and profiling many potential indie greats that have either not yet been completed or are currently hunting for more publicity and funding. Some of these diamonds in the rough are amazing. Others are, for lack of a better word, interesting. But they all offer something new to the indie games connoisseur who dreams of one day sitting around a fireplace, brandy in hand and monocle in eye, discussing the art and depth of an industry which most people only see the shallowest glimpses of.

If you've recently become enthused about independent game development in a big way and would like to keep your finger on the pulse, this is a place designed exclusively for the job. The URL is simple (indiegames.com), the selection is broad and the news is always served fresh.

Call of Duty: Courtroom Warfare

Activision adds EA to its list

IT SEEMS THAT WHOLE legal battle between Activision and the creators of the *Call of Duty* series is still going strong. So strong, in fact, that Activision recently sought to expand the scope of their epic lawsuit (which we've written about many times before) by adding publishing rival Electronic Arts to the list of people to sue. Now Jason West, Vince Zampella and EA are facing off against Activision together – because, according to Activision, EA "interfered" with the former Infinity Ward bosses, which led to their defection. Activision wants 400 million dollars from EA. By the time you read this, the court will have decided if EA can be added to the lawsuit.

Electronic Arts has shrugged off these accusations by saying this: "This is a PR play filled with pettiness and deliberate misdirection. Activision wants to hide the fact that they have no credible response to the claim of two artists who were fired and now just want to get paid for their work."

Since being ousted from Activision,

West and Zampella have settled at EA and set up Respawn Entertainment. They're protesting the expansion of the lawsuit, stating that Activision knew of EA's alleged involvement over six months ago, but only sought to add EA to the case in order to have the beginning of the trial (which is scheduled for May) pushed further back. The reason for their protest is simple: West and Zampella say they "are paying for this litigation from our own funds" and that, at the time of writing this, the lawsuit's cost had "[exceeded] our combined annual salaries." Respawn apparently employs "dozens of employees" now, but the time and money that's being poured into the case is making it difficult for the duo to get things off the ground.

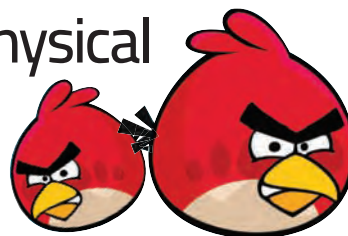
"Any delay of the trial in this lawsuit would increase the financial and non-financial burdens and would continue to distract us from running our business and earning a living," state West and Zampella.



Angry Birds gets physical

THE EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL IOS game, *Angry Birds*, has not only made the jump to the PSN (it's now available for PlayStation 3 and PSP) but also to real life. You know "real life": it's that thing that gets in the way of your gaming.

Major toy company Mattel can now add a board game version of *Angry Birds* to its line-up of products alongside Barbie, Masters of the Universe and Hot Wheels. The real life version is called *Angry Birds: Knock on Wood* and it can be played by two to four players at a time. The game features a deck of cards, fourteen blocks, four of the green pigs, three of the Angry Birds and of course the sling-shot. One player draws a card which depicts a blueprint for a structure that needs to be assembled using the plastic blocks. The pigs are then placed in specific locations in the structure. The



other player is then tasked with hurling a bird at the structure using the sling-shot. Points are scored for every block and pig knocked over by the hit. The first player to reach a thousand points wins.

In case you haven't figured it out, the game is kind of aimed at kids more than adults, although you could definitely make up some elaborate drinking game with it.

If you're not content with hurling enraged avian pixels at porcine targets then perhaps you need this version as well? You'll have to wait until May 2011 though; we're sure you'll cope.

LEAVING ON A JET PLANE

Activision is not happy with the UK government's recent decision to not give tax breaks to game developers – despite their promises to do just that. Activision is threatening to withdraw its 600-strong office from the country, according to The Telegraph. Activision CEO Bobby Kotick had this to say: "I think it was a terrible mistake. There are so many other places that are encouraging the video games industry."

Kotick said that there's a ton of talent in the UK, but other places like China and Singapore, and US states like Texas and Rhode Island, offer very enticing incentives that benefit the games industry. British trade group TIGA thinks that the UK could see a significant brain drain throughout its development community if more isn't done to encourage game development. TIGA seems to think that tax breaks would translate to 3 550 high-level jobs.

THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM ANNOUNCED

In case you haven't heard, there's a new *Elder Scrolls* game incoming. Subtitled *Skyrim*, it's a direct sequel to *Oblivion*, it's supposedly coming out on November 11th and it's being built on a brand-new engine that was developed internally by Bethesda – which means they're done with Gamebryo, the engine that powers older Bethesda titles like *Oblivion* and *Fallout 3*.

Key to the PS3's heart

HACKERS HAVE BEEN TRYING for years now to crack the PS3's protection mechanisms. Every once in a while someone gets it right – if only temporarily. Sony is always right there, ready and waiting with a firmware update that squashes the would-be hacks. Now it appears that a firmware update won't be enough to fend off the hacks of renowned hacker George "GeoHot" Hotz.

Let us explain. The same group who managed to crack into the Wii's innards and found a way to jailbreak Nintendo's console recently claimed that they'd found the PS3's "private cryptography key." This key would allow users to install and run their own code on the PS3. From there, the group planned to release tools that would allow the installation of Linux – which Sony blocked early last year. Homebrewed applications and pirated games would obviously be possible as well.

Then, one week later, GeoHot (who helped crack the iPhone) claimed to have taken all this hacking one step further. He's published the PS3's "root key" online. What this root key supposedly does is act as a signature, which tells the PS3 that the program/game/whatever that it's about to run is a legitimate piece of software. Knowing this root key would allow you to trick your console into believing that you're a cool guy with no bad intentions, allowing you to go crazy with pirated games and homebrewed stuff.

The biggest concern with all this is that, because these methods tinker around with the PS3's hardware, it cannot be fixed with firmware updates. It'd allegedly be almost

impossible to fix at all, because altering these keys runs the risk of rendering all existing PS3 software unusable. Sony has promised that they will put an end to these hacks, so time will tell what comes of this.

An example of a typical hacker.



Rift – now with launch date

JUST IN CASE YOU'RE interested, Trion Worlds has given its intriguing upcoming MMORPG *Rift* (formerly known as *Rift: Planes of Telara*) an official release date: March 1st for North America and March 4th for Europe.

If you're looking to pre-order the game digitally, you can head over to <https://www.riftgame.com/en/products/>, where you'll find two versions of the game – the regular

old digital edition and the fancier digital collector's edition, which includes all the standard-edition stuff but also comes with an exclusive in-game mount that's a **frikkin' two-headed turtle thing**. We recommend you go for the collector's edition, because OMG two-headed turtle. For those of you who insist on early access to your MMOs to get a head start on things, you'll be happy to know that pre-ordering will get you exactly that.

Actual two-headed turtle may differ.



CM 690 ADVANCED

CM 690II Advanced • Perform In Style

CM 690II Advanced praise continued after the global launch. In addition to black version of Advanced, while listing the classic and nVIDIA version to meet consumer preferences and needs.

CM 690 II Advanced raises the bar again with improvements over the top-selling CM 690. The spacious mid-tower will keep enthusiasts happy with room for up to 3 VGA cards, high-end CPU coolers, top or bottom mount water cooling radiator and 1.8"/2.5" drive adapter. It also features much improved airflow with oversized mesh and enough space for up to 10 fans. Maintenance will be a breeze with the tool-free drive bays, new cable management and CPU cooler retention hole.



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Miktar's Meanderings

by Miktar Dracon

Quake Live

I'D BEEN EYEING WWW.QUAKELIVE.COM (which lets you play *Quake 3* in a browser) for a while now but didn't think much of it. Then, in a fit of boredom with modern shooters I loaded it up and fragged through a few games. The map rotation mostly threw out a remake of Q2DM1 in festive drag (complete with Christmas tree in the courtyard). Still a great map design, that one. The website kindly informed me that if I played just 20 games, I'd be ranked and "skillmatched" against others of my skill-level. I had to wonder, what was my skill level?

I was trained in *Quake* by whom I considered masters. We all worked at the same Cyber Cafe (from *Quake 1* to *3*) and aside from a few falling outs here and there we parted amicably I felt. Cyber Cats, one of the first Cyber Cafes in South Africa unless someone wants to correct me, was situated right next to the large

"I was trained in Quake by whom I considered masters. We all worked at the same Cyber Cafe (from Quake 1 to 3) and aside from a few falling outs here and there we parted amicably I felt."

high-school I attended. We're talking mid 1990s here: there were almost 50 people to a classroom so CyberCats saw a lot of traffic for its time. Online gaming was still a novelty and gaming itself was still regarded as a strange "computer nerd" pastime by non-gamers (a.k.a. jocks). *Counter-Strike's* transformative influence only arrived in 1999, bringing along with it all the jocks that originally mocked gamers. "Headshots are cool bru", they'd say. Hypocritical philistines.

I did a lot of "talking" through *Quake 3*. I feel myself fluent in the "language" of *Quake*, and I still feel comfortable with my genre skills. So when I meet someone in the game on the field, I can tell when they're there to talk, not to smacktalk. Smacktalk can be fun, but it's self-indulgent and you make for an easy kill while being a chattybitch. So I played my 20 games, had some great conversations, and quakelive.com ranked me. But doesn't reveal what it ranks you as. Servers show up as green when "skillmatched", but there's no feedback on what that actually implies. More's the pity.

Razer Switchblade

A portable gaming PC so awesome it might never see the light of day.



RAZER IS THAT COMPANY that makes gamer-centric peripherals like mice and hyper-geeky keypads aimed at MMO crowds. Admit it: their stuff is cool and you totally want their *TRON*-inspired keyboard.

The company has just announced a prototype portable PC called the Switchblade. The concept was debuted at this year's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas and it is still not definite whether it'll ever become commercially available.

The unit looks very much like an ordinary Netbook with a 7-inch LCD touchscreen and clamshell design. It is powered by an Intel Atom CPU but other than that Razer is yet to finalise system specs. It will feature USB ports and will support a mouse for those who cannot game without one.

The Switchblade is intended to run current PC-centric games like *World of Warcraft* and *DotA* but don't expect it to run *Metro 2033* or upcoming behemoths like *Crysis 2*.

What sets this apart from gaming laptops and perhaps Panasonic's recently announced Jungle portable MMO player, is the touchscreen and unique keyboard layout. Opening the

device does not reveal your standard QWERTY keyboard but rather a set of clear keys that can be mapped to perform various functions on-the-fly depending on what game is being played. A single projector beneath the keyboard is able to beam images behind each key so that the keyboard layout changes instantly. Want a set of directional buttons, spell bindings and potion hotkeys for your favourite MMO? Not a problem. Tired of that game and want to play a bit of *Quake III Arena* instead? How about a keyboard layout that features symbols for each of the guns in your weapon loadout? Of course, a full QWERTY keyboard is also possible for more PC functionality like internet browsing and messaging.

So how has the device gone down since its debut? Apparently, Valve boss Gabe Newell has seen the Switchblade and is thoroughly impressed. Razer is not ruling out any developer deals so a Valve- or Blizzard-branded Switchblade pre-loaded with Steam functionality or Battle.net is a possibility. Of course, this is all assuming that the Switchblade ever moves out of its prototype stage and becomes commercially available.

>>

THIS IS OUTWORLD!

Kratos, perpetually angry Spartan and star of the *God of War* series, is seeking vengeance in a new game: the upcoming *Mortal Kombat* reboot. Well, only if you buy the game for PlayStation 3, at least. This is very cool, because Kratos seems like the perfect match for *Mortal Kombat's* style of brawling. Microsoft needs to one-up this by announcing that they're bringing Master Chief or Marcus Fenix to the game. Sure, they'll completely break the game's balancing with all their guns with chainsaws and plasma grenades, but come on – it'd be awesome. *Mortal Kombat* is due in April.

>>

PROTOTYPE OF THE PROTOTYPE

Another game announcement, this one unleashed on the gaming world by Activision. It's a sequel to 2009's excellent open-world, tendrill-filled action game, *Prototype*. It's simply called *Prototype 2*, and it's in development over at Radical Entertainment, developers of the original title. Original protagonist Alex Mercer is replaced by Sergeant James Heller, who embarks on a quest to kill Mercer after the events of the first game took the lives of Heller's loved ones. It's due out in 2012 for PC, Xbox 360 and PS3.

Hey Valve – where's our Half-Life?



WE LOVE VALVE. YOU love Valve. Everyone loves Valve. However, sometimes they're prone to sending us mixed signals when it comes to release dates for their (always excellent) games. Makes it difficult for us to understand what we need to do to make them happy, you see. This in turn makes us think that it's us doing something wrong that's making them all crazy and unpredictable. Or something.

Joking aside, Valve has come out and told everyone that there's no need to worry: they're totally not schizophrenic. Valve's mega-marketing man, Doug Lombardi, stepped into the spotlight to defend the erratic release schedule of the developer/publisher.

"I think it's fair to say that Valve never approaches a product release the same way twice," says Lombardi. "With *Half-Life 2* we took six years to create an epic sequel, then we immediately shifted to episodic releases, which were then followed by the release of a new IP (*Left 4 Dead*) which was given a sequel in less than a year. Now, with *Portal 2*, we've taken a couple of years to produce a full sequel to a game that was launched in episodic size. The point is not that we're schizophrenic, but that we try to productise every game in a way that's best for [it], given market conditions and other factors."

It's okay Valve. We understand. Just keep making great games and we'll let it slide. We wait patiently for Blizzard. We wait patiently for id. And we'll definitely wait patiently for the house of *Half-Life*.

>>

KENTUCKY ROUTE ZERO COULD BE ADVENTURE GAMES' LUKE SKYWALKER

In the sense that it's a new hope for a flailing genre battling to find contemporary acceptance amidst the barrage of triple AAA shooter titles and RTS games. It has absolutely nothing to do with *Star Wars* though! *Kentucky Route Zero* is being developed by indie duo Cardboard Computer and is a "magic realist adventure game about a secret highway in Kentucky and the mysterious folks who travel it" according to the development team's website. The game was announced on 7 January 2011 and is currently scheduled for a fall release this year (Spring our time). If you head on over to www.cardboardcomputer.com you can see the debut trailer for the game. Not only does it have unique art direction and animation, but it also has some stunning lighting effects and amazing music. There's something intriguing about this one, so be sure to keep an eye on it if you're looking to scratch your adventure game itch.

Hey, iPad – have this cool analog stick

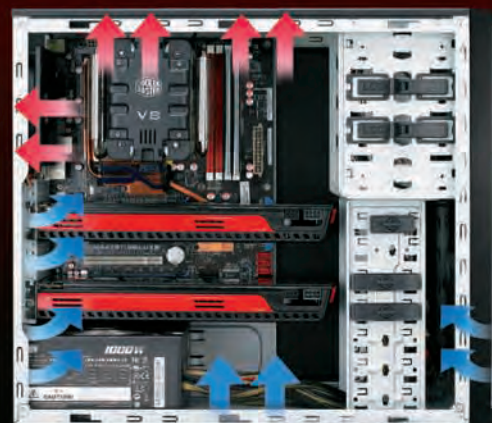
LOVE GAMING ON YOUR flashy new iPad, but hate leaving greasy fingerprints all over its glossy screen? Then you're going to want to read this. The folks at Fling have created an analog stick that attaches to your iPad's screen using suction cups – so no need for sticky adhesives.

Dump the analog stick wherever it's needed on your screen and your thumb movements will be transferred to the screen, grease free. Apparently the thing works surprisingly well, so this seems like a pretty sweet deal. Fling's analog stick will set you back \$25, but if you own an iPad, money shouldn't be an issue.



ELITE 371 the one and only choice

The Elite 371 features a classic black Cooler Master design with clean, yet attractive lines. It has been built to last and uses high quality materials. It's also been designed to keep the components inside the case cool and not only does it have space for plenty of additional cooling fans, but it can also be fitted with large CPU coolers, such as the Cooler Master Hyper 212 Plus.



Big Interior space and air flow improvement



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Harmonix – now on sale at your local BT Games

ACCORDING TO THE WALL Street Journal's sources, *Rock Band* and *Dance Central* developer (and the original creators of *Guitar Hero*) Harmonix has been sold – for the price of a copy of *Rock Band 3*.

After former parent company Viacom revealed that they planned to sell the acclaimed developer (after a massive drop in rhythm-game sales), investment group Columbus Nova gladly paid to have Harmonix under their banner. Now, Wall Street's Peter Kafka claims that, according to sources close to the transaction, the previously undisclosed sum that was exchanged for the studio was \$49.99 in total.

Bear in mind that this is just rumour and that there are many factors to take into consideration here when you stare at that stupidly small sum of money. Like the fact that Columbus Nova also bought all of Harmonix's debt, along with licensing fees for all the songs (of which there are over 2000) in the *Rock Band* Music Store. Take that kind of stuff into account and it starts making sense.

Kafka's sources also state that Viacom manipulated the deal in such a way that it would make somewhere in the region of 150-million dollars in tax benefits from the transaction. If this news turns out to be true, then Viacom made back a substantial sum of the 175-million dollars they spent purchasing Harmonix. Not only that, but the company has also distanced itself from a ton of financial liability.

>>

RAINDROPS KEEP FALLIN' ON MY HEAD

Silent Hill 8 has been revealed. They've chosen to call it *Silent Hill: Downpour* – apparently because rain, water and various watery things will play a huge role in the game. It'll also visit some new places in the terrifying titular town of *Silent Hill*. In development at Vatra Games, the developers have revealed that new protagonist Murphy Pendleton will be able to pursue side quests and that the game will utilise a new hybrid camera system that blends the fixed viewpoint of older *SH* games with the behind-the-character view of *Silent Hill: Homecoming*.

>>

PENNY ARCADE ADVENTURES PWINNING MAC APP STORE

Four days after the launch of Apple's Mac App Store, the first two episodes of *Penny Arcade Adventures* rocketed up the charts. The series' (which was planned to be a trilogy, but was ended prematurely) first two episodes were ranked at 21 and 56 respectively on the bestselling apps chart. Developer Hothead Games then tweeted this: "We're thrilled that *Precipice of Darkness* has been doing well on the Mac App Store!" Then they followed that up with this: "For those of you that want PA Episode 3, all you need to do is get 100,000 of your friends to buy 1&2. Seriously. Do that and we'll make it." This tweet has since been pulled and that the third episode probably still won't happen. Sad face.

A new way to p[l]ay CoD

ACTIVISION HAS MADE NO secret of the fact that it wants to try and milk even more cash from its *Call of Duty* series. Activision CEO Bobby Kotick spoke about "the natural evolution of a property like *Call of Duty* into a massively-multiplayer environment." The company has promised that we will never pay subscription fees for CoD's multiplayer component as we know it now (i.e. the multiplayer component we're used to getting in regular boxed copies of games in the series) – but that doesn't mean there aren't other revenue-generating avenues for Activision to pursue.

Analysts at Wedbush Securities seem to think that the publisher will reveal a second tier of online multiplayer for CoD very soon. "Activision remains a top pick, primarily due to the company's potential to create and

monetize a second tier of multiplayer online gaming for its *Call of Duty* franchise," state the Wedbush analysts in their January 2011 newsletter. "We expect this to occur during the first quarter of 2011."

That's a very specific timeframe. Perhaps the analysts at Wedbush know something we don't? Does Activision have an online-only CoD iteration in the works that'll require subscriptions or will attempt to turn a profit via microtransactions? Time will tell.



Land of the [DRM] free

AT FIRST, THINGS WERE great. The all-powerful Internet uncovered top-secret plans revealing Ubisoft's intention to completely drop its annoying, obnoxious and universally hated DRM that requires players to be online at all times when playing certain Ubi titles. This particular piece of DRM forced players to prematurely save and quit their beloved games the moment they lost connection the Ubisoft's servers, making playing their games on an unreliable Internet connection a pain in the balls. Anyone without an Internet connection was utterly screwed. So PC gamers everywhere cheered in delighted unison when word started spreading that Ubisoft would patch the DRM out of their games forever. Everything was right with the world... ..but then, things changed. It turns out that Ubisoft won't completely disassemble their evil DRM machine.

Turns out Ubisoft has only patched their DRM out of *Assassin's Creed II* and *Splinter Cell: Conviction* at the time of writing this. Ubisoft has stated that they'll still be making use of their DRM abomination in the future, on a case-by-case basis. This basically means that brand new games will still be plagued by this blight in a bid to curb piracy, but as the games get older and less popular it'll be patched out, making it possible to actually, y' know, play them. Oh well – at least *AC II* and *Conviction* will be free and clear. Apparently you'll still need an Internet connection during installation of these games (and possibly each time you start them up as well), but it's better than being forced to return to your boring old desktop each time Telkom decides it's had enough of you.



SPAWN

 **3500 DPI** PRECISION OPTICAL SENSOR

CONQUER THE COMPETITION

Another weapon joins the online battlefield as CM Storm brings you the Spawn gaming mouse. It's an ultra responsive device that has been specially crafted for claw grip gamers. Competitive gamers will marvel at its lightweight, ergonomic and reassuringly solid design. Made for precise in-game tactical maneuvers, the Spawn mouse is topped with a high-performance 3500 DPI sensor, highly accurate scroll wheel, and includes extremely durable Japanese-made Omron micro switches that can endure 5 million clicks. The CM Storm Spawn removes the limiters; will you be able to keep up?



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The Evolution of... 

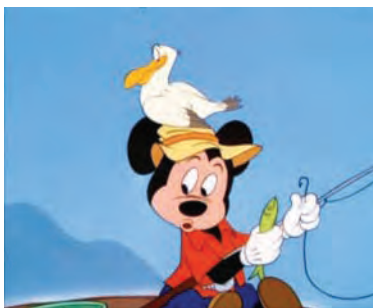
Mickey Mouse



1928 - Plane Crazy



1937 - Clock Cleaners



1953 - The Simple Things



1990 - The Prince and the Pauper



2010 - Epic Mickey



Vive la Résistance 3!

FIRST ANNOUNCED AT SONY'S Gamescom 2010 press conference, *Resistance 3* has now been given an official release date: September 6th 2011. The PS3 exclusive brings back the weapon wheel from the original game, promises a mixture of new and old weapons (which will be upgradeable and increase in power

the more you use them), features online/split-screen co-op for the campaign and aims to improve the multiplayer experience. We don't know much more about it than that, other than you'll still be fighting to fend off the Chimeran invasion, but this time it'll be better and stuff. You'll know more when we do.

The PS3 is about to bring you boobs in Thrrrrreeeee Deeeeee!

THE BRAVE AMONGST US will readily admit that when 3D TVs first made it into households, the first thought that popped into their heads was "3D Porn". It turns out that Sony was thinking similar albeit toned down and a tad more demure.

When it comes to appreciation of the female form, no magazine has done it quite as tastefully as Sports Illustrated's annual Swimsuit Edition. Now, thanks to a deal between Sony and Sports Illustrated, the PSN is about to be bombarded with women in bikinis starting this February, and of course the whole thing will be in 3D.

The promotional tie-in will feature a bevy of Dynamic themes for your PlayStation 3 as well as twelve hours of 3D Swimsuit Edition videos. The videos will be available for purchase or rental over the PSN as well as Sony's Qriocity Video on Demand program, which is built into certain Sony TVs and Blu-ray players. And there will even be short previews of the videos for research purposes to decide whether or not you want to buy a 3DTV. That's right, yeah... research purposes - totally.



>>

GABE LOVES INTEL'S SANDY BRIDGE

Processor manufacturer Intel has a new CPU on the way. It is codenamed "Sandy Bridge", but hopefully that will change because it sounds like a porn actress' name. The CPU is being designed to negate the need for graphics cards as it will be powerful enough to do the job of both a CPU and GPU. Valve boss Gabe Newell loves the idea and the development team has been producing *Portal 2* with Sandy Bridge in mind. According to Newell, "It's a real game changer for us. This allows for a console like experience on the PC". What he means is that with the CPU negating the need for a graphics card, it will supposedly make developers' lives easier insofar as programming for multiple hardware configurations is concerned; much like programming for a console like the Xbox 360 or PlayStation 3. And if it's good enough for Gabe, then it's good enough for any PC gamer, right?

Look & Listen recommends

PS3

- Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood
- Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock
- Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit

MOVE

- Resident Evil 5
- EyePet Move Edition
- Heavy Rain

XBOX 360

- The Sims 3
- Vanquish
- Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

KINECT

- Dance Central
- Kinectimals
- Kinect Joy Ride

PS2

- Despicable Me
- Toy Story 3
- Disney Sing It: Party Hits

PC

- Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II
- World of Warcraft: Cataclysm
- Fallout: New Vegas

PSP

- The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest
- Michael Jackson: The Experience
- Dragon Ball Z: Tenkaichi Tag Team

WII

- MySims SkyHeroes
- A Shadow's Tale
- Truth or Lies

DS

- Pictionary
- Monopoly Streets
- Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1



November 2010 figures provided by GfK
www.gfksa.co.za

Sales by game platform

PS3

- Call Of Duty: Black Ops
- Gran Turismo 5
- FIFA 2011
- God Of War 1 And 2 Collection
- Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit

XBOX 360

- Call Of Duty: Black Ops
- FIFA 2011
- Kinect Sports
- Kinect Adventures
- Assassins Creed: Brotherhood

PS2

- FIFA 2011
- WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2011
- Pro Evolution Soccer 2011
- FIFA 2009
- Gran Turismo 4

PC

- Call Of Duty: Black Ops
- The Sims 3: Late Night
- The Sims 3
- Need For Speed: Undercover
- Call Of Duty: Deluxe Edition

PSP

- MX vs ATV Untamed
- Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters
- Gran Turismo 5 Roadster
- God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta
- WWE Smackdown vs RAW 2011

WII

- Wii Sports
- Super Mario Galaxy 2
- 2009 Super Mario Bros
- Wii Sports Resort

FIFA 2011

DS

- Mario Kart
- New Super Mario Bros
- The Sims 3
- FIFA 2011
- Despicable Me

>>

THE 3DS WILL HAVE 3-5 HOURS OF BATTERY

That's according to an official Nintendo spec sheet that was released by the company at a recent Nintendo World event. It seems that backlighting on the 3D screen is the cause for varying battery times. When playing a 3DS game with the backlight turned low, you can expect between 3-5 hours. Obviously, the brighter the backlighting is, the lower the battery life. When playing an older DS game that doesn't utilise the 3D functionality of the handheld, then the battery life can last between 5-8 hours. A full charge will take around 3.5 hours to complete, so in some instances it could take longer to charge the battery than it would to deplete it. Ouch. That being said, the battery life isn't that different to that of the DSi, and the 3DS has quite a bit more hardware underneath than its predecessor does.

>>

DRAKE OF ARABIA

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception. It's a thing that's happening and we are very, very excited for it. Drake and Sully (if those names mean nothing to you, then you probably don't care about this news anyway) are off in the desert hunting for a lost city in this third title. We're joining them on a quest that'll take us to the Arabian Peninsula and Rub' al Khali Desert in a story inspired not only by Sir Francis Drake's legendary exploits, but also draws inspiration from the life of British Army officer and archaeologist T.E. Lawrence (as in Lawrence of Arabia).

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Wii - R230

Kit's come standard with 2 controller skins, 2 controller battery pack skins, 2 sides and faceplate!
Kit comes standard with 2 controller skins and the main face skin!
Kit comes standard with front and back skins!
Kit comes standard with 2 controller skins, 2 nunchuk skins, 2 sides, top skin, receiver skin and faceplate!

ALSO AVAILABLE AT ZAPS (upstairs), SHOP G15A, BRIGHTWATER COMMONS, RANDBURG, 2167 - 011 789 9747

OnLive – coming to a television near you

THE CREATORS OF ONLIVE, that game-streaming microconsole thing, have just made a very smart move by partnering with budget electronics manufacturer VIZIO to integrate their game-streaming service into select VIZIO products.

OnLive streams games from its own servers, allowing you to simply buy their "Microconsole" and never have to worry about hardware upgrades ever again. Having this service built into your Blu-ray device or television set makes total sense.

The Beavatar



I'm in ur jungle, hiding from ur doods

The story so far: Our poor badger has disappeared (somewhere in the über jungle of Pandora). He's easily distracted by bright lights... so you can imagine. We are looking for him and will let you know.

In the meantime the awesomeness of NAG has attracted someone else, a pretty blue thing that's still a little shy (this is our awkward way of saying she's hiding in the magazine). So, to win the prize you must now find Ney'turik, she's hiding in the magazine somewhere... Get going. Send your sightings to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line 'December Beavatar'.

January Winner



Justin Williams, pg 43

WIN!
One person who finds the Beavatar will win a Thrustmaster USB Joystick for PC & MAC valued at R300, sponsored by Thrustmaster.



THRUSTMASTER

This is a big list of competition winners!

6 month subscription to NAG: Sean Currin from Emerald Hill

24 Days of Giving NAG Online Competition:

Zotac Zbox - Jean Naidoo from Lombardy East; **Motor Monkey & Flash drive** - Daniel Prinsloo from Fochville; **3-in1 Cheetah Wheel & Flash drive** - Jason Bridges from Newlands; **Mecer Hard Drive/Multimedia Player & Flash Drive** - Andreas van Wyk from Nelspruit; **R500 Look and Listen Gift Voucher & Flash Drive** - Roland Neumann from Randpark Ridge; **Plantronics Gamecom 367 Headset & Flash Drive** - Daniel Stuart from Orange Grove; **Guitar Hero 5 Super Bundle & Flash Drive** - TBC; **PS3 Move Quad Dock Pro & Ergo Tilt & Flash Drive** - Siya Ngqakaza from Walmer Heights; **Netgear N300 Wireless Router & Flash Drive & PS3 Media Power Pack & Musica Gift voucher** - Braham Du Plooy from Langenhoven Park; **PS3 Shadow Wireless Controller & Flash Drive** - Marius Nell from Bloemfontein; **Netgear N300 Wireless Router & Flash Drive** - Richard Eek from Pretoria; **AMD Phenom II X2 560 CPU** - Peet Esterhuizen from Wonderboom; **From The Vault: Relics & Flash drive** - Vincent Cordewener from Vredenburg; **Aion hamper & Flash Drive** - Kim Naidoo from Lombardy East.

December AMD Competition:

Vaughan Macmillan from Arcadia

AVG subscription Competition:

Scottburgh Primary School; Claudene Bower from Durbanville; Ruben Strydom from Randburg, Timothy King from Cotswold; Matthew Botha from Garsfontein; M Myburgh from Waterkloof; Dakin Saallan from Glenvista; JB Hutten from Clubview; Allistaire Clark from Boksburg; Kerry Curtis from Aston Manor; Nicolas Thelander from Cape Town; De Wer Cilliers from Lynnwoodridge; Dries Van den Berg from Centurion; Grant Foster from Edgemoor; David Texeira from Edenvale; Subashen Naidu from Durban; Willem Oldenwage from Cresta; Anton Snyman from Riebeeckstad; Dylan de Jongh from Doornpoort; Christiaan Oosthuizen from Fairy Glen; Eben Jordaan from Aston Manor; Hakon Petemann from Newlands; JD e Freitas from Strand; Elzahn Botha from Groblersdal; Hendri Snyman from Lyttleton; Gillian Le Masson from Fontainbleau; Cl Rapson from Pierre van Ryneveld; Dino Marziale from Hermanus; Zak Du Toit from Stellenbosch; Sebastian Diana from Durban; Michelle Hlozek from Durbanville; Pieter van der Vyver from East London; Melaney Jordan from Diep Rivier; Marianne van Reenen from Durban; K de Klerk from Cape Town; Owen Du Toit from Wedgedacht; Leoni Lubbinge from Pretoria North; Jaco Viljoen from Die Hoewes; W Van Zyl from Nina Park; Ruan Snyman from Henley-on-klip; Imraan Akhalwaya from Lenasia; Ryan Scheepers from Potensie; Daniel Mc Dougall from Benoni; Richard Weil from Sunnyridge; Johan Meyer from Botswana, Ernest Wolmarans from Springs; Leon Cornelius from Kloof, Victoria Park High School; Marnu Pretorius from Cresta; C Borman from Boston; Dylan Viljoen from Kenilworth; Matthew Crumplin from Table View; Barry the Banana from Durban; Cobus Visser from Bothasig; Christiaan van der Spuy from Philadelphia; Altay Turan from Rondebosch, V Soldo from Noordstad; James Oosterbaan from Hout Bay.



KINECT HAS JUST MADE MICROSOFT VERY VERY HAPPY

A few days after Kinect launched in November 2010, Microsoft went on record to say that they were hoping to sell 5 million units within the first two months. Now that the motion-sensing camera has been out in the wild for sixty days, Microsoft has announced that they nearly doubled that initial expectation with Kinect selling 8 million units since launch.

That's a really good start considering the peripheral's price tag and relatively small line-up of games available at launch. Microsoft has thrown millions of dollars at advertising and promoting their new toy, so it's nice to see that they're reaping the benefits. You can expect to see loads more Kinect features being added to Xbox LIVE and future games.

Dawn of War II - Retribution makes you pick a side when you purchase

BUT DON'T WORRY, YOU'RE not going to be stuck with only one race to play with in the single-player campaign. Instead, when the second stand-alone expansion releases this March, it'll come in six different flavours, one for each of the six playable races in the game. Each version will come with exclusive wargear and abilities for the race of your choice. The DLC items can then be used in the single-player campaigns. The race-specific extra content is only available as a pre-order incentive for digital download copies of the game. Of course, two of the races' extra content will be exclusives to

particular online retailers: you'll only be able to get the Ork content through Steam and the Tyranid content if you order through THQ.com. The remaining four races' content packs will be available through any digital download retailer.

If you're feeling indecisive, there is a Collector's Edition box that comes with all six race content packs as well as the standard Collector's Edition swag like lithographs and posters. This edition is only available through THQ's website so break out that credit card and order one now to display your obsession with the 40K universe.



29 Stores Nationwide. For contact information go to www.btgames.co.za

The year is 2027. The world as we know it is unravelling after fifteen years of economic meltdown and widespread global conflict over dwindling natural resources.

A once proud America has fallen, her infrastructure shattered and military in disarray. Crippled by a devastating EMP strike, the USA is powerless to resist the ever expanding occupation of a savage, nuclear armed Greater Korean Republic.

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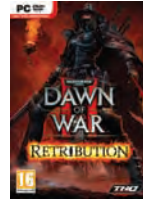
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If your company isn't listed here, phone NAG on [011] 704-2679

Caption of the Month

Every month we'll choose a screenshot from a random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better one. The winner will get a copy of *Dawn of War II: Retribution* for PS3 from Ster-Kinekor Entertainment. Send your captions to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line 'February Caption'.



NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT AT HUMOUR: This is what happens when you light a fart on the Grid.



LAST MONTH'S WINNER: "I know the graphics suck, but your face in this game only makes it worse!"
-Stephan Terblanche

A new superpower?

FIREMINT, MOST RECOGNISABLE AS the developer of insanely popular casual games like the multi-million selling hit *Flight Control*, announced recently that they've got their hands on Infinite Interactive. Why is this important? Because Infinite Interactive developed *Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords*, which devoured so much time, productivity and cash around the world that we're surprised it wasn't created by PopCap Games. Infinite's founder (and lead designer) Steve Fawcner and the Infinite team will be assimilated into Firemint and while we're not sure right now as to what new games will be born from this merger, they'll most likely eat through a ton of our time (which we should be spending working) and money (which we should be spending on food).

BT GAMES™ Release List

Dates subject to change without notice

FEBRUARY: WEEK 1

The Sims 3: Outdoor Living Stuff PC

FEBRUARY: WEEK 3

Darksore PC

FEBRUARY: TBA

Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship 2011 DS

uDraw GameTablet + uDraw Studio Wii

uDraw Pictionary Wii

Dood's Big Adventure Wii

Paws and Claws: Fantastic Pets Xbox 360

Ben 10: Ultimate Alien: Cosmic Destruction PC, Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, PS2, DS, PSP

LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars PC, Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, DS, PSP

Dance Junior Wii

Haunted House Wii

Atari's Greatest Hits: Volume 2 DS

Hello Kitty Seasons Wii

Test Drive Unlimited 2 PC, Xbox 360, PS3

We Dare PS3, Wii

Michael Jackson: The Experience Xbox 360, PS3

Body and Brain Connection Xbox 360

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood PC

Knights Contract Xbox 360, PS3

Dungeons PC

Marvel vs Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds Xbox 360, PS3

The Conduit 2 Wii

F.3.A.R. PC, Xbox, PS3

City of Strange

THE SEQUEL TO ROCKSTEADY Studios' phenomenal *Batman: Arkham Asylum* just got a little stranger. It's been revealed that Hugo Strange, mad scientist/supervillain extraordinaire, will join the game's rogues' gallery. Hugo Strange first appeared in *Detective Comics* #36 (back in February 1940) and is one of Batman's first recurring villains. He's been around longer than Catwoman and even the Joker. *Arkham City* is due later this year.

HOMEFRONT

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS.



Pre-order now to receive gun & camo DLC, exclusive to BT Games

A DECADE IN GAMING

NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM (JULY 1983 - SEPTEMBER 2003)

The Third Console Generation (8-bit era) was dominated by Nintendo's Entertainment System (except in Brazil and Europe where the SEGA Master System ruled the roost). The third generation is noted for introducing some of the first console role-playing games, as well as founding some of the longest-running franchises of all time like: Super Mario Bros., Final Fantasy, Dragon Quest, Metroid, Mega Man, Metal Gear, Castlevania and The Legend of Zelda. South Africans probably remember the NES by the Chinese knock-off brands: Ending Man, Golden China, Reggies Entertainment System.

SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM (NOVEMBER 1990 - SEPTEMBER 2003)

The Fourth Console Generation (16-bit era) began in 1987 already with the release of the PC Engine (TurboGrafx-16), but it was to be defined by the clash of Nintendo and SEGA's consoles. The SEGA Mega Drive was introduced in 1988 and even though it provided Sonic the Hedgehog and "Blast Processing" (a made-up technical term), the Super Nintendo would dominate the generation.

SIXTH CONSOLE GENERATION (1998 - 2005)

The sixth console generation began in 1998 with the launch of the SEGA Dreamcast. This generation in console hardware is defined by built-in DVD players, hard-drives making a tentative appearance and broadband connections being integrated, either internally or via external peripherals.

SEVENTH CONSOLE GENERATION (2004 - CURRENT)

While the seventh and current console generation technically begins with the Xbox 360 in 2005, the Nintendo DS and Sony PlayStation Portable are generally considered a part of the generation. This generation is defined by High Definition-ready graphics, media-center capabilities, wireless game controllers becoming a standard and complete online services such as PSN and Xbox Live.

TOP 5 SELLING GAMES OF ALL TIME

1. Wii Sports (74 million)
2. Super Mario Bros (40 million)
3. Pokemon Red/Green/Blue (31 million)
4. Tetris (GameBoy) (30 million)
5. Duck Hunt (28 million)

SERIOUS BUSINESS

Issues that have been frequently debated this decade include: globalization (technology is bringing about unprecedented economic and cultural integration), overpopulation (the planet can't sustain our growth rate), abortion (in 2003 there were 42 million abortions which upset some people), gay rights (as much of a political issue as a human rights one), dysgenics (human genetic integrity may be deteriorating), poverty (still the root cause of famine, disease and insufficient education), disease (AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria), war and terrorism (civil wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo are the largest since World War II), global warming (biodiversity and ecosystems are in trouble), intellectual property (we have no idea where the boundaries between copyright, trademark and patents really are) and fossil fuels (we're running out of dead dinosaurs).

2000



JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

> SOFTWARE

February: The Sims - By 2002, The Sims surpassed Myst (1993) as the top-selling game in PC game history, by selling more than 6.3 million copies worldwide. By 2005, 16 million copies

March: Thief II: The Metal Age

May: Perfect Dark

March: Soldier of Fortune - Redefined shooting people in the balls

June: Diablo II - People stayed a while to listen

June: Deus Ex

June: Jet Set Radio

July: Final Fantasy IX

August: Heavy Metal: F.A.K.K.? - We're still waiting for the sequel

September: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 - Arguably the last true good Tony Hawk game

September: Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn

October: American McGee's Alice

November: No One Lives Forever

November: Sacrifice - Surrealist Real-Time Strategy, ahead of its time in concept and design

December: Phantasy Star Online - While the MMORPG genre began in seriousness with Ultima Online (1997), Everquest (1999) and Asheron's Call (1999), it only became a dominant genre in 2000. Appearing on Dreamcast, GameCube and Xbox, PSO popularized MMORPG for the console market, though it remains a PC-dominated genre



What's In A Name?
Unlike previous decades, the 2000s lack a universally accepted name. Some people refer to it as "two-thousands", while others opt for "the noughties" or "the aughts".

> HARDWARE

May: NVIDIA release 2nd Generation GeForce line (GeForce2 GTS)

June: AMD releases their second-generation Athlon (codenamed "Thunderbird"), capable of 600 MHz to 1.4 GHz. It had sweet on-chip, full-speed exclusive cache. Remembered for being an overclocker's paradise

March: Sony PlayStation 2 - Successor to the PlayStation and still the best-selling console to date (over 147 million units and still selling), the PlayStation 2 had up to 18 hardware revisions and three different model releases (Original, Slim and PSX). While a broadband adaptor was sold separately, and later

incorporated into the Slim design, online and multiplayer gaming was never a focus of the console

April: ATI introduces their Radeon videocard product line

November: Microsoft releases DirectX 8, an API (Application Program Interface) that was supposed to revolutionize multimedia and gaming.

November: Intel releases the Pentium IV (codenamed "Willamette"), capable of 1.3 GHz to 2 GHz. It had a quad-pumped FSB, to make the nerds wet

December: Bandai WonderSwam Colour

2001



2002



< ADE IN GAMING >

JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

> SOFTWARE

- January:** RuneScape
- February:** Clive Barker's Undying
- March:** Black & White
- March:** Conker's Bad Fur Day
- March:** Tribes 2
- March:** Serious Sam: The First Encounter
- May:** Bejeweled - Selling more than 25 million copies (Halo 3 sold 11 million in its lifetime), Bejeweled ushered in the "PopCap Generation"
- May:** Red Faction - One of the earliest examples of truly destructible environments
- June:** Anachronox - Still waiting for the sequel
- July:** Final Fantasy X
- July:** Max Payne
- August:** Arcanum: Of Steamworks and Magick Obscura
- August:** Microsoft releases Internet Explorer 6.0
- September:** Ico - Cult classic
- September:** Silent Hill 2
- October:** Grand Theft Auto III
- October:** Devil May Cry
- November:** Halo: Combat Evolved - What DOOM did for PC gaming in the 90s, Halo did for console gaming in the 00s. Deal with it
- November:** IL-2 Sturmovik
- November:** Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty
- November:** FreQuency
- November:** Return to Castle Wolfenstein
- December:** Pikmin
- December:** Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy



January
Wikipedia.org comes online, forever changing how we do homework.

April
Microsoft announces it took Clippy out back and shot the dumb thing.

> HARDWARE

- January:** Intel recalls all its 1.13 GHz Pentium III (codename "Coppermine") processors due to a glitch. That sucked
- February:** NVIDIA releases world's first DirectX8.0 graphics card the GeForce 3.
- March:** Nintendo GameBoy Advance - Sold over 81 million units worldwide.
- April:** The USB 2.0 specification is unveiled, and it was superfast
- April:** Intel releases their third Pentium III (codenamed "Tualatin"), capable of 1.1 GHz and 1.13 GHz
- August:** SATA 1.0 is introduced. Case-modders rejoice at smaller cable.
- September:** Nintendo GameCube - Sold over 21 million units worldwide
- October:** AMD releases their third-generation Athlon (codenamed "Palomino"), capable of 1.33 GHz to 1.53 GHz. They also changed their naming convention, moving to the "Athlon XP" convention
- October:** Apple introduces the first iPod. Everyone realizes they have to have one, or they might die
- November:** Microsoft Xbox - Sold over 24 million units worldwide
- November:** GamePark 32 - Korean-built handheld console that got overlooked by non-internationals

> SOFTWARE

- February:** Jet Set Radio Future
- March:** Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast
- April:** Dungeon Siege
- May:** The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind
- May:** Final Fantasy XI
- June:** Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem
- July:** Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos - Up until this point, only the Role-Playing Game and First-Person Shooter genres were predominantly 3D, and while the Real-Time Strategy genre saw its first 3D game in 1999 with Homeworld, it wasn't until Warcraft III and Age of Mythology that it became a standard for the genre
- August:** Super Mario Sunshine
- September:** Battlefield 1942
- September:** Animal Crossing - Still the finest debt simulator
- September:** Kingdom Hearts - Disney x Square Enix
- September:** Tekken 4
- October:** TimeSplitters 2
- October:** Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
- November:** Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell
- November:** Metroid Prime - A rare example of a game developer proving themselves as an authority with their first game.
- November:** Ratchet & Clank
- December:** The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker



September
The first programming code of what would become Mozilla Firefox is made available.

> HARDWARE

- January:** "PhysX" inventors Ageia founded. A fabless semiconductor company, Ageia created PhysX: a Physics Processing Unit Chip, like the Graphics Processing Unit Chip found on videocards, but the PPU focused entirely on game physics calculations. Ageia was the first company to offload calculation of physics from the CPU to a separate chip. Before this, neither ATI or NVIDIA had any such plans but after Ageia unveiled PhysX, both scrambled to announce their own physics solutions. In 2008, NVIDIA bought Ageia, and the PhysX engine became incorporated into their video cards
- June:** AMD announces their 0.13 micron "Thoroughbred"-based Athlon XP 2200+ processor
- July:** PCI Express is approved as a standard. Goodbye AGP!
- August:** ATI introduces world's first DirectX9 graphics card the Radeon 9700
- December:** Microsoft releases DirectX 9

2003



JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER

> SOFTWARE

- January:** SimCity 4 released online for free
- January:** Devil May Cry 2
- February:** Master of Orion III
- February:** Command & Conquer: Generals
- March:** Freelancer
- March:** Amplitude
- April:** Postal 2
- June:** Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness - Forever redefined just how bad, bad controls could be. Back that truck up, Lara!
- August:** Soul Calibur II
- September:** Savage: The Battle for Newerth - The first Real-Time Strategy meets First-Person Shooter online-only game for up to 128 people. Being too ahead of it's time, it only saw true popularity a few years later when it got
- October:** Call of Duty - While World War II-themed shooters were popular before, it was Call of Duty that turned it into its own genre and ultimately, one of the biggest cash-cows next to Italian Plumbers in Magic Land
- October:** Viewtiful Joe
- October:** Lineage II - While being the biggest Massively-Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game outside of the US, it wasn't until World of Warcraft (2004) that the genre hit its stride
- October:** SSX 3
- November:** Beyond Good & Evil
- November:** Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic
- November:** Prince of Persia: Sands of Time



April
Apple opens the iTunes store.
April
The first computer is infected with the Spybot worm, which allowed people to remotely control the computer over IRC.

> HARDWARE

- February:** Game Boy Advance SP - Of the 81 million Game Boy Advance units sold, 43 million are SP units
- March:** Intel Pentium M is introduced
- May:** Tapwave Zodiac - More than a full year before the Nintendo DS, this little touchscreen handheld console tried gallantly, but failed, mostly due to high retail price and restrictive Palm OS game development licenses
- September:** AMD introduces the first mainstream 64-bit processor the Athlon 64. Also changing desktop 64-bit computing forever with x86-64 instruction set we use even today
- October:** Nokia N-Gage - Nokia claims it has shipped 2 million units, but won't comment on how many sold

2004



JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER

> SOFTWARE

- March:** Metroid Zero Mission
- March:** Unreal Tournament 2004 - Still rules the roost
- March:** Katamari Damacy - Na na, na na na na na na, Katamari Damacy...
- March:** Sacred
- March:** Far Cry
- March:** Ninja Gaiden - Strategy Guide Man can't help you now!
- April:** Painkiller
- April:** City of Heroes
- June:** The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay - Proved that movie license games don't have to be terrible
- August:** Doom 3
- September:** Fable
- September:** Rome: Total War
- September:** Burnout 3: Takedown
- September:** The Sims 2
- September:** Myst IV: Revelation
- September:** Spider-Man 2
- September:** Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War
- October:** Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas - Will be forever known for the "Hot Coffee" debacle in which a whole lot of people got very upset that polygons were "doing it" while fully clothed (if you hacked the game to unlock the disused content)
- November:** World of Warcraft
- November:** Half-Life 2 - Raising the bar across the entire spectrum of game-design conventions - physics, animation, sound, artificial-intelligence, rendering and narrative - Half-Life 2 marked a seachange in the First-Person Shooter genre. From this point onward, developers either had to do as good, or better: or their game would flop
- November:** Killzone
- November:** Halo 2
- November:** Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater

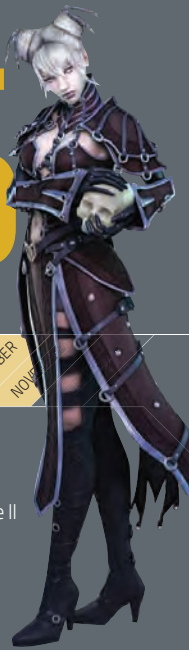


August
Acclaim, developers and/or publishers of classics like Wizards & Warriors (1987), NBA Jam (1993) and Mortal Kombat (1992) declares bankruptcy and closes its doors.

> HARDWARE

- April:** NVIDIA introduce industries first DirectX9.0c graphics card the GeForce 6
- August:** DirectX9.0c released with many new features like HDR etc
- November:** Nintendo DS - Sold more than 135 million units and counting
- December:** Sony PlayStation Portable - Sold more than 62 million units and counting

2005



JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

> SOFTWARE

- January:** Resident Evil 4
- January:** Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath
- February:** Gran Turismo 4
- February:** Tekken 5
- March:** Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening
- March:** God of War
- March:** TimeSplitters: Future Perfect
- March:** The Matrix Online - Defunct, but good while it lasted
- March:** LEGO Star Wars
- April:** Psychonauts
- April:** Guild Wars
- April:** Jade Empire
- June:** Battlefield 2
- August:** Dungeon Siege II
- August:** Nintendogs
- October:** Civilization IV
- October:** F.E.A.R.
- October:** Quake 4
- October:** Age of Empires 3
- October:** Shadow of the Colossus
- October:** Call of Duty 2
- October:** Soul Calibur III
- November:** Guitar Hero - Developed by Harmonix, this paved the way for the Music Game genre in the West since, as predecessors Guitar Freaks (1999) and Dance Dance Revolution (1998) never made it big outside of Asia. Its success led to Rock Band in 2007, also made by Harmonix
- November:** The Movies



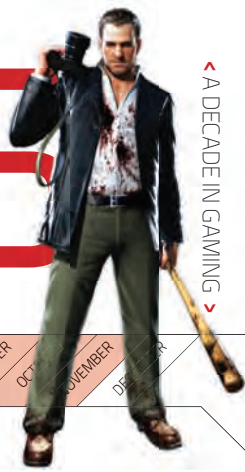
February
YouTube is founded and comes online, cute kittens everywhere unite!

February
The first ever YouTube video is uploaded, titled "Me at the zoo".

> HARDWARE

- May:** AMD releases world's first mainstream dual core CPU the Athlon X2.
- June:** Apple announces its plans on switching its computers to Intel processors.
- November:** Microsoft Xbox 360 - Sold 44 million units and counting.

2006



< A DECADE IN GAMING >

JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

> SOFTWARE

- February:** Dungeons & Dragons Online: Stormreach
- March:** Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion
- March:** Final Fantasy XII
- March:** Kingdom Hearts II
- April:** Okami
- April:** Tomb Raider Legend
- April:** Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day
- May:** New Super Mario Bros
- May:** Rockstar Games: Table Tennis
- June:** Half-Life 2: Episode 1
- June:** Titan Quest
- July:** Prey
- August:** Dead Rising
- August:** Saint's Row
- September:** God Hand
- September:** LocoRoco
- September:** Company of Heroes
- October:** Sam & Max Save the World
- October:** Battlefield 2142
- October:** Bully
- October:** Microsoft releases Internet Explorer 7.0
- November:** The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess
- November:** Wii Sports
- November:** Gears of War
- November:** Call of Duty 3
- November:** Tony Hawk's Project 8 - Managed to bring the franchise back to glory after a long decline, only to be decimated by Skate the following year
- November:** Resistance: Fall of Man
- November:** Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas



December
TIME magazine names "You" as Person of the Year, referring to the growth and success of community-driven websites and content.

> HARDWARE

- January:** The Blu-Ray format is first announced and introduced at CES
- January:** Intel introduces the Intel Core and Viiv
- March:** Toshiba releases the first HD-DVD player in Japan.
- April:** Intel releases the Core2 Duo Processors
- July:** The Intel Core 2 Extreme is released
- July:** AMD announces acquisition of ATI graphics (and thus remains in debt for what seems like an eternity)
- November:** NVIDIA introduces the first
- DirectX10** graphics card on the market the GeForce 8
- November:** Microsoft Zune - Microsoft claims it has sold over 2 million units
- November:** Microsoft introduces DirectX10 as a Windows Vista exclusive.
- November:** Sony PlayStation 3 - Sold 41 million units and counting
- November:** Nintendo Wii - Sold 75 million units and counting
- November:** Intel releases the world's first mainstream quad core x86 CPU the Core 2 Extreme

2007



JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

> SOFTWARE

- February:** Supreme Commander
- February:** Crackdown
- March:** God of War II
- March:** S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl
- March:** Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars
- April:** The Lord of the Rings Online: Shadows of Angmar
- May:** Forza Motorsport 2
- June:** Tomb Raider: Anniversary
- June:** Overlord
- August:** BioShock
- August:** Metroid Prime 3: Corruption
- September:** Halo 3
- September:** Skate
- September:** Heavenly Sword
- September:** Enemy Territory: Quake Wars
- October:** Portal
- October:** Team Fortress 2
- October:** Half-Life 2: Episode 2
- October:** The Witcher
- October:** Project Gotham Racing 4
- October:** Hellgate: London
- November:** Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare
- November:** Super Mario Galaxy
- November:** Mass Effect
- November:** Crysis
- November:** Rock Band
- November:** Assassin's Creed
- November:** Unreal Tournament 3
- December:** Wii Fit



January
Microsoft releases Windows Vista and Office 2007.
March
Estonia becomes the first country to conduct an election over the Internet.

> HARDWARE

- September:** Apple iPod Touch - Over 45 million units sold and counting.
- November:** Intel releases the world's first 45nm x86 CPU code named Yorkfield
- November:** Amazon.com releases the first Kindle e-book reader.

2008



JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

> SOFTWARE

- January:** Burnout Paradise
- January:** No More Heroes
- January:** Super Smash Bros. Brawl
- April:** Grand Theft Auto IV
- April:** Mario Kart Wii
- May:** Race Driver: Grid
- June:** Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots
- June:** Ninja Gaiden II
- June:** Alone in the Dark - Nice idea, shame about the game
- June:** Battlefield: Bad Company
- July:** Street Fighter IV
- August:** Braid
- September:** Spore
- September:** Mega Man 9
- September:** Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
- September:** LEGO Batman: The Video Game
- October:** LittleBigPlanet
- October:** Fallout 3
- October:** Fable II
- October:** Dead Space
- October:** Far Cry 2
- November:** Left 4 Dead
- November:** Mirror's Edge
- November:** Gears of War 2

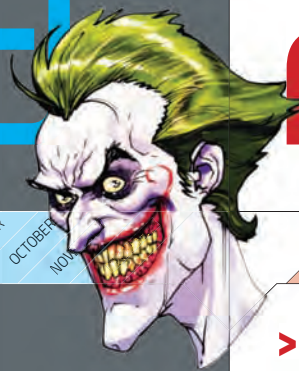


February
The HD format war ends as HD-DVD calls it quits, making Blu-ray the winner. DVD still sells more for years to come.

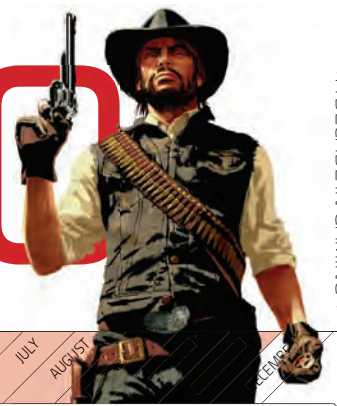
> HARDWARE

- February:** NVIDIA buys AGEIA technologies.
- March:** AMD releases their first quad core CPUs under the Phenom name. A
- CPU family probably best forgotten
- November:** Intel introduces the Core i7 range of CPUs

2009



2010



< A DECADE IN GAMING >

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

> SOFTWARE

February: Demon's Souls

February: Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War II

February: Halo Wars

February: Killzone 2

March: Microsoft releases Internet Explorer 8.0

June: The Sims 3

June: Red Faction: Guerilla

June: Prototype

August: Batman: Arkham Asylum

August: Monster Hunter Tri

August: Wolfenstein - How do you say "mediocre" in German?

September: Halo 3: ODST

October: Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

October: Borderlands

October: Bayonetta

October: DJ Hero

October: Brütal Legend - Also known to some as the "Betrayal of Tim Shafer".

October: Tekken 6

November: Assassin's Creed II

November: Dragon Age: Origins

November: Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

November: Left 4 Dead 2

November: New Super Mario Bros Wii - Which, much to the dismay of RedTide, sold more than Modern Warfare 2 (on all platforms combined!)

December: Final Fantasy XIII - When Square Enix announced the next Final Fantasy would not be a Sony exclusive, it was huge news. That Sony had initially just pasted Xbox 360 control icons over PlayStation 3 screenshots - and later apologized for the deception - was big news. The news that Square Enix had lost a lot of their Japanese fanbase by catering to the Western market in releasing the game for a "western" console, didn't really make it out of Japan (which still maintains a serious culture of boycotting products and meaning it too)



August
Batman: Arkham Asylum gets into the Guinness World Records for 'Most Critically Acclaimed Superhero Game Ever'. That's Batman for ya.



> HARDWARE

January: AMD release the Phenom II CPUs to a significantly better reception

September: Intel releases P55 platform and Lynnfield CPUs

September: ATI introduces world's first DirectX11 family of VGA cards the Radeon 5000 series

September: Microsoft Zune HD

> SOFTWARE

January: M.A.G.

January: Darksiders

January: Mass Effect 2

February: Star Trek Online - Boldly going nowhere in particular

February: BioShock 2

February: Heavy Rain

March: God of War III - (Spoiler Alert!) Kratos finally kills his dad. It was brutal

April: Super Street Fighter IV

May: Red Dead Redemption

May: Super Mario Galaxy 2

May: Alan Wake

May: Blur - Tragic victim of Racepocalypse 2010

June: Transformers: War for Cybertron

July: StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty

July: Limbo

August: Metroid: Other M - Oh, baby.

September: Amnesia: The Dark Descent

September: Civilization V

September: Dead Rising 2

September: Halo: Reach

September: Final Fantasy XIV

October: Super Meat Boy - Save me Meat Boy!

October: Castlevania: Lords of Shadow

October: Vanquish

October: Fable III

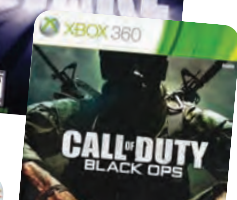
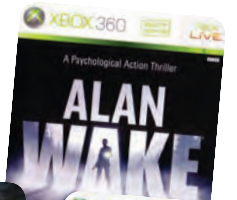
November: Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit

November: Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

November: Bejewelled 3

November: Call of Duty: Black Ops

November: Gran Turismo 5 - Better late than never!



April
Xbox Live for the original Xbox and games discontinued, after they managed to get all the Halo 2 players off the damn servers.

> HARDWARE

January: Apple iPad

June: OnLive

September: PlayStation Move

November: Microsoft Kinect **NAG**



Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds

It's gonna take you for a ride.

GENRE > Fighting

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

THIS IS THE GAME nobody would have thought possible five years ago.

Fighting games in the West were, to be frank, in the gutter. That is said with no offense to fighting fans; a statement of sad truth rather than derision. Having retreated to a niche dominated largely by Korean-centric, hyper-technical games such as *Guilty Gear* and *BlazBlue*, even populist series such as *Tekken* were fading from popular awareness. The reasons why could fill an essay all its own: too technical, too eastern, too difficult, and too hard to find competition in a world that had gone online. Even Capcom, originator of the genre as we know it today, had retreated from the field and outwardly displayed little interest in returning... ever. **NAG**

Miktar Dracon



Super Revival

A funny thing happened on the way to irrelevancy; game producer Yoshinori Ono of Capcom began battling the top brass to create *Street Fighter IV*. It was a real fight - those in power believed a fighting game revival impossible, underestimating the inherent draw of the concept. *Shouldn't* a genre that involves a pair of supreme bad-asses duking it out toe-to-toe be one of the most popular attractions in gaming? So *Street Fighter* returned and for once, the faithful were rewarded; it was big, bold, and confident. More, it helped engineer the return of the fight; paving the way directly to what in some ways, is the main event: *Marvel vs. Capcom 3*.

Like *SFIV*, *Marvel 3* does not hedge its bets. From the moment *MvC3* was revealed officially in early 2010, we got the impression that Capcom had - perhaps emboldened by *Street Fighter's* retail sales - opened up the purse strings for this one. It ran on the same technology powering games like *Resident Evil 5*. It was promised to feature a huge cast for a game being rebuilt from the ground up with all new assets; three dozen or more characters.





“Detail is the name of the game in *Marvel 3*. Each of the more than thirty characters - an even division between Marvel and Capcom cast members - features their own unique intro and outro dialog, including specific pre-fight taunts...”



Hyper Changes

Now just weeks away from *MvC3*'s first regional release in North America, we have been able to see a lot of what the game will offer and the pro players have had their hands all over Capcom's pride and joy at several events, culminating with two days of light tournament play at Consumer Electronics Show 2011. Their verdict: it's the real deal.

Which is not to say it's identical to *Marvel vs. Capcom 2*, a game that has proven itself a genuine classic. Like *SFIV*, *Marvel 3* uses 3D visuals on a 2D plane. The art style is entirely different from *SF*; rather than the chunky, sketchpad look of *Street Fighter*'s return, *MvC3* adopts a striking ink-lined appearance that gets away from Japanese fighting games and straight into western style comic books.

Like those before it, *Marvel 3* is a 3-on-3 fighting game. Each player has full access to all three characters instantly, and a wide variety of mechanics for swapping, assist attacks, and combination hyper moves. Capcom's HD generation "MT Framework" engine proves it can handle this task, easily throwing around six enormously detailed characters and massive backgrounds at sixty-frames-per-second with the steel verve required by fighting games.



Ultra Features

The cast of characters receives more of an infusion of fresh faces than in any previous Capcom *Versus* game entry. A lot of time has passed since the original golden age of fighting games; characters such as Dante, Amaterasu (of *Okami* fame), and *Resident Evil*'s Wesker take the place of older *Street Fighter* faces. On the Marvel side, the "Army of X" has given way to icons such as Thor, Super Skrull, and the offbeat MODOK (Mental Organism Designed Only For Killing.) Overall, it better represents Capcom and Marvel as a whole; finally leaving behind the legacy of a series that originally focused exclusively on *X-Men* and *Street Fighter* cast members.

The play speed in *MvC3* is in point of fact, a tad slower than *MvC2*. This is a legitimate point of contention with veteran players, but the adjustment is not without reason. There is simply a wider variety of characters and fighting styles in the series 3rd entry; fresh mechanics that involve using space in ways not seen before. The chaos level has been ratcheted up; seeing a game of *MvC3* in action, one gets the impression that speeding up the game further may have pushed it over the edge into nonsense. Detail is the name of the game in *Marvel 3*. Each of the more than thirty characters - an even division between Marvel and Capcom cast members - features their own unique intro and outro dialog, including specific pre-fight taunts for every other character in the game. Everyone has their own musical theme which alternate during a match. In addition, an extensive and slick Mission Mode echoes the training trials in *SFIV*, but is presented better with a unified interface that makes it much easier to keep track of what has been accomplished. Every character in the game takes part, inviting experimentation with the full cast.

"*Marvel vs. Capcom 3* is a bit of a no-brainer; the people who have been waiting on this one for ten years can trust that their hype will be rewarded."

>>

One of Deadpool's special attacks involves him beating his opponent with their health bar.



Combo Bonus

As expected in a revival fighting game, online play is fully supported and builds on the features in *Super Street Fighter IV*. Innovating with a much more comprehensive online Player Card system, *MvC3: FTW* tracks pages of history and statistics. Given that this is a full *Versus* series entry, these features aren't going to go to waste; there's going to be competition in *MvC3* for the foreseeable future. It's odd to write a preview of a game of which so much has already been vetted by experts in the field; clearly, the complete package will be duly evaluated when the time comes. Still, *Marvel vs. Capcom 3* is a bit of a no-brainer; the people who have been waiting on this one for ten years can trust that their hype will be rewarded. For everyone else, there is an extremely robust package coming together that should warrant serious consideration; even if *SFIV* didn't pull you into the fighting game world, *Marvel 3* is a different beast.

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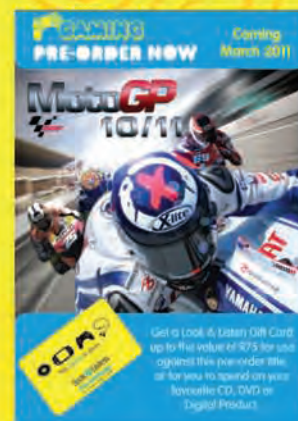
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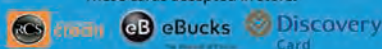
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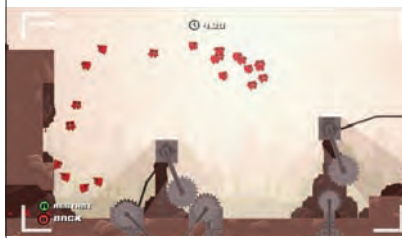


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For the Fans

Quick Hits



SUPER MEAT BOY

In what is undoubtedly the greatest videogame story ever written, you star as Meat Boy, a cube of meat whose girlfriend is made of bandages (thus her name: Bandage Girl). She's kidnapped by a foetus in a jar wearing a tuxedo (whose name is obviously Dr. Fetus) and you guide Meat Boy as he gallantly throws himself at buzz saws, spikes, homing rockets and super-deadly salt in the name of rescuing her. That story doesn't mean a damn thing though, because here, gameplay is king. *Super Meat Boy* is a seemingly simple, astoundingly devious platformer in the purest sense of the word.

It's split up into a massive number of short, but infuriatingly challenging levels set across several worlds, which in turn come in Light and Dark varieties, both of which feature bonus levels and collectable junk. Take all that into account, and you're left with something like 350 extremely challenging, wonderfully designed levels, each of which is filled with around 700 000 different ways for you to die in a shower of spectacular, meaty gibs, and you've got a ton of unadulterated platforming action on offer here, wrapped up in a fantastically retro visual style.

Controlling Meat Boy is simple and excellently precise: you've got your standard movement keys, a key to sprint (which also activates the special abilities of a plethora of unlockable playable characters from other brilliant indie platformers) and a key to jump. Your job is to use these simple controls to navigate the devious traps and pitfalls present in each level in order to get to Bandage Girl at the end. It's a fairly simple task if you take your time navigating the levels – but to truly experience the game at its finest, you have to attempt to beat each level in the fastest time possible to get its coveted A+ rating. Then there are collectable bandages, scattered in what initially appear to be impossible to reach places. You will die – a lot – but completing the perfect run through a level by collecting the bandage and getting that A+ rating is worth every cuss, every tear and every angry shout that this superbly challenging game draws out of you.

Super Meat Boy is undoubtedly brilliant. It deserves more space in this magazine, but space is limited. Simply put, you should play this game – it's f***ing awesome.

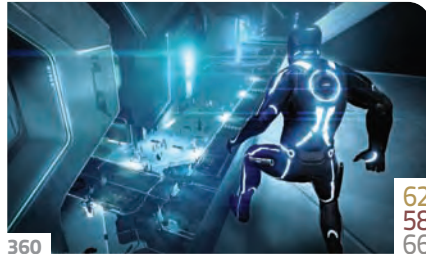
Bottom line: *Super Meat Boy* is one of the greatest, most rewarding platformers ever created.

Web Scores

How do we measure up? We scour the Net to find out what the rest of the world thinks.

NAG // Metacritic average // Game Rankings average

TRON: EVOLUTION



360

62
58
66

GRAN TURISMO 5



360

86
84
84

GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA



360

93
86
87

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: CATAclysm



360

90
90
90

EPIC MICKEY



PC

76
72
71

SPLATTERHOUSE



PS3

82
62
64



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NAG



Gran Turismo 5

The Fifth Place... or just number 5 in the series?

GENRE > Racing

PC 360 **PS3** Wii PS2 PSP DS

THIS GAME, *GRAN TURISMO 5*, represents a six-year labour of love by development team Polyphony Digital, and six years of eager anticipation for literally tens of millions of committed fans of the series across the globe, and for these reasons alone it's undoubtedly one of those watershed events. These properly dedicated GT enthusiasts have endured the brunt of scorn for too long, from Xbox pundits lauding *Forza 3* as streets ahead of the old-technology, PS2-bound *GT4*, and from PC racing fans who have blasted thousands of kilometres in a multitude of racing games in some or other way superior to this PS exclusive title.

And shame, it's been hard to stay dedicated to the title, nay to the very platform considering how closely Sony link the PS branding to GT and it's "Real Driving Simulator" tag, without ditching all sensibility and just turning into one of those hardened, binary-view creatures known as a fanboy. And now the next instalment, the racing game to lead the genre for the next several years across all platforms, is finally here to affirm or pour ridicule on their deep-seated commitments.

Meanwhile the *FM3* and *NFS* crowd are buying for their fickle loyalties to be vindicated, for GT to turn out *not* to be the Holy Grail of digitised racing. And for Polyphony... well GT is the only thing their reputation is built on, nothing less than the anchor stone of an entire, highly celebrated gaming publisher.

And here I sit, right in the middle, tasked with passing judgement down on this final version. No matter which way it goes,



everybody is *not* going to be pleased. And after the frankly (I can say it now) abysmal GT5 "demo code" which recently graced the office, the likelihood of GT5 being defensible as the rightful heir to the racing game crown by default, is looking slim.

Thankfully, the internet has already heaved under the initial eruptions of this titanic spat. Gamers from all corners of the Earth have read the reviews of online journalists in minute detail and fired massive salvos in each direction – many going down in flames in the process. Leaving it to magazines (in the modern idiom of reliable information), to get into the real meat and potatoes of the matter – the nitty-gritty. Which is great, I like nitty-gritty, particularly in car simulators.

WEEK 1

Not a fantastic start. The load times are insane, and insanely annoying. The menu system looks slick but is cumbersome and, oddly, has actually lost some of the useful navigational touches of previous versions even while immeasurably improving visually. They're also quite oddly arrayed, a mixture of attractive frames and innocuous little buttons down the side to be sifted through.

It doesn't look, at first, like there could be 1000 cars in there. Sure, more than 100 of them are just variations of a couple of iconic Japanese models, but still. There are huge gaps, particularly in the New Car dealerships. No Porsche at all, for instance. That's a big mark against it for me, I thoroughly appreciate the rear-engine engineering icon,

and the closest you can get to it is a Beetle.

By day two I'd taken the hour to install all 8GB on my PS3, helping load times yes, but not that significantly. You still spend a lot of time waiting about. And, frankly, once the load is complete the result isn't quite as spectacular as you might wish, the trackside objects are bland, the textures look pre-HD, and many of the cars (especially the beginning ones) look lifted straight from GT4. Even the engine samples aren't that stirring, although they're certainly better than the atonal, indistinguishable droning of the early code.

And then there's damage. There doesn't seem to be any at first, and your first few days racing you'll get used to using the car in front of you instead of your brake pedal. It's appalling, making the years in development and hyping and the sticker price seem way excessive.

But they have built a pretty convincing physics simulation to hang it all on. This most critical, core element of a racing game was always fairly good in GT. No, nowhere near the "Real Driving Simulator" credentials – but close enough for suspension of disbelief to be effortless and for the gratification levels to be high when everything comes together. And for this latest installation, they've gone for a similar recipe, but polished it to what must be its ultimate level of refinement.

WEEK 2

Unfortunately, none of the little niggles and foibles go away with updates or with level advancement. The menu is still not as slick as it could be, the load times are still huge, and the trackside graphics still something of a remnant of the past. But, crucially, quite a few of the bigger issues I had in the beginning have been fixed.

Damage is now starting to look and feel more significant, the physics model is shining through brightly in the more expensive machinery I'm now pedalling, and once you've delved into the second hand car market it starts to seem as if 1000 cars might actually be conservative. Yes, it's still a bit of a bummer that only 200 of them get Premium models, but the sheer volume is enough to keep car fanatics like me giggling in joy waiting for something new and interesting to pop into the second hand market.

The unfixable annoyances, although they remain, are also lessened in various ways. For instance, the weather effects are so jaw-dropping you'll never notice the kinked shadows when you're driving through a biblical thunderstorm. Even the load times – I started up *FM3* again last week for a direct comparison, and the Microsoft platform actually wastes even more of your time waiting for tracks to load up.

Anyway, during week 2, I'm basically



happily grinding away, getting into the meat of the car selection, tuning selectively for specific race meets and, generally, getting quite deeply absorbed in the mechanics of racing cars.

WEEK 3

I've been delving deeper into the multiplayer experience by now to know that it, too, is a little bit clunky. Yes they've tried to do a social-networking type of feel, but it hasn't worked really. Social networking is becoming ever-more popular because it's so easily accessible; the GT MP environment isn't that sort of experience. However, once you've got a race going or joined an existing one, it is great racing fun. That's enough.

The single player, meanwhile, has turned an all-important corner, and it isn't the Karussell of the Nurburgring Nordschleife. It's more emotional than that.

The thing is that I've now started driving my garage of fairy-tale cars as if they were just that. In reality. My garage. I wince when they get scraped, howl in shared pain when they get rolled, and ensure that my favourites are always put away clean, and

serviced before they strictly need it.

Because I'm more familiar now, the tuning element alone is vastly more fun. Modifications which make subtle but important changes to the behaviour of your car can now be detected on the test drive and in the races, even if it's just something like less dive under braking from the fitment of a thicker front anti-roll bar.

There's a full knock-on effect as well. Because I'm so much more in tune with the car, I can appreciate the detail of the physics modelling better. I still must refrain from saying it is a "100% accurate copy of real driving". It isn't. But damn it feels good, feels right so often, that reality isn't that important any more.

I've also clicked on to something, something at the very heart of the game, which you can sense built-in to its very DNA. This is a game for the absolutely car-obsessed, like me. There's a fetishist level of detail to the 200 Premium cars in particular which is impressive, and that joy of collecting and "owning" rare exotic and precious race cars steeped in historical heritage is there for the relishing.



It is also more of a slow-burn game than one which will make you go wow straight away, and then for several hours more as you play through it, and then never grace your PS3 optical drive again. This one will take weeks just to get into, many months to fully complete, and will likely be a game you can jump into to while away an hour or so pretty much as long as your hardware survives.

And in that frame of reference, *GT 5* is just superb. In fact, it's peerless. Sure, other racing games can compete, perhaps even defeat the new physics model, others offer similarly impressive visuals, and still others generate a far more thrilling symphony of engine noise. But none do all of the above with a garage quite so rich with choice pickings, which does make the lack of the Porsche brand even more frustrating, and even more of a factor in scoring *GT 5* down. For those who feel this type of thing is nit-picking, well it is, but the rest of the game is good enough that this is what it comes down to.

It's *still* a game which, if you own a PS3 and quite like cars, you have to have. Just have to, period. The scale is unmatched, the execution slightly imperfect but also a joyful experience when you're tuned-in properly. Although I almost didn't want it to be, effects of the recent recession et al, it is actually a good enough game that I might have to buy myself a home PS3... **NAG**

Russell Bennett

THE SCORE

3 | Gamepad icon | 1-2 | 2-16 | N/A | MUST PLAY

- >Plus**
- + Sheer scale
 - + Gorgeous Premium models
 - + Polished physics model

- >Minus**
- Load times
 - No Porsche/RUF
 - Silly handling of damage at first

Look Listen For the Fans

>Bottom Line
 Certainly not the racing game to end all racing games, but grandiose and deep enough that anyone who likes cars and has a PS3 has to have it.

86

SUPERBAD. SUPERDAD.



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Look & Listen
For the Fans



God of War: Ghost of Sparta

This is Sparta?

GENRE > Action

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 **PSP** DS

TEETH! BOOBS! SCARY MONSTERS with sharp teeth! Scary monsters with freakish boobs! Action! Slashing! OMG my swords on chains are on fire! Kratos is back for his second outing on Sony's handheld and this time it's bigger, bolder and... Well, it's exactly the same really. Not that that's a bad thing. Not at all.

God of War: Ghost of Sparta is set after the events of the original *God of War*, after Kratos replaced Ares as the god of war. It's a more personal story that's told this time, one that deals with Kratos' family and the memories of his past that haunt him. However, that doesn't mean it's any less ludicrous or over the top, or that Kratos is any less of an angry, rage-fuelled and completed unforgiving bastard. Developer Ready at Dawn (who also developed the previous PSP title in the series, *Chains of Olympus*, although this time they had help from SCE Santa Monica) planned to make this sequel bigger and better looking than their excellent previous effort, with more onscreen enemies, more boss encounters and more angry shouting from Kratos. They've succeeded in every way.

In terms of gameplay, there's nothing really new here. Sure, there are new weapons, new magical abilities and such, but it's still the same *God of War* formula we've grown accustomed to over the years. You've got the Blades of Athena from the start, and you mash the square and triangle buttons for light and heavy attacks. Block, attack, land a combo, use magic to even the odds and then swear yet another oath of vengeance. Combat is as sharp and responsive as it's always been and the controls make everything buttery smooth. I particularly like Thera's Bane – a new ability which replaces Rage for this title. Hold the right shoulder button and Kratos infuses the Blades of Athena with Thera's Bane,



which is a fancy way of saying that your swords on chains are now on fire and you can use them to singe the eyebrows off of things in addition to cutting them. The ability is limited, however, so you'll need to wait a bit for it to recharge after use. Green orbs replenish health, red orbs allow you to upgrade weapons and abilities, and blue orbs replenish your magic – everything you'd expect to find is here.

Other than that, you'll experience the usual quick-time events, some light puzzling/platforming and the obligatory sex mini-game. Crazy set pieces and scripted events (although nothing quite as impressive or outrageous as what we saw in *God of War III*, which is understandable), gigantic monsters and angry gods make this an action-packed ride through some great new locations. Visually it's an absolute pleasure, with no other PSP game able to match it in terms of sheer graphical fidelity. Top-notch audio and phenomenal production values make it hard to believe you're playing this game on a handheld, especially considering some of the situations the game throws at you. What Ready at Dawn has essentially

done is taken everything that makes *God of War* such a gaming powerhouse, compressed it into a bite-sized package and released it with all its signature bits intact. *Ghost of Sparta* is unquestionably *God of War*, it's undoubtedly awesome and if you own a PSP, I see no reason why you shouldn't own this game. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

THE SCORE

18 www.pegi.info	1	N/A	N/A	MUST PLAY
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- >Plus
- + Same fantastic gameplay
 - + Great controls
 - + Technologically outstanding

- >Minus
- Camera is still annoying

>Bottom Line

It's big, it's brutal and it's bold – it's definitely *God of War*, now in pint-sized format.

Look Listen
For the Fans
and a little bit of a kick

93

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World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

"And all will burn beneath the shadow of my wings!"

GENRE > MMORPG

PC MAC PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING that Blizzard has learnt a lot in the last 6 years. The game has become more accessible (for better or worse) and more and more players are finding their own niche in the world. In the original "vanilla" release, *World of Warcraft* catered for endgame. The levelling process, though vast, became inconsequential after enough players had reached the maximum level. The endgame was designed to be incredibly challenging. It's estimated that only 3% of the game's population at the time actually saw all of the content, and a lower percentage achieved the pinnacle of Player Versus Player prestige.

Blizzard took this to heart in both of the following expansions, giving us smaller raid group sizes, faster-paced PVP options and, arguably, easier bosses. The introduction of the 360-style Achievement system also gave players a lot more to do between raiding or PVP sessions. While many hardcore veterans lamented this catering to the casual player, it has been very well received. To build on this successful formula would be difficult, however. Regardless of new content and renewed interest, the world is six years old. Their solution? "Destroy Everything!" Okay, not quite...

Cataclysm's main villain, Deathwing, has far less notoriety to most players. We were all familiar with Kel'thuzad, Illidan Stormrage and The Lich King if we played through *Warcraft III*. Even if you hadn't, by the time you reached the higher levels and played through the quest zones, you were familiar enough with these heavy hitters. Deathwing would have to make quite an



impact if Blizzard wanted to demonstrate his bad-assery to the community, and boy does he deliver. In hiding, on the elemental plane of Deepholme, Deathwing has a bone to pick with pretty much the whole world. Having gathered his strength in seclusion for the last few years, he has erupted out of his hiding place and has, literally, torn the world open.

In what's become known as "The Shattering", Deathwing has displayed his immense power by causing massive destruction to almost all of Azeroth: changing the shape of the continents, and opening the way to previously sealed areas. This does a great job in two ways: it brings the player right up to speed with Deathwing's awesome destructive power; it also gives players nearly an entirely



new world to explore. Flying mounts are now useable in the old areas of Azeroth (previously limited to Outland and Northrend, areas added in the expansions) – so you can now soar across the continents while exploring the destruction left in Deathwing's wake. This also succeeds in repopulating older zones – as most of Azeroth was abandoned for Outland and Northrend once players reach a high-enough level. The old capital cities haven't been this busy in years!

The level cap has also been raised, from 80 to 85. A lower level cap than most were expecting, but Blizzard has made the difference in level substantial; 81 is quite considerably superior to 80, and so on. The new quest zones are well designed and a great example of Blizzard's experience being put to good use. While the quest-lines are very linear, the flow is diverse enough to keep players interested. Personally, I've always found the questing fairly dull and monotonous in the previous expansions, but I was captivated with the storylines from each of the new zones. Further to this, all of the old quests have been revisited. Levelling a new character from scratch is quite vastly different. Many of the quests deal with the consequences, good or bad, of the game's earlier quest lines. If you had a quest to kill someone while levelling your

original character/s, chances are he's dead now as far as the storyline is concerned, and your new character might have a quest to take out his successors. Blizzard has also implemented a technique they dabbled with in Wrath of the Lich King that they call "Phasing". Essentially, this means that certain parts of the world appear different to certain players depending on what point in the quest-lines they're on. As a storytelling device, this makes everything that you do as a player far more believable as you can see the world altering, even if only slightly. In the later quest-zones, in-game cinematic sequences have been introduced, creating an all-round epic experience.

The talent trees were simplified in the build up to Cataclysm – where previously class structure was up to the player, the talent structure is now far more set in stone. You have the same choice of 3 talent trees, but each tree has far less to choose from. Also, only once one tree has been maxed out can a player add points into talents in different trees. Many consider this to be oversimplifying things – but realistically, there was always an "ultimate spec" for each class and tree, that skilled players would choose from. This just standardises everything, making it easier for beginners.

New races are now available – Worgen



for alliance and Goblins for horde. Each has their own backstory and all-new starting zones that provide an interesting change of scenery for players looking to roll new characters. Worgen are particularly interesting, with their ability to shape shift between man and werewolf, and their unique "ground mount," which involves them running really fast on all-fours.

The new dungeon content is incredibly challenging. The 5-man dungeons in *Wrath of the Lich King* were easy, and Blizzard wanted to bring the challenge back to even the small-scale dungeons. Lack of gear is a factor here though, and soon enough everyone will be able to walk all over everything. The challenge for Blizzard will be to keep updating the content in advance of the present content feeling out-dated.

In short, while at its core *Cataclysm* is much of the same – levelling up, stronger villains, repetitive questing and "grinding" for new equipment – Blizzard have somehow masked this by creating the illusion that everything has changed. It's succeeded quite well on initial release and has renewed my waning interest in the game, but the content will need to be refreshed a lot more frequently than with previous expansions to maintain the winning formula. Only time will tell whether or not Blizzard succeeds. If you're already hopelessly hooked on *WoW*, then you need no convincing to pick this up. If you're a new player, or an ex-player considering returning and are wondering if it's worth diving (back) in, you may find that this is perfect timing. **NAG**

Lee Hunter



THE SCORE

12 www.pegi.info	1	lots	N/A	MUST PLAY
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>Plus

- + Mostly new world
- + New races
- + Diverse content

>Minus

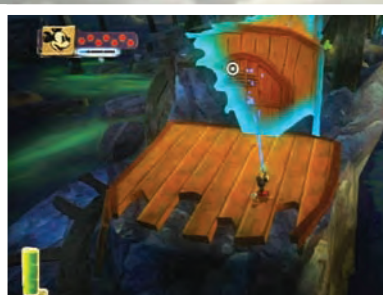
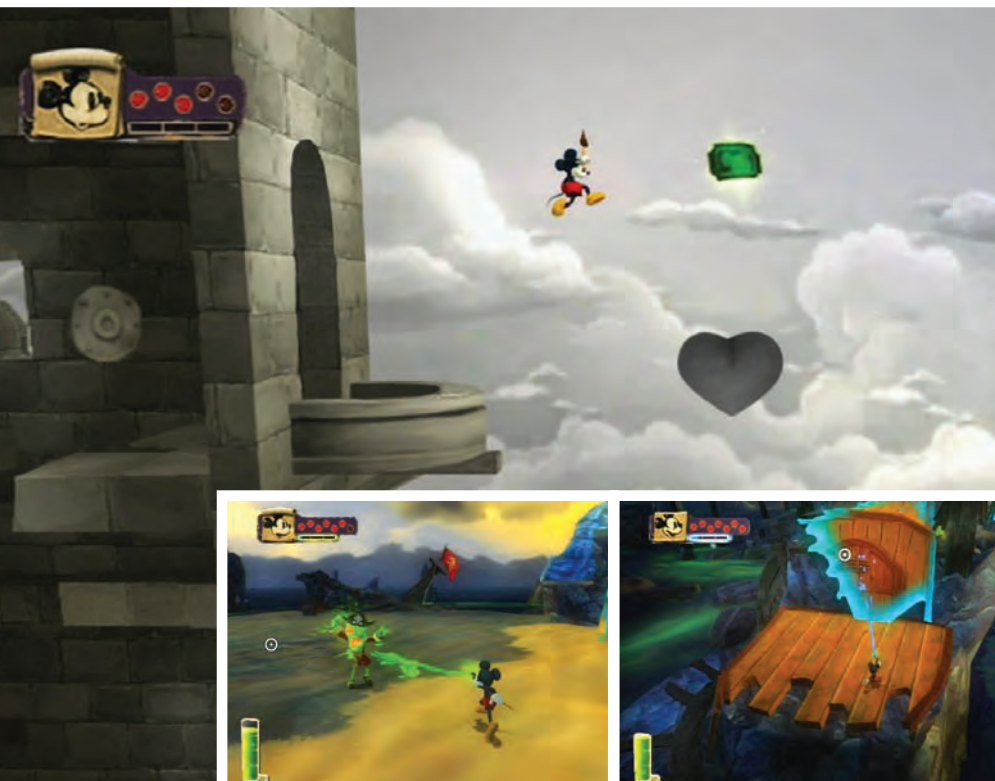
- Much of the same
- Limited endgame content

Look Listen For the Fans

>Bottom Line

Definitely nothing new, but the fresh approach keeps players interested.

90



Epic Mickey

Not quite Epic, but definitely Disney

GENRE > Puzzle platformer

PC 360 PS3 **WII** PS2 PSP DS

WHEN THE NAME WARREN Spector appears on the credits list for a game, people pay attention. In addition to his history in the pen-and-paper role-playing game industry, Spector is behind some incredible videogame series including *Ultima Underworld*, *Thief*, and *Deus Ex*, although not the upcoming *Human Revolution*. Instead of working on the title that many devout fans felt he should be busy with, Spector founded Junction Point Studios and in 2007, announced their partnership with Disney to produce a *Mickey Mouse* game to rival all *Mickey Mouse* Games. The claims were massive: it'd be intelligent, grown-up, and dark, yet still definitely Disney. Has Spector lost his way, or his mind? Has he set sail down Nut River with the rest of those dangerously eccentric designers like Peter Molyneux and Will Wright? Or has he managed to create the perfect balance between a child's and adult's game?

Epic Mickey is centred on Mickey Mouse, and begins long in the past, just as Disney's favourite rodent is kicking off his career. One night, Mickey decides to poke his head through a magical mirror, and finds himself inside the sanctum of a great wizard known as Yen Sid who is putting the finishing touches of magical paint on a world that will house all of Disney's forgotten cartoons. When the wizard leaves, Mickey decides to try his hand at using the magical paintbrush but accidentally knocks a pot of paint thinner all over the world. Mickey promptly leaves, forgets about the event, and goes on to have his successful career. Then, many decades later, Mickey is pulled through the



Each chapter is related to a famous Disney film, this is Peter Pan's world.

mirror once more and into the world that he inadvertently destroyed all those years ago. It turns out that since the Thinner Disaster, the world of Wasteland has fallen on tough times: an evil creature known as Blot has created equally evil minions all over the world, many structures lie half in ruin, and The Mad Scientist has taken to creating all manner of nefarious creatures and mechanisms to disrupt the lives of the forgotten inhabitants. Mickey soon figures out all of this, and takes it upon himself to meet the leader of Wasteland, one of Walt Disney's first-ever creations – Oswald the Lucky Rabbit – and put right the problems in the world.

The game world is divided up into three parts: a free-roaming quest hub area known



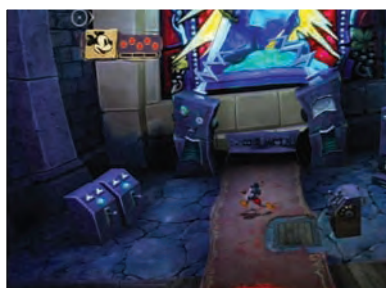
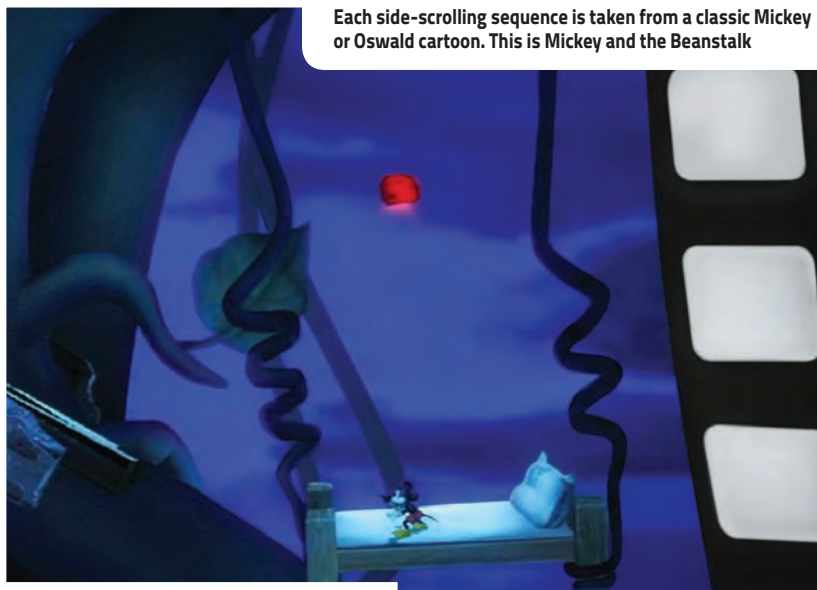
Paint and thinner

The core of the hype machine that's surrounded this title for the last three years, paint and thinner is Mickey's main tool in his exploration of and interaction with Wasteland. By squeezing the B trigger, Mickey's magical brush will eject a spray of blue paint that is used to "fill in" specific blank spots in the world. The Z trigger causes the brush to spray thinner, which erases specific portions of world. Initially, you'll use these tools mainly to melt/befriend enemies, fill in missing bridges and occasionally erase supports and frames in the world, which causes whatever they were supporting to fall (including enemies or even Mickey). Later in the game, the puzzles will take on a more

physics-based focus and will require a fair bit of fore-thought to be figured out, and more often you'll find that playing the good guy by painting everything you see isn't the best way to find the *many* hidden items and areas in Wasteland.

The only major downside to the system is that every area resets when you return to it. That time you spent painstakingly painting every last shrub and pillar in OsTown is wasted. The only permanence offered is in the method that you choose to defeat the few world-end bosses in the game: be the friendly hero and you will be rewarded with an increased paint capacity; burn their faces off with thinner and its capacity is increased.

Each side-scrolling sequence is taken from a classic Mickey or Oswald cartoon. This is Mickey and the Beanstalk



as Mean Street, the individual worlds within Wasteland, and the deliciously old-school side-scrolling 2D platform segments that separate them all. Throughout the game, Mickey will need to find items for various characters that will allow him to progress. In this sense, the story elements of the game are almost non-existent, but it's in the conversations, exploration and presentation that the real reason behind *Epic Mickey* becomes apparent: completing a story about Mickey Mouse is secondary; *Epic Mickey* is a tribute to all things Disney: its forgotten characters, worlds and history. Every single location you explore and character that you meet has a place in this almost 90 year-old company's history books. The characters are perfectly animated (as one would expect, given that Walt Disney Studios laid down the foundation for modern animation), and translate brilliantly to their implementation in either the 3D or 2D sequences.

Unfortunately, the almost complete lack of voice acting hampers the immersion factor. The bulk of Mickey's actions will involve getting from one side of an area to another, or unlocking a door or other mechanism that prohibits him from continuing on whatever task he's performing. It's here where *Epic Mickey* starts to show a few cracks in its



design. In the earlier stages of the game, *Epic Mickey* is a downright simple platform game: floating/moving/sinking platforms; levers or gears that need to be activated; see-saws, pressure plates and just about every platformer mainstay you can think of makes an appearance. It's only after a good few hours of game time that the painting/thinning mechanisms really start to become important parts of the core gameplay.

While all of the levels manage to be stuffed full of interesting design, they're not always terribly intelligent or challenging. While this is doubtless an intentional decision to avoid alienating the slower gamers or children, it stretches on for too long and is likely to put off those who bought the game in search of a hardcore, steampunk RPG adventure. It's not really any of those.

Epic Mickey is many things, but even without mentioning the hype surrounding it; it only manages to be a good platformer. The RPG elements are minimal, the alignment system is underused, and the game takes too long to get going. With all of that said, however, it's still fun, with fascinating environments and interesting puzzles in later parts of the game. If you own a Wii, you should pick this up, but it's not going to be one of those titles that will push non Wii owners to make the leap.

NAG
Geoff Burrows

THE SCORE



>Plus
+ Tons of history
+ Overall presentation

>Minus
- Too gentle
- Poor controls and camera

Look Listen
For the Fans

>Bottom Line

A fun and competent puzzle platformer, but not much more. Stick with it though; it gets better as you progress.

76

We have no idea why this game is called *Splatterhouse*.



Extra stuff!

In addition to the main game, there are also six survival arenas in which Rick must stand against waves of enemies. There is also the rather nice little addition of all three original *Splatterhouse* games which are unlocked as you progress. In addition, entries from Dr West's journal are unlocked every 5% of main story progression. All of these neat features make for what feels like a complete *Splatterhouse* package and will ensure that you spend a healthy amount of time in-game.



This brings new meaning to painting the town red.



Splatterhouse

Let's get dangerous

GENRE > Beat-'em-up

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T PLAY the original *Splatterhouse* trio of games. If I remove my rose-tinted glasses for a moment, I can tell you truthfully that they weren't really anything special; Namco decided to go for guts over good times with the games and the result was two brutally challenging, moderately amusing platform games followed by a slightly less challenging and slightly more amusing beat-'em-up. What *Splatterhouse* offered players was (for its time) an incredibly gory experience that caused a bit of a ruckus back in the late eighties, so today's Namco decided that was the perfect starting point for their 2010-branded reboot of the franchise.

You'll play as Rick, who finds himself lying in a pool of blood and intestines following his failed attempt to stop his girlfriend, Jennifer, from being kidnapped by Dr West and his evil goons. There, a mask offers you a chance for salvation: wear it and Rick will come back from the brink of death and be made able to rescue Jen. The only condition is that Rick cannot remove the mask until Jen has been saved. Seeing no other option than death, Rick agrees with the Terror Mask's terms, dons it, and soon after turns into a massive, hulking death machine.

As you progress through the game, following Jen's trail of torn photos (some rather naughty) through all sorts of crazy environments like corrupted theme parks and decimated streets, Rick will slowly piece together the night of Jen's abduction. Despite being a completely linear, no-nonsense beat-'em-up with only four characters worth mentioning, *Splatterhouse* manages to have a fairly enticing storyline. A lot of the story is told through dialogue between Rick and the parasitic mask that empowers



Rick yet needs him to stay alive. The voice of the Terror Mask is performed by Jim Cummings, a voice actor whose career goes all the way back to 1985 and includes work on *DuckTales*, *Gummi Bears*, *Teenage Ninja Mutant Turtles* and *Darkwing Duck*. If you grew up watching those TV shows, you'll find it both oddly comforting and fairly creepy when the voice of Drake Mallard tells you to drink in the blood of your enemies along with a slew of rude words.

The action in *Splatterhouse* follows that same old beat-'em-up recipe: enter a room; slaughter bad guys until they stop coming in; move onto the next room. These arena-style segments are broken up with killing monsters in corridors, killing monsters in particular ways to unlock a door of some sort; killing monsters in the very well-constructed side-scrolling segments, killing big monsters that have health bars, and throwing your controller at the wall every time you slip and fall to your death in the rather awfully-constructed level traversal segments. Despite having a great combat system, excellent visuals and just teetering on the safe side of repetitive gameplay, the few

incredibly irritating sequences where you're not bashing things into a bloody pulp quickly become a problem. As is so often the case, when a game's controls and camera (which is buggy in itself) aren't designed for anything but killing things, throwing in a bit where you have to jump around on platforms will do nothing but irritate the player.

NAG
Geoff Burrows

THE SCORE

18 www.pegi.info	1	N/A	N/A	
---------------------	---	-----	-----	--

>Plus

- + Tons of content
- + Looks and sounds great
- + Solid combat system

>Minus

- Long loading times
- A few irritating sequences

>Bottom Line

Loads of blood and gore, a heavy metal soundtrack, and pictures of naked women. Sound good?

Look Listen For the Fans

82

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Maximum current



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 (Solid Capacitor)

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P67A-GD65

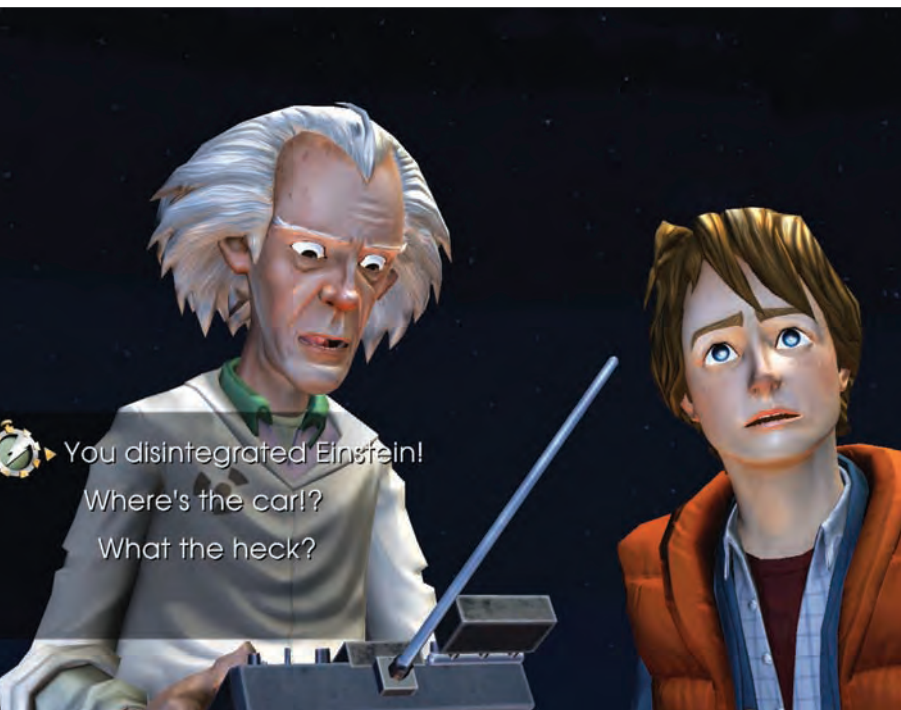
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Back to the Future: The Game: Episode 1

"You built a time machine... out of a DeLorean?"

GENRE > Adventure

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

IS THIS WRONG? THE *Back to the Future* films are beacons for all that was good and right about Hollywood in the '80s and early '90s, and alongside other cult icons like *Terminator* and *Alien* have been inducted into just about every hall of fame you can imagine. So why now, 25 years since the release of the first film, has Telltale decided to launch an adventure game based on the time-travelling antics of Marty McFly and Doc Emmett Brown? Whatever their reasoning, they're stepping on fragile ground with this episodic series; let's see if it's been worth their time...

Shortly after a dream from which Marty awakes (showing a disastrous version of that first fateful temporal experiment in 1985), *Episode 1* (entitled, *It's About Time*) begins with a cleanout sale at Doc's house. In case you forgot, Emmett leaves on a time-travelling adventure with his family at the end of the third film; the game takes place six months after that event. It's clear that the level designers spent a lot of time recreating elements from the films: everything looks perfect, from Doc's dog-feeding contraption to his collection of strange clocks. The characters, although they look like they might've just stepped off the set of *Clone Wars*, do their original counterparts justice. Their animations are suitable, and occasionally rather good, but I'd like to see a little more facial animation on Doc in particular.

As Marty is poking around in Doc's house, the DeLorean time machine pops up out of nowhere, Emmett's dog Einstein is on board, with a message from Doc urging Marty to travel back in time and rescue him. Marty does so,



and soon finds himself at the tale-end of prohibition in 1931. The puzzles are what we've come to expect from Telltale by now: fairly simple, completely linear and mostly logical, with only a few deviations on the latter point. The same goes for the dialogue: Marty (voiced by an unknown named A.J. LoCascio who does an excellent job recreating Michael J. Fox's squeaky banter) will be given a number of dialogue choices in most conversations, but you'll always reach the correct choice by simply cycling through them all. The rest of the options reveal interesting tidbits or insight into each character's backstory.

While *It's About Time* definitely manages to sell itself as homage to the films, it's too early in the season to tell if this is really going anywhere, and if future episodes will make use of the complexity offered by throwing the words "time-travelling DeLorean" into the script. Having Universal Studios give the green light, Christopher Lloyd provide his likeness and voice, Michael J. Fox provide his likeness, and the films' co-writer

Bob Gale on board for inspiration and guidance are all good signs that Telltale will take this series further than a simple and entertaining interactive story, but right now, that's all it is. **NAG**
Geoff Burrows

THE SCORE

12

www.pegi.info 1 N/A N/A

>Online services
Internet connection required

>Plus
+ Official backing
+ Great homage
+ Excellent scriptwriting

>Minus
- Too linear
- Too simple

Look Listen
For the Fans

>Bottom Line
A potentially good start to something great, but not great in itself.

70

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- On-the-fly DPI switching
- 5 customizable buttons

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Hope they're using energy-saving bulbs!



TRON: Evolution

You've been derezzed

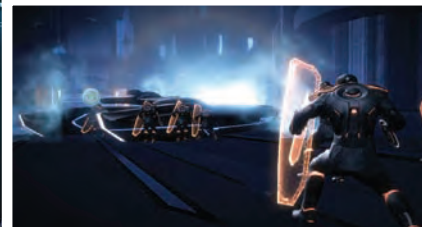
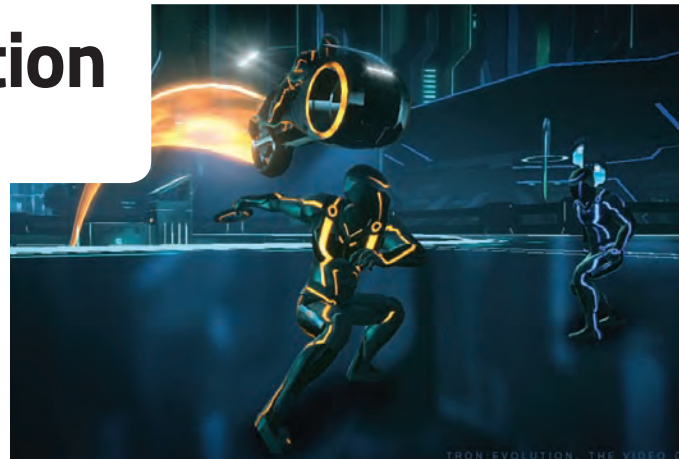
GENRE > Action Adventure

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

SO HERE'S THE DEAL: these ISOs (Isomorphic Algorithms) have appeared on The Grid and their existence has caused quite a stir in the world of *TRON*. ISOs aren't like basic programs, you see - they've got a measure of free will and aren't just the physical embodiment of a programmer's handiwork. The massive potential of these ISOs excites the hell out of Kevin Flynn (creator of The Grid, also known as Jeff Bridges), whose digital world just got a whole lot more complex and unpredictable. The Basic Programs of The Grid, however, are starting to feel like Flynn's paying a little too much attention to these shiny new ISOs, and the neglect and indifference he seems to show towards his original creations has them all mighty jealous. If all of this sounds like gibberish to you, go watch the original *TRON*, or its newly released sequel, *TRON: Legacy*. It'll all make slightly more sense once you've done that.

TRON: Evolution starts off with Flynn feeling a wee bit paranoid about the shaky truce currently held between the Basics and the ISOs. Thus, he writes himself a program to keep an eye on the situation and uncover a conspiracy that Flynn believes is in the works. This System Monitor program is you, the player, and when Flynn's paranoia proves to be justified and things go awry you step up to kick digital ass and take virtual names (or identity discs - whatever). You're handed all the toys that *TRON* can throw at you. Light Discs, Light Cycles, Light Tanks, Light Everything - it's all here, ready to be smashed into the faces of programs across The Grid, with a dash of parkour (which, for some reason, seems to be an essential feature to be checked off in the design documents of most games these days) thrown in for extra flavour.

Evolution is supposed to act as a prequel



to *Legacy* (the new movie), detailing the events surrounding Flynn's imprisonment within The Grid, but right from the start everything story related starts to come crashing down on top of *Evolution*. Its story feels disjointed and very basic, like it was hurriedly written under immense pressure to try and get something, anything that resembles a videogame story out in time for the release of the movie. It's a shame really, because *TRON*'s unique take on a digital world where computer users exist as gods among the programs they create and use has so much potential. Potential that is wasted here.

At least the Light Disc-infused combat is decent. The combat controls are reasonably fluid and work well for the most part, turning you into a deadly, shockingly agile disco ball that spews psychedelic light trails and leaves derezzed opponents in your wake. The same cannot be said for the acrobatic segments and movement puzzles (which there are a lot of in *Evolution*), for which the controls are far too rigid, resulting in unforgiving and unrelentingly annoying movement. Even the Light Cycles are much too sensitive; making what should have been exciting, high-speed segments more frustrating than rewarding.

At its core, *Evolution* is just another action adventure, one that feels completely uninspired, like it was created by a crew of developers who had absolutely no fun

making it. It looks good a lot of the time (except for a few weird, very unnatural animations) and the soundtrack fits in nicely with the scenery and the action, but the uneven gameplay and flimsy story only serve to prove once again that licensed games usually aren't worth the space they occupy on store shelves. The combat is fun for a while, and the multiplayer can be enjoyable, but the rest of *Evolution* is disappointing. If you're looking for a good *TRON* game, go play 2003's excellent *TRON 2.0*. It may be getting on in years, but it's much better than this. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

THE SCORE

12

www.pegi.info 1 2 - 10 N/A

>Plus

- + The combat's okay
- + Decent visuals
- + Cool soundtrack

>Minus

- Rigid movement
- Fractured narrative
- Occasional bugs

Look Listen For the Fans

>Bottom Line

TRON: Evolution definitely isn't terrible, but it's not particularly great either.

62

DEVELOPER > Sanzaru Games PUBLISHER > SCEE
 DISTRIBUTOR > Ster Kinekor WEB > http://uk.playstation.com/slytrilogy



The Sly Trilogy

In with the old...

GENRE > Action Adventure

PC 360 **PS3** WII PS2 PSP DS

BEFORE SUCKER PUNCH BECAME famous for making *inFamous*, they produced a series of three games on PlayStation 2 that were close to becoming definitive of platform gaming on that console. These games were up there with the *Ratchet & Clank*, *Crash Bandicoot* and *Jak & Dexter* franchises; well put together adventures that garnered a number of fans... the Sly Raccoon series. And if you didn't get a chance to play them the first time round, you're in luck... they have been reworked for the PlayStation 3.

The Sly Trilogy, as the name implies, features three full games for the price of one. Each game will give the player around 12 hours of gaming fun, so there's excellent value for money there. Additionally, the team that reworked the titles, Sanzaru Games, added in some Move based mini-games, for a little extra distraction.

The games tell of the exploits of a master thief, Sly Cooper (who happens to be a raccoon) and his team as they

travel across the globe, sneaking and stealing through numerous levels. The real beauty is that the three games aren't identical. The first is a platform title, while the second allows the player more freedom, and the third falls somewhere in between. This means that there is variety in this collection, making it even more fun.

With updated graphics added to these classics, fans – old and new – will be able to enjoy one of the better PlayStation 2 franchises all over again. They might be called classics, but they're still relevant and enjoyable. If you didn't get to play them before, this is your chance to enjoy some excellent, entertaining platform action. And if you did play them before, you'll probably want to jump right back in and enjoy the updated looks and new mini-games.

This collection is excellent value for money, and grants a well-deserved return to one of the better PS2 franchises. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

THE SCORE

7
 www.pegi.info 1-2 N/A N/A

- >Plus
 + Great games
 + Updated graphics
 + Variety

- >Minus
 - It's a rerun
 - Mini-games a bit weak

Look Listen
 For the Fans

79

>Bottom Line

A welcome return for the Sly Raccoon series, updated for the new PS hardware.

DEVELOPER > X-Bow Software PUBLISHER > SCEE
 DISTRIBUTOR > Ster Kinekor WEB > http://uk.playstation.com



The Fight: Lights Out

More knocked-out than knock-out

GENRE > Fighting

PC 360 **PS3** WII PS2 PSP DS

NEW HARDWARE ALWAYS LEADS to new ideas – some of them rather obvious – but it also takes a while for things to get settled. That means the potential for nasty games is always higher early in the lifecycle of new toys... and we certainly have seen that with the PlayStation Move.

In an attempt to create a hard-core, attitude driven, adult fighting game for the new Sony motion controller, X-Bow Software missed the mark quite securely. The end result is a frustrating game that doesn't do much to redeem itself.

There is no story to *The Fight: Lights Out*. After a tutorial by the player's trainer (played with unintentional hilarity by tough guy Danny Trejo) the player is thrust into a series of pointless bare knuckle boxing matches. The only goal is to beat all the opponents.

This would still be okay, if X-Bow had got the controls right. Sadly, even though the player has to perform a lengthy calibration before each fight,

the software seems to miss what the player is doing more often than not, resulting in bouts of frantic flailing just to land a punch. The head detection is similarly flawed, and the overall control scheme (while fairly easy to learn) just doesn't perform well enough.

In addition, the action feels sluggish... the player is hampered by their character's performance, which is a bit sad in a movement game. Surely, if the player can punch quickly, the character should be able to as well? Even the work-outs that the player gets to do for their character, to build stats, seem to have little effect.

With bland graphics, forgettable sound and a control scheme that is poorly implemented, *The Fight* is more frustrating than fun. If more work had gone into getting the controls right, instead of injecting the game with so much attitude it makes you want to spew, there might have been something redeeming to the title.

Maybe the sequel will be better. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

THE SCORE

16
 www.pegi.info 1-2 N/A N/A

- >Plus
 + Danny Trejo is funny

- >Minus
 - Bland graphics
 - Rotten controls
 - Very frustrating

Look Listen
 For the Fans

45

>Bottom Line

If you're desperate for a Move based fighting game, give it a try... but we're talking real, true desperation here.



Crisis 2

Maximum Preview

DEVELOPER > Crytek Frankfurt | Crytek UK
WEB > www.ea.com/games/crisis-2

PUBLISHER > Electronic Arts
GENRE > First-Person Shooter

RELEASE DATE > March 25th, 2011
PLATFORMS > PC | Xbox 360 | PS3



THIS ISN'T YOUR REGULAR cover feature. Normally we'd get some fancy preview code of some upcoming game that we'd blast through to get a feel for what it's like to actually, y' know, play it. Then we'd write about our hands-on experience to impart upon you, the reader, our newfound knowledge on the subject of what you can expect when you cough up your hard-earned cash for a copy of the game come release day. That's what we'd normally do. The folks at EA and Crytek, however, didn't like the look of us – called us scruffy-looking Nerf herders. Said they wouldn't give us any of their candy. They also weren't going to let us anywhere near a preview build of *Crisis 2*. So, to sum up – EA hates us, Crytek won't even look at us anymore, we have no candy, and no *Crisis 2*. Naturally, we cried for a bit. We cried a lot to be honest. We're still crying right now. I'm worried my steady stream of tears is going to short out my keyboard. But no worries – we threw a bag of flaming poop through the window of EA's CEO's house. That'll teach him.

Crisis 2 is no run-of-the-mill FPS, so we weren't going to let something silly like a lack of playable code get in the way of us swooning over it for the next few pages. That, and EA did offer up some exclusive specially recorded in-game footage of one of the levels in the game as a truce. Thanks EA, but we'd still like some EA-branded candy to ease the pain. Simply put, everything we've seen, read and heard about *Crisis 2* has gotten us maximum excited. After watching the short (but sweet) gameplay demonstration that EA sent us, however, we're foaming at the mouth, ready to murder something to get our hands on this game. Michael actually stabbed himself in the leg with the handle of a spoon because he got a little overexcited. Chris ran off down the street, cackling maniacally and screaming "maximum awesome." Geoff spontaneously combusted at some point during the gameplay demo, but despite the extreme burns, he still looks pretty excited. He also managed to write a smouldering hands-on account of his time with the game's multiplayer, which is somewhere on these pages. [He played it in Germany, Ed]

For those of you who aren't yet aware, *Crisis 2* is moving out of the tropical jungle (Crytek's old favourite setting for games) and into the urban jungle (Crytek's new favourite setting for games). We're headed to New York City – or what's left of it at least. Aliens have laid siege to the city, turning it into a

Simply put, everything we've seen, read and heard about *Crisis 2* has gotten us maximum excited.

crumbling mess of rubble, half-destroyed skyscrapers and abandoned vehicles. This newly evacuated locale is now the home of *Crysis 2*, bringing along with it all the emotional attachment that we normally associate with places like New York. Seeing this iconic city torn to pieces, spotting the eerily familiar remnants of obliterated landmarks and witnessing the catastrophic destruction of a city as recognisable (and influential) as New York immediately sets this sequel apart from the FPS pack. Thanks to this intriguing new setting, the most strikingly noticeable facet of *Crysis 2* is the jaw-dropping verticality prevalent in the environments. *Crysis* and *Crysis Warhead* boasted levels that spread out horizontally to provide you with a wide-open playground in which to engage in some Nanosuit-infused experimentation. In the sequel, spaces are tighter (although the combat zones are still enormous) and there's less room to move on the ground – but start moving upwards and suddenly all manner of exciting tactical avenues open up. For the most part, lush vegetation is replaced with car parks, palm trees have become streetlights and makeshift huts have become concrete monstrosities – but Crytek's jungle obsession still shines through in places, with parks and outdoor areas flooded with water from burst water mains to create impromptu, chaotic reminders of Crytek's tropical-island heritage.

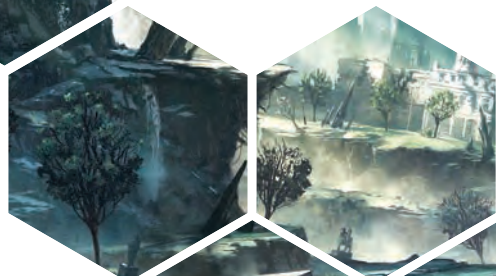
This is what we know about the story so far: the year is 2023. It's been three years since the events of the first game. You're thrust into the nano-shoes of "Alcatraz" – which is the player character's codename in this sequel. There's no sign of Nomad (the original's protagonist) yet, but there's speculation that Alcatraz is simply Nomad's

newly chosen codename, chosen so that he may remain hidden from Crynet Systems: creators of the Nanosuit. You see, Crynet is not happy with you. You stole their new and improved Nanosuit (the creatively named Nanosuit 2) and you're now on the run from Crynet while simultaneously battling the alien menace. The story was written by acclaimed sci-fi authors Richard Morgan (author of *Altered Carbon* – his name being tied to this sequel is enough to send sci-fi buffs into an excited frenzy) and Peter Watts (whose work apparently influenced *BioShock 2* – he also worked on a very early draft of the story for *Homeworld 2*). Everything points to *Crysis 2* telling a thoroughly engaging tale and we can't wait to unravel the story.

In terms of gameplay, it's still the *Crysis* we know and love, but with a plethora of improvements. The original did a fantastic job making you feel like a godly weapon of war set loose among mere mortals with guns. Thanks to the Nanosuit, it felt like you could never truly be outnumbered or outgunned – even when the aliens suddenly appeared. The sequel seems to take this to a whole new level with the improved capabilities of the Nanosuit 2. The Speed and Strength modes have been combined to create Power mode. Cloak mode is now Infiltration mode, a modified, tweaked and improved stealth generator that's sure to make fans of all things sneaky-sneaky squeal with delight. Armour mode is still there to turn you into a walking tank, able to shrug off direct hits from rockets to the face. Then there's the new Tactical mode, which allows you to assess any situation and devise a plan of attack. From this mode, you can tag enemies to track them through the environment. This looks like it's going to be extremely useful, because these new aliens aren't the glowy,



"Crytek's jungle obsession still shines through in places, with parks and outdoor areas flooded with water from burst water mains to create impromptu, chaotic reminders of Crytek's tropical-island heritage."





CRYSIS 2 MULTIPLAYER

With half the FPS gamers of the world wrapped around the pinkies of *Call of Duty* and various *Battlefield* titles, every developer that declares “we’re going after the big guys” is going to need some serious firepower if they hope to survive in this hostile market. It’s for that reason that Crytek decided to put the 70+ troops at Crytek UK (formally Free Radical Design – the team behind *Haze* and *TimeSplitters*) to task creating a dedicated multiplayer mode.

You know the feeling you get when, in *COD* or *BF*, you spent hours running around the map looking for enemies, only to be put out of your misery within a one-second engagement? That’s exactly the type of issue *Crisis 2*’s multiplayer is looking to avoid. The driving force behind gameplay will be getting into combat quickly but making use of tactics and the many abilities of the Nanosuit to create a deep combat system that doesn’t rely purely on choice of weaponry. Each combatant in the game will feel like a superhero thanks to the Nanosuit they wear, and will have access to a number of impressive abilities: invisibility; insta-kills; super-sprinting; high-speed climbing; the ability to leap tall buildings in a single bound; the ability to survive the impact when you come crashing down on the unsuspecting foe beneath you; and plenty more.

All of the abilities available will come together to allow for much more interesting map design with a spotlight on that always-promised but seldom-delivered feature: verticality. With the ability to move at speeds and across distances that would almost give *Tribes* a run for its money, players will be able to get to all sorts of nasty places in the maps scattered around New York City. That doesn’t mean that each game will descend into boring campfests, however, thanks to one particular design decision that we can’t help grin about. There will be killstreak rewards in the game (typical stuff like radar and gunships), but to achieve those rewards you’ll need to be spry. Whenever you kill an enemy in an interesting way, such as a melee kill, headshot or revenge kill, they’ll drop their dog tags. You’ll have to physically go and get those tags before they count towards your killstreak, which means all the dirty smelly campers will have to rely on their weapons to do all the damage, or take their chances and bolt for the dog tags while nobody’s looking.

At present, Crytek has only confirmed two game modes and three maps. The game modes are Team Instant Action, which is TDM, and Alien Crash Site. The latter involves two opposing teams attempting to capture and hold alien drop pods as they land around the map. If you’ve played *Call of Duty*, it’s essentially the same as Headquarters. The three maps we’ve seen so far are: a rooftop garden above a fancy New York apartment building; two buildings that have collapsed into one another (offering stark contrasts in design and layout); and a tall, narrow hotel building with a huge disparity between fighting inside and attacking those poor chaps stuck outside on the ground level.

Geoff Burrows



When I say that New York has been invaded by aliens, I don't mean that a bunch of extraterrestrials rolled in, knocked over a few trashcans, overturned a few cars and smashed some store windows to steal HD TVs.



floaty blue techno-weenies that made the last few hours of *Crysis* so monotonous – these are fast, agile and lethal cyborg soldier things that seem to actually be fun to chase down and kill. Of course, aliens aren't the only enemies here, and you're certainly not the only dude with a Nanosuit. Also – vehicular segments return.

Crytek stated early on that they want combat in the game to be "catastrophically beautiful," and it sure looks like they've succeeded. Heated fire fights become these incredibly wondrous, beautiful things as tracers fly about the battlefield, alien drop ships launch drop pods that crash into the ground sending clouds of dust and debris soaring skywards, and human soldiers' cries fill the air as they try desperately to stand their ground against their lethal foes. While all this is happening, you're working behind the scenes, badass that you are, with combat capabilities that put Star Destroyers to shame (total exaggeration, but whatever – it seems appropriate). The amount of combat options you have available to you at any one time is almost intimidating. You can modify and upgrade your weapons and your suit on the fly to suit your playing style or to try a different approach. Plan to take out those enemies from medium range? Then quickly attach your assault scope to your rifle. For longer ranges, you've got your sniper scope handy. Want to get right in the thick of it, tearing through your enemies with melee attacks? Switch to your pistol, turn on Power mode and charge in. Prefer the stealthy approach? Switch to Infiltration mode, sneak right up behind enemies and silently melee them into quiet, undetected submission. The possibilities are even more numerous than in the original – which is saying a lot.

At the risk of severe understatement, it has to be said that *Crysis 2* looks and sounds absolutely astonishing. Crytek promised that they would deliver the same level of

phenomenal graphical fidelity that they've become known for over the years to the consoles and from what we've seen, they totally have. The console version obviously won't be packing the same punch as it will on the PC, but that doesn't matter – this is still one of the best-looking console games out there. For PC gamers, Crytek plan to not be so eager to pummel your rig (and your ego) into oblivion – they've said the sequel's system requirements will be lower than those of the original. The awe-inspiring visuals will also be displayed in stereoscopic 3D, if you're so inclined. Complement this with sublime ambient and musical audio and you've got the potential for a technological masterpiece.

So the game looks and sounds incredible – we all knew that would be the case. It's the details though, all the little additions that Crytek are adding to their sequel that make this game so visually entrancing. Every inch of the world looks like it has a story to tell about this alien invasion. When I say that New York has been invaded by aliens, I don't mean that a bunch of extraterrestrials rolled in, knocked over a few trashcans, overturned a few cars and smashed some store windows to steal HD TVs. I mean that it's been absolutely decimated – the earth has been torn asunder, leaving enormous craters in the shattered earth and literally tearing the ground in two. Peer into these unnaturally formed crevices and you can see the remains of the city's sewer network – that's the level of destruction we're dealing with here. You get the sense that Crytek's developers are really pouring every ounce of passion that they have into this game. Everything – from the level design and the world detail, to the audio and the chaotic combat – alludes to Crytek being more focussed this time around and having one, very clear goal: to blow you away. We're counting the days until we get our hands on *Crysis 2*. **NAG**

Dane Remendes



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Deus Ex

DEVELOPER > Ion Storm PUBLISHER > Square Enix | Eidos Interactive PRICE > \$9.99 on Steam

YOU KNOW WHO WARREN Spector is, right? You should, because we're always going on about him. He's the guy behind this game, *Ultima Underworld*, *System Shock* and most recently *Epic Mickey*, which you'll find reviewed elsewhere in this collection of dead trees. We felt that it was important to include a Looking Back of *Deus Ex* in this issue, not to drive home our lament for the "fallen" Spector (we understand that he's bored of trench coats or something), but to give you a little perspective, a drizzle of education and a spoonful of insight into what was considered cool ten years ago.

First up, the education: *Deus Ex* was developed by Ion Storm Inc., a company founded by industry hotshot John Romero after he was given a swift kick in the pants by id Software. Shortly after Ion Storm's foundation, Romero pulled Spector into the business following the tragic death of Looking Glass Studios. Spector joined, formed Ion Storm Austin and begun development of *Deus Ex* in 1997. Bam, there you go.

In *Deus Ex*, you take on the role of JC Denton, an agent for the United Nations Anti-Terrorist Coalition (UNATCO) in a futuristic cyberpunk world fraught with danger. Denton is an early adopter of a new generation of augmented agents who rely on nanotechnology rather than electro-mechanical (and ugly) augs to make them the super-humans that they are. Players will be able to equip Denton with a range of nano-augs to improve his firepower, strength, movement abilities, stealth, defence and so on. Mix in an inventory system, skills and skill points and you have

the base from which this action-RPG is born.

Throughout the game, you'll have to perform various missions that eventually leave you well-entangled in a messy web of deception and conspiracy, and it's up to you to decide how exactly you'll handle each situation. There are always at least two ways to get the job done: the brutal, guns-blazing frontal assault and the sneaky backdoor approach. In addition, there are a number of variations in the way you perform your chosen path. If you've chosen the stealthy avenue, do you use your augmented strength to lift the heavy crates out of the way of the side entrance, bribe a nearby and nose-y street bum to tell you the secret code to the secret entrance, or hack the security system and go in without any assistance? Similarly, the frontal assault needn't be entirely direct. You could booby-trap the entrance and attempt to lure the guards past your proximity mines, snipe them from a distance or slap on your damage-soaking armour and break out a flamethrower. Chances are there's even a third entrance that you'd only know about if you took the time to chat to the locals and do a little exploration.

Deus Ex was special because it not only offered a lot of replayability, but because it reminded people that first-person shooters and RPGs don't have to be mutually exclusive. It's not without its problems, and looked ugly even for its time, but there's a timeless charm here that many feel didn't make it into the sequel. Now we just need to wait for *Human Revolution* to come along and either rock our worlds or make us cry. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows



JC Denton: A superfreighter. That's enough virus to infect a continent.



In *Deus Ex*, you take on the role of JC Denton, an agent for the United Nations Anti-Terrorist Coalition (UNATCO) in a futuristic cyberpunk world fraught with danger.

NAG GAMING
LEAGUE



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Number of Clans: 80 teams – 4 divisions of 20 [Premier; First; Second; Third]

Players Per Team: 5v5 plus 3 additional substitutes

League Dates: February – July 2011

Steam Group: NAG Gaming League

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Alienware at CES

SOME NEW PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENTS were made by Alienware, Dell's premium high-performance PC gaming brand, at CES in Las Vegas in January. The new M17x features 3D capability with a full HD 120Hz 3D display. They also introduced the new Aurora system, a MicroATX desktop with full 3D HD capability and liquid-cooled CPUs. No news yet on when these products will be available locally.



By the Numbers

1,500 years

In 2010, more than 13 million hours of video, or approximately 1,500 years, were uploaded to YouTube and more than 700 billion videos were viewed via the site

Kingston Upgrade Kit

IN THE DECEMBER ISSUE of NAG we reviewed the Kingston SSDNOW V+ and if you remember correctly, we were suitably impressed with it. What we didn't mention at the time was that, in addition to it being a great drive, it's available in an almost revolutionary package.

Described as an upgrade kit, the SSDNOW V+ package includes not just the drive itself, but everything else you'll need to upgrade your desktop or laptop's primary drive without the need to call in a technician or fiddle with complicated backup software. Included in the kit are all the necessary

mounting brackets for installation in a 3.5" or 2.5" bay, SATA power and data cables, an external 2.5" USB enclosure and cable, and a bootable version of Acronis TrueImage HD. All you need to do is open up your PC, swap out the drives and then pop your old drive into the enclosure. Then, boot off the disc and follow the prompts to clone your entire drive, OS installation and all, to your speedy new SSD. In our test installation, the entire process (from shutdown with the old drive to the Windows desktop with the new one) took just twenty minutes with an 80GB system drive.

The Mosh Pit



PRESTIGIO PMSG1

The Prestigio gaming mouse sports a 5040 DPI sensor, ceramic feet, detachable rubber grips, a 4-way scrolling wheel, 7 operation modes, and 9 programmable buttons. Colour options include Italian red, flaming yellow, and titanium grey.

www.rebeltech.co.za | R350



ERGO-TILT

This Laptop Stand has been designed and manufactured in SA keeping the environment in mind. The packaging has no plastic and is made from recycled materials. The stand can be personalised by branding it with a photo, artwork or logo, and is available in seven colours - black, silver, blue, green, red, yellow, pink.

www.ergo-tilt.com | R140

"The new 2nd Generation Intel Core processors represent the biggest advance in computing performance and capabilities over any other previous generation."

Mooly Eden, vice president and general manager, PC Client Group, Intel.

Intel Corporation introduced its game-changing 2nd Generation Intel Core processor family in January. New features include Intel Insider, Intel Quick Sync Video, and a new version of the company's award-winning Intel Wireless Display (WiDi), which now adds 1080p HD and content protection for those wanting to beam premium HD content from their laptop screen to their TV. The quad core (four processors inside one chip) based systems were released on 9 January and additional dual-core versions will be available in February.

Snippets

Dolby recently unveiled a new suite of audio technologies at the 2011 International CES (Consumer Electronics Show). The Dolby PC Entertainment Experience

program offers two technology suites, Dolby Home Theater v4, and Dolby Advanced Audio v2.

GIGABYTE is designing a new range of motherboards geared for extreme

overclocking in collaboration with renowned overclocker "hicookie". They will be sporting the "OC Orange" colour scheme.

Toshiba has updated the Qosmio X500

with the 2nd generation of Intel's Core processors, added 2D to 3D conversion and support of HDMI to stream 3D movies to a 3D capable TV, included a Bluetooth 3.0 port, and also a SSD hybrid drive.



AOC E2236VW

The 21.5 inch LED is the new green monitor from AOC. The low power function saves 50% consumption compared to normal 4CCFL monitors. Features include a 5ms response time and a USB connector.

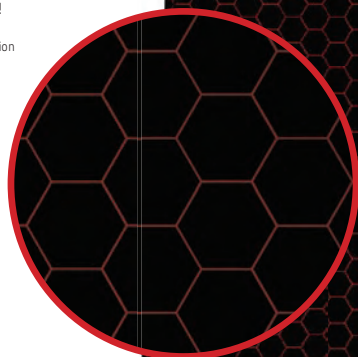
www.eurobyte.co.za | TBA

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The Dream Machine



Your Dreams

SO, WE WERE WONDERING (yes we do that sometimes when we're bored and not playing Black Ops) since we're always telling you lot what to buy and why, and since we have nothing new to add to our Dream Machine this issue (and therefore have space to fill right here with some insightful and meaningful words), why don't you tell us this month what you would buy for your own ultimate gaming rig and why. Be daring and be bold – please don't send us a blah list of stuff. We want to be excited by your choices, and most importantly, we want to be mildly entertained, no wait make that inspired, when reading your e-mails. If you're new around these parts, e-mails must go to lauren@nag.co.za, and remember to include the customary intro – NAG roxorzz and you guys are sooo freakin orsome! – we never get tired of reading that.

NOTEBOOK
Alienware M17x
 R29,999 | www.dell.co.za

System Specs:
CPU: Intel Core i7 720QM (2.8GHz)
RAM: 8GB DDR3 1066
Graphics: 2 x ATI Mobility RADEON HD4870 CFX
Display: 17-inch LCD (1920x1200)
HDD: 320GB SATA2
OS: Windows 7 Ultimate 64-bit



PROCESSOR
Intel Core i7 980X
www.intel.com



MOTHERBOARD
GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD9
www.gigabyte.com



MEMORY
Corsair Dominator GT 2000C8
www.corsair.com



GRAPHICS
ASUS ARES Limited Edition
za.asus.com



STORAGE DRIVE
Seagate Barracuda XT 2TB
www.seagate.com



OS DRIVE
OCZ Agility 2 60GB SSD
www.ocz.com



POWER
Thermaltake Toughpower 1.5KW
www.thermaltake.com



CASE
Ikonik Ra X10 LIQUID
www.ikonik.com



DISPLAY
Samsung P2770HD
www.samsung.co.za



KEYBOARD
Logitech G19
www.logitech.com



MOUSE
Roccat Kone[+]
www.roccat.org



SOUND
ASUS Xonar Xense
za.asus.com

The Damage...

COMPONENT	PRICE*
CASE	R3,585
PROCESSOR	R9,199
MOTHERBOARD	R6,199
MEMORY	R2,199
GRAPHICS	R11,999
STORAGE DRIVE	R1,699
OS DRIVE	R1,699
SOUND	R2,699
POWER	R3,699
DISPLAY	R4,999
KEYBOARD	R1,899
MOUSE	R899
TOTAL	R50,774

* At print time

Tech Q&A

UPGRADES

From: Christo Strydom

"LATELY I HAVE BEEN having problems running games full blast so I think it's time to roll out my mom's wallet.

1. I want to buy my first GPU, but I want to know if double HD5770's are more powerful than a Single HD5870 or GTX 460 if I run them on a 32" 1920x1080.
2. I am currently running a G41M-E43 with a Q8300 OC'd to 2.7 GHz and 2GBs of 667 DDR3. Would any of the config's work with this system?
3. Would the 5770's run in SLI or Crossfire.
4. I currently have a generic 300W PSU, if I need to upgrade, could you recommend one under R1,200.
5. I currently have only two stock fans, what GPU cooling kit would you recommend for my system?
6. Finally, I only have about R3500-4500, so would I be able to purchase all these parts in that margin and could you please give me an exact price."

Neo

1. Buy the Radeon 5870 if you're going to be using such a resolution, and "full-blast" consider the Radeon 6870 or 6950 as well.
2. Yes the graphics cards would work fine on that system.
3. Avoid Crossfire or SLI if possible on your configuration.
4. Before buying anything else get at least a 650Watt unit from CoolerMaster, Antec or Zalman, or any other reputable manufacturer, and should set you back about R800 - R900.
5. The stock cooling on the graphics cards is fine and doesn't need to be changed.
6. As for exact prices I can't do that because I don't know where you'll be buying and when. Try Zaps Online or The Prophecy Shop, they deliver and online purchases with them are easy.
7. With the budget you have you should be able to buy a Radeon 6870 and a 650Watt PSU with some change to spare.

AMD VS. NVIDIA

From: Christopher Erwee

"HHEY NAG LOVE YOUR mags. I'm buying my new rig soon, it's a AMD Phenom 2x4 CPU and 4 gigs of ddr3 ram but I don't know what card would be better to get for this rig. I have a choice of a NVIDIA Gigabyte GTX 460 1gig or AMD Gigabyte HD 6850 and I have had a lot of bad memories with ATI."

Neo: Go with the NVIDIA GTX460 1GB. By the time you read this the GTX560 will have been announced or will be ready, so consider that as well as it's faster than both cards you mentioned by some margin and costs about the same.

WINDOWS 7 64-BIT

From: Brandon Kent

"HI, FIRST OF ALL I would like to say thanks for the great magazine! What I want to know is that some of my friends say you should have more than 4Gb RAM to run 64-bit correctly? Is this correct or can you run 64-bit with lower RAM and will it still be better for gaming than the 32-bit?"



NVIDIA GTX460 1GB

Neo: You can only access the full 4GB of memory when using a 64-bit system. Everything else above that for most people (especially for games) is academic and doesn't decrease load times or make the system any more responsive. 4GB is just fine for now on a 64-bit system.

NEED UPGRADE ADVICE

From: Jacques Treadway

"HHEY NEO, HOPE YOU'RE well. I need your expert advice.

I'd like to upgrade my rig but I'm on a very tight (R2000) budget. The items I'm looking to upgrade are my 7900GT, 400w PSU, 2GB RAM.

I would like to upgrade my RAM with an extra 1GB...the rest...well, I would appreciate your input.

Other system specs worth mentioning:

MB - Gigabyte K8n ProSLI

Chip - Athlon X2 3800+

HDD - 500GB

OS - Win XP 32bit

I'm just looking for value for money.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Warmest regards,

JT

P.S Thanks for an AWESOME mag! I'm not a subscriber but I make sure I get the NAG every month. Besides, by purchasing it this way, I ensure you guys+girl make a little extra...i.e. +/-R84...which is the least I can do to say THANK YOU for the BEST gaming mag in SA!!"

Neo: You're probably better off getting an NVIDIA GTX450 graphics card, and as for RAM it is near impossible to find DDR1 these days for any reasonable price. I'm not sure what options you have there. In all honesty you're most likely better off keeping your current graphics card and upgrading to a newer modern-day platform which will allow you greater upgrade options. It may be worth saving a little more to get to

>>

If you'd like our tech guru, Neo, to answer your hardware questions, send a mail to lauren@nag.co.za. There aren't any prizes for the letters we print, just simple and honest advice (that is, if we can even decipher the garbled e-mail we sometimes get).

about R3,000 then make the upgrade.

MONITORS

From: Justin Weaver

"I am looking to get a monitor in the 23" range but I am stuck on what one to get. In the Dream Machine you guys suggest a HD monitor, but I hear from everyone that a LED is better. Which one is better for gaming and media use, and can you suggest a good one out of your preferred style, HD or LED."

Neo: HD means high definition, LED is Light Emitting Diode, they don't have anything to do with each other. LED talks about how light is provided to the monitor (backlight mechanism) while HD speaks about the number of pixels on the screen. Get an HD LED monitor.

NEW GPU PROBLEMS

From: Tinus Reinecke

"I hope your new year has started out great, because mine sure hasn't. I have recently bought a new graphics card (a GTX 460 Top DirectCU) and since then every single one of my games has been lagging. Everything was fine when I still had my HD 5770, but then it burned out and I was forced to buy the GTX 460 (best I could afford). I am not exaggerating the problem: all my games - from Hot Pursuit and Avatar to Underground 2 and CoD 4 - lag to the point where I cannot play them anymore. I would really appreciate any advice you could offer."

Neo: Anything could be causing that including a dying PSU (most likely if not driver related). Try a clean install of the graphics drivers and make sure you've removed all ATI drivers that were on the system (use DriverSweeper if you must). This should sort out your problems. If not you could try uninstalling the games and re-installing them, or you may need to re-install your OS. **NAG**

Hardwired

By Neo Sibeko

Everything Broken

WITH 2010 WELL BEHIND us, some time ago I found myself thinking about all that had gone right in 2010 and what hadn't, and oddly enough I realized that more had gone wrong than in any other recent year in computing. This isn't a rant but just an observation of how things have turned out less than how we had hoped for.

We'll start with Intel and their Sandy Bridge CPUs. Indeed these are fast and they are priced very well, in fact if AMD doesn't get their Bulldozer CPUs out in time there'll be nothing worth buying from AMD's camp. However that aside, the lack of any BCLK adjustments for the P67 platform is something that is far from ideal and in essence is Intel going backwards. Their reasons aside, the company isn't in the business of making CPUs for themselves but for the public and where the enthusiast is concerned this Bclk locking is annoying to say the least.

If there was any skill involved in overclocking it was in the tweaking and finding the right combination that would allow CPUs to reach stratospheric speeds. Alas this is no longer the case and the amateur overclocking on P67 is just as good as a hardened veteran, hardly what we would call exciting or challenging. Add to that it's made it near impossible to get truly unique motherboards and by and large we are dealing with almost identical motherboards with a few negligible differences. Sandy Bridge-E due later this year as the X58 replacement (2011 pin) may also suffer from the same fate but we'll see closer to the time.

The next thing that was broken was Futuremark's 3DMark11. Granted at the protest of overclockers HWBOT v1.01 fixed some of these issues, but the benchmark is still less than ideal. Sad because this is probably the best looking 3DMark iteration since 3DMark03 and it should have been the best as well. As I have stated on numerous occasions and it's no secret, 3DMark05 and 06 were identical and Vantage was arguably the worst looking 3D benchmark post 2000. The Jane Nash or GT1 sequence is appalling and looks much like games from the DirectX8 era. Without mixing words this was an artistic catastrophe and there's no two ways about it. However with 3DMark11, all was fixed except that the CPU you have in your system makes virtually no difference in your score. That is a Phenom II X4 970 is as capable as a Core i7 980X and the difference in score will come down to a mere 200 points or so. In reality the difference between these CPUs is night and day but 3DMark11 suggests otherwise.

Besides that, the benchmark is even more restrictive in its basic guise (there's no free edition anymore) there's

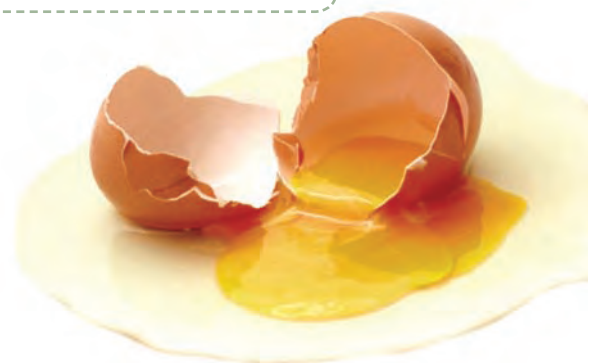
really nothing compelling enthusiasts to move from 3DMark Vantage as it currently offers the right balance between CPU and GPU score weighting.

While doing the 3DTV feature in this issue, I realized how annoyed I had become with all things HD of late. The fact that HD isn't really useful for anything outside of the video/broadcast context but used everywhere is what has us accepting inferior pixel distribution just because it has a marketable name. For instance while 720p offers higher pixel density than the old 1024x768 resolution of last century, it says nothing about pixel distribution other than their shape.

"some time ago I found myself thinking about all that had gone right in 2010 and what hadn't, and oddly enough I realized that more had gone wrong than in any other recent year in computing."

The thing is with the 720p standard the vertical pixel density is less than what you get at 1024x768. It may not sound like much but our eyes have a smaller viewing angle vertically than horizontally but at the same time it is significantly more sensitive up and down as opposed to left and right. This is precisely why playing console games at 720p looks specifically harsh. 720p is HD only in relation to SD where video is concerned, which has been as low as 320x240 on VHS tapes. So of course anything is HD compared to that, even compared to the 720x576 PAL standard. However where PC gaming is concerned the HD standards are a step backwards, and that goes for 1080p as well. 1600x1200 for 4:3 and 1920x1200 16:10 displays is how we should be defining our HD. How we ended up with 1080 is puzzling, when these resolutions were the norm many years before the "HD" boom.

Anyway, let's hope all of the above changes sometime this year or in the near future. There's hope for the all things save for HD as I'm afraid we'll have to wait for the 4K standard for any real advancement. **NAG**



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DIY: Hands-on with Dremel

Part 12 – Arcade stick controller Part 2

What you will need

- Everything from the previous issue [January 2011]
- An Xbox 360 controller
- Soldering iron with solder
- Glue gun with glue
- Dremel rotary tool with abrasive buff and PVC cutting disc
- 24x Thin wiring (25cm)
- 24x Female quick-connect terminals (flat type)

This is the final part of the first series of Dremel DIY articles, and, like the previous tutorial, will use a number of skills and tools that you've acquired over the last year. I'll directly refer to items from last month, so make sure you've got that issue handy.

In this tutorial, we'll complete our arcade controller by applying a few cosmetic and finishing touches, and then tackle the wiring that will enable our controller to actually work with an Xbox 360. If you're performing this tutorial with any other controller, follow along to gain an understanding of how everything works; the principals will apply regardless.

STEP 1: COMPLETING THE CONSTRUCTION

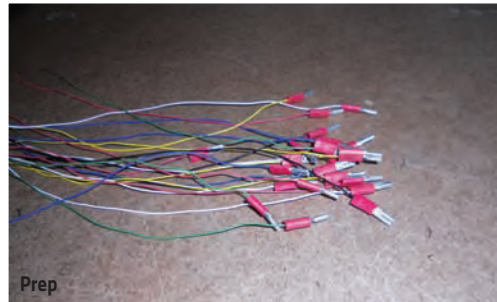
Once you have your completed box, you'll need to fit right-angle brackets to the inside to hold panel A to its frame. I recommend that you fit at least four, but, depending on your arrangement, you could fit as many as ten. The stronger your construction is, the better.

Before you paint, you should decide whether your entire controller will be painted or varnished, or if you intend on putting on printed vinyl stickers to provide decoration. Whatever your decision, now is the time to make it. Once everything is installed it'll be difficult to go back and change the design. No matter what your design is, you should sand the corners to increase comfort.

For my controller, I've chosen to go with a simple green and white spray-job with the possibility of covering panel B with a printed vinyl. Sand down all surfaces that you intend to paint until they're smooth (panel B is fibreboard, and should already be smooth enough) and put on two coats of white primer, very lightly sanding with high-grit sandpaper after each coat. Perform the same tasks with your colour, but go for three or even four coats. If you're paranoid, finish with a coat or two of hard-wearing lacquer. Once the paint is dry, fit the buttons and joystick.

STEP 2: WIRING THE PCB

Extract the printed circuit board from your Xbox controller, following the same process we covered in the June 2010 issue. If you don't have that issue with you, the process requires a T8 Torx screwdriver. Simply remove each screw at the back of the controller; the final one is hidden underneath the barcode sticker in the battery bay. Pry apart the controller, remove the circuit board, buttons, grey contact strips, rumble motors and analogue sticks (they simply pop off).



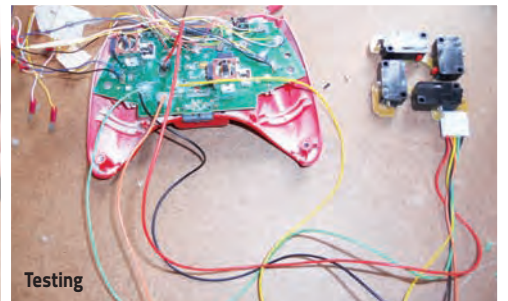
Prep



Prep



Soldering



Testing



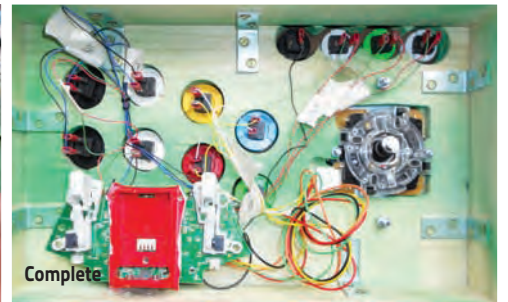
Gluing



Installation



Painting



Complete

Prepare two wires for each button (that's a total of 24 wires in my case) on your arcade controller. Cut the wires to approximately 25cm and strip off each end. Fit female quick-connect terminals to one end of each and crimp them in place. Tin the exposed copper wiring on the other end.

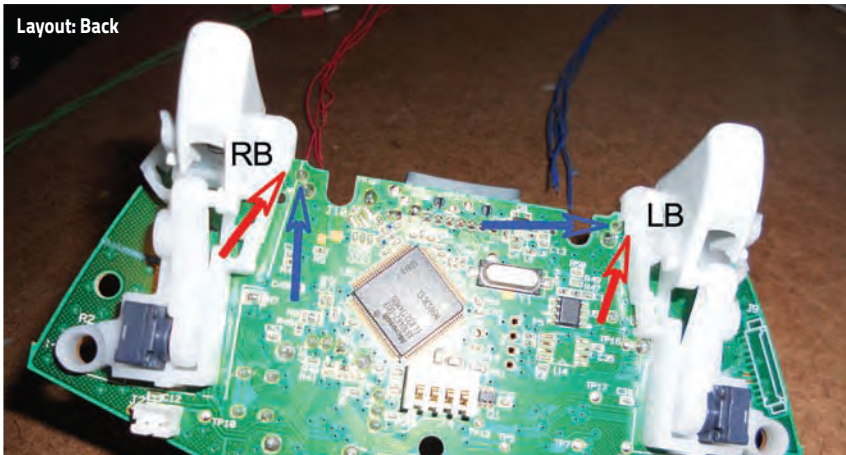
I've opted to wire up every button on the controller. Bear in mind that you won't use the analogue sticks but rather the directional pad; arcade joysticks only receive inputs from four directions. Begin by preparing the contact pads for the ABXY, Back, Start and Guide button. You'll need to scrape off the black epoxy coating to expose the copper contacts beneath. Scrape off only in the middle of the pads, giving yourself enough room to solder. Ideally, you should give the contacts a once-over with a Dremel rotary tool fitted with an abrasive buff, or steel wool. The surface will need to be clean and shiny for

the solder to stick properly. Next, prepare the d-pad contacts. Depending on your revision of controller, you may not have sufficient space on which to solder your wires, so we'll resort to hot glue to hold the leads in place.

Each button on your controller acts as a temporary bridge that connects their corresponding contact pads on the PCB. To do this, we need to solder each lead from the buttons (connected by the quick-connect terminals) to each side of the corresponding contact pads on the PCB. Do this for the ABXY, Back, Start and Guide buttons. For the d-pad, your joystick's wiring harness only has five leads, so wire one to each contact (red is up; yellow is right; green is left; and orange is down), using the top, left, right, and top contacts on each pair respectively, and the black lead (which is ground) to the other pad on any direction.

For the shoulder bumpers, you need

POWERFUL MOTOR, GREAT PRECISION



only wire directly to the pin headers on the other side of the PCB; nudge the triggers out of the way to expose them. The triggers themselves are easy-enough; look at the diagram to see where you need to connect to. Finally, the wireless sync button is a bit of a pain. Connect one lead to any ground source (such as the nearby LB), and the other to the central, tiny little pin into which the sync button connects to the PCB. Get in close and you'll spot it; I suggest that you use hot glue to hold the lead in place; there's not much space to solder. Once you're done, give each solder point a little hot glue for extra strength; just make sure that each connection works before you do this.

STEP 3: INSTALLATION

Assuming you've been testing as you go along (and everything works), the last step

is to mount the battery bay to the PCB, and then the whole unit to the box. Using a Dremel rotary tool and PVC cutting disc, cut out the battery bay from the back of the controller. Hot-glue the bay in place on the PCB. Last, using plenty of hot glue, mount the PCB inside the arcade controller, ensure sufficient space for the buttons and wiring. Ensure everything is connected properly.

Now close up the bottom of the controller using panel C and screw in rubber buffers at the corners to keep it in place. You'll have to unscrew the base to replace the batteries, which certainly leaves room for improvement, but you can't expect me to think of everything;)

Good luck with your arcade controller and any future projects. Be sure to e-mail us if you have any questions, or to show off your own projects. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows



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3D'RV:

3D Gaming on PC invades your lounge

3D MAY HAVE SEEMED LIKE a gimmick a few years ago, but it's obvious from the uptake and popularity that it's here to stay. While some may be against it, it's the future and there's really no way to stop that. With each passing year it gets better and 2011 should hopefully convert some and, in a way, help them see the "light".

Oddly enough while 3D LCD monitors for the PC have not sold well (for a number of reasons including cost), the TV market has done much better. Even though 3DTVs cost several times more than 3D PC monitors, people are more than happy to part with their hard-earned cash for a TV rather than a monitor. This may be for several reasons including the almost zero setup time for 3D TV's as opposed to 3D on the PC.

Whatever the reason, chances are if you have a fairly modern and powerful PC and a 3DTV, you've wondered how you could make use of the two to enjoy your games, not only on the much larger TV, but in 3D as well. We tried this using two high-end 3DTVs and this is what we found.

THE PLAYERS: NVIDIA 3DTV PLAY VS AMD HD3D

There's not much to say here other than that the difference between these two technologies or implementations if you prefer is night and day. Not surprising given that NVIDIA has been in the stereoscopic vision business for three years now, while AMD has only had a few months in it. For the rest of this article we will be focusing

on 3DTVPlay, as it is simple, straight forward, well documented, well supported and offers a vastly superior result when compared to HD3D.

For 3DTVPlay all you need is a NVIDIA graphics card (GeForce 8 onwards) with an HDMI output (mini-HDMI is fine as well) or you can use a converter (DVI-HDMI), the regular Force Ware driver, and 3DTV Play software which you can find on the website. Of importance as well is the 3D Vision IR emitter, but the rest is entirely up to your TV as it needs to be at least HDMI 1.3 compatible and naturally be 3D capable.

Where HD3D is concerned it's a little but trickier. You need third party software (iZ3D driver and DDD Tri-def) a transmitter, a compatible TV and

HARDWARE USED

- Intel Core i7 980X
- GIGABYTE X58A-UD7
- Corsair DominatorGT 3x2GB PC16000
- NVIDIA GTX460
- Windows 7 64-bit, Forceware 260.99
- LG LX9500 47" LED LCD 3DTV [R41,999]
- Samsung 7000 Series 55" LED 3DTV [R48,000]
We used two LED 3DTV's from LG and Samsung.

For an exhaustive list of supported projectors, TVs, LCD monitors and other displays check out www.nvidia.com/object/3dtv-play-requirements.html



obviously the latest Catalyst drivers. You should be aware that only RADEON 5000 and 6000 series cards work with HD3D and Crossfire is not supported in this mode as well. As it stands we are not moved by AMD's offering and despite it being promoted as an open standard it isn't, because only specific hardware, TV's and transmitters work with the system (NVIDIA's 3D transmitter is not supported).

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT 3D TV'S

For some reason almost everything related to LCD TV's these days is more marketing than reality and as such how you experience 3D on the TV is not necessarily how you would on your PC. In fact for the most part the experience is poorer in quality, but given that LED backlit 3D monitors are near impossible to find, the Led backlighting system can somewhat compensate and still make the experience worthwhile. If anything, it's worth it because you get to experience your games on a much larger screen in possibly a more comfortable/social environment than you normally would on the PC.

3DTV's, as mentioned earlier, these days are more about successful marketing than actual capabilities. You may see many units advertising incredible refresh rates, with some going as high as 240Hz, doubling what you need on the PC for 3D Vision and seemingly better in every respect. The truth is it's near impossible to verify that these TV's actually have a scan rate of 240Hz and they most likely do not imply that you can display that many frames a second. There

are two technologies used to achieve these numbers and in general they are achieved by inserting frames at regular intervals to eliminate motion blurring and/or judder.

This use of the scan rate isn't necessarily related in any way to 3D or stereoscopic viewing, especially when viewing a signal from the PC.

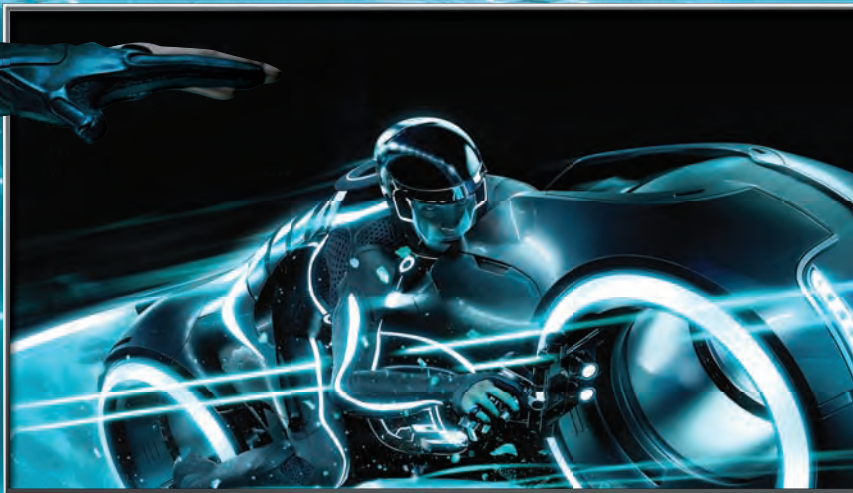
Almost all TV's that feature HDMI regardless of the iteration can only process 3D imagery at 720p and at most 60fps. While HDMI 1.4(a) does allow displaying of 3D at full HD resolution, the maximum scan rate drops to 24Hz which will be virtually unplayable for most of us as that frame rate is far too low.

This is simply because the HDMI standard supports a finite total bandwidth of 10.2Gbits/sec which just wouldn't be enough for 120Hz 1080p viewing. This would be easily fixed with a dual-link DVI input (with virtually unlimited bandwidth) on the TV, but so far we have yet to find a TV that has this. So what that means is that if you choose to play on your TV using 3DTV Play or HD3D for that matter, you will likely be stuck at 720p and have to employ AA to smooth out the rough edges.

Once again there's really nothing high-def about any 720p image in the context of gaming on the PC. Even in the days of 1024x768 last century this was never considered a high resolution, and so many years later we have actually gone backwards, as 1024x768 offers a sharper image than 1280x720 even though the 720p standard offers better pixel density in total.

As unappealing as 720p may sound, it will be a relief for those with less than powerful graphics cards, as the 720p limit means that frame rates will not suffer, especially given

DisplaySearch forecasts that nearly 18 million 3D sets will be shipped worldwide in 2011, rising to over 91 million in 2014.



SIZE MATTERS

For ultimate big screen gaming at uncompromising image fidelity the ASUS VG24H or Acer 245Q are good options to consider, as these are amongst the few 24" 120Hz true 3D Vision capable monitors. This year will likely see even bigger units released but at the time of writing these were two of the best on the market. While there are no 1920x1200 3D Monitors, these two are amongst the largest you'll find and anything viewed on either of these will be better than what most large 3DTV's can offer.



that rendering a stereoscopic image has a large penalty in performance. For those with powerful graphics cards, 4x to 8xAA should help smooth out the rough edges and render a smoother image.

GAMING ON A 3DTV

Gaming on a large TV is inherently going to be difficult if you are planning on playing an FPS using your PC. This is because the viewed image is far too big for how close you would have to sit to make use of this technology unless you can get a really long HDMI capable and have a relatively large space to work with. Ideally you'll want to be as far from the TV as you would be if you were playing on a console.

Not only is it very uncomfortable to have your eyes scan the screen when you are too close, when viewed in 3D this gets a little more strenuous, so it's best to sit as far away as possible. This leads us to another point worth factoring in if you want to try this technology. It will ideally work for games where you can use a game pad, like *Just Cause 2* and the like. For FPS games or at least competitive ones you're probably better off on the PC monitor as the frame rate cap even at 60Hz won't be to everybody's liking, and the loss of detail because of the

relatively low resolution will leave you at a disadvantage.

Where watching 3D movies is concerned, you're better off removing the PC entirely from the equation and watching your 3D movies directly from the TV and Blu-Ray player. 3DTV in gaming right now or at least on the PC works very well on specific titles making the experience worthwhile. However in some other games it can be less than optimal.

Racing games like *NFS Hot Pursuit* take well to being played in 3D and lend themselves to a spectacular experience, and even racing simulators like *F1 2010* work somewhat well when played on a 3DTV. It's still early days for 3DTV and gaming right now, but it's likely to get better as the TV's get better and cheaper.

We will however have to wait for an HDMI standard that has enough bandwidth to really unleash the potential this mode of gaming has. Right now, there may just be too many sacrifices to be made for some to justify the "investment". However, should you have a 3D Vision Kit and a 3D TV it is well worth trying out 3DTV Play as, when it does work, it's really great and worth checking out.

TRON will be available on DVD and 3D Blu Ray in April 2011. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

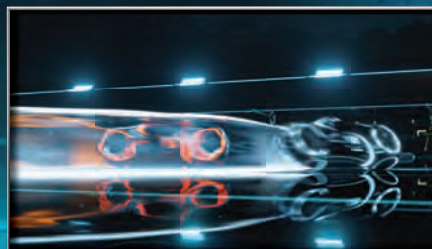
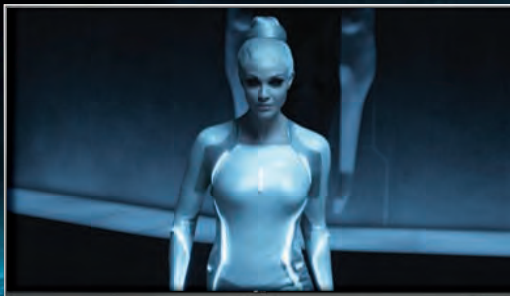
COLLABORATION

"As a technology leader, Samsung's expanded alliance with DreamWorks Animation - recognized across the industry as a 3D entertainment innovator - marks our collective goal to offer consumers the best of technology and entertainment combined," said Samsung Visual Display President Boo-Keun Yoon in his keynote speech at CES in Las Vegas in January. "Through this mutual relationship, DreamWorks Animation is helping us to create an increasingly immersive home entertainment experience for audiences at a moment's notice."

As part of their expanded collaboration efforts, Samsung and DreamWorks Animation have agreed to explore ways to work together on research and development of future technologies related to 3D TV and smart TV. In 2010, Samsung introduced the first 3D LED TV, and DreamWorks has been a leading entertainment provider of high-quality 3D films and Blu-ray discs. The two companies hope to combine their talents to improve home entertainment even further than they have today.

In 2011, the 3D Blu-ray version of *Megamind* will become the next DreamWorks Animation title to be made available exclusively to purchasers of new Samsung 3D TVs as part of a bundled promotion.

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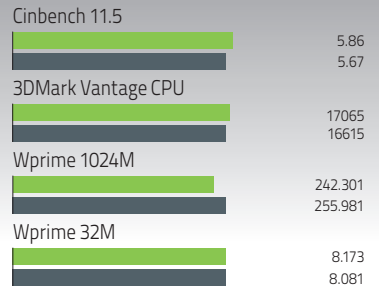
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Specifications

Core: 45nm Thuban (x6)
Frequency: 3300MHz
Cache: 9MB Total (6MB L3)
Platform: AM2+/AM3

Benchmarks



AMD Phenom II X6 1100T

WE DOUBT IF THERE'S anybody who follows the tech industry with a keen eye who will not admit that the last 5 years or so for AMD have probably been the hardest in the company's history. Nothing seemed to have gone according to plan and one only needs to ask look over at Intel to see what went wrong for AMD.

Barcelona was the CPU that was supposed to bring AMD back to its winning ways, but if anything it helped cast further doubt into AMD's ability to compete with Intel. Not only was the architecture doomed before it saw the light of day, as it was plagued with a TLB error, which was only fixed in the 2nd revision of the CPU's outing. Add that to having overpaid for ATI (at the time they paid well more than what the company was worth) and the end looked more than likely for AMD.

We've come a long way since then and AMD has won back some favour with users and more importantly with its share holders as 2011 looks like the year AMD will once again rise to the challenge and provide Intel with some proper competition not only in value but in performance as well. While the Phenom II and Athlon II CPUs are respectable products in their own rights, let's be honest and admit that tri-core CPUs were probably as meaningless as CPUs can be.

The idea that the competition could only offer two cores when AMD could provide you with three was bogus especially given just how much faster Intel's competing CPUs were. One of AMD's beliefs was that games were being coded with three cores in mind (obviously lifted from the Xbox360 with its tri core CPU) but in all honesty this was nothing more than a co-incidence as virtually all games were faster on the competition's dual-core offerings and significantly so.

Not entirely AMD's fault though as the money for R&D was seemingly not there and for quarters on end the company bled money.

So you may wonder how this is related to the Phenom II X6 1100T CPU. Well it's likely that this may be the final Thuban based high-end X6 CPU from AMD, if not it's unlikely

there'll be an SKU that reaches anything above 3.4GHz as (the 1100T operates at 3.3GHz) and this is because AMD is probably not going to be able to clock another Thuban CPU at 3.4GHz while staying within the 120watt TDP.

The 1100T is a measly 100MHz faster than the 1090T which isn't much at all, but significant in that the 45nm manufacturing process has matured enough to allow AMD to release such an SKU while keeping within the thermal limits of their previous high-end part.

Right now, it is likely AMD is working on mass producing their first Bulldozer based CPUs which bring with them the return of the FX line of CPUs. So clearly AMD is confident in the performance of their next generation CPU architecture.

That aside, the 1100T does offer performance gains sometimes a little better than one would expect, and this is simply because the performance and clock frequency scaling of the Phenom II CPUs is somewhat linear (at least at sub 4.5GHz) and only begins to struggle at the very high speeds. So having said that, in a market that now has Intel's 2K line of i7 CPUs, the 1100T has its work cut out for it but surprisingly manages to stay relevant beating out the older Intel Core i7 760 and 860 CPUs in some productivity suites and in video encoding where physical core count counts for more than number of in-flight threads. (CineBench 11.5 is one such program) Paired with the recent 890FX boards like the 890FXA-UD7 or the board we tested on the ASUS Crosshair IV Extreme, the 1100T offers some very good performance.

For the enthusiast which is likely who this CPU mostly appeals too, they'll be happy to know that these CPUs clock even better than the 1090T. You can easily run this CPU at 4.2GHz for everyday use and as expected the performance is phenomenal at that speed. For the brave who are going to cool this CPU to sub-zero degrees, the CPU is cold bug free as per usual and will more than likely hit 6GHz, which should generate some

impressive results in the 2D benchmarks and in some 3D as well for those who compete for class points.

The 1100T represents the best AMD has to offer or at least the highest possible balance of cores to frequency the company can offer, but where things get a little difficult is in the pricing of the CPU. The problem is it costs as much as some Core i7 parts especially those of the P67 platform. In fact the pricing is dangerously close to that of the 2600K which is significantly faster than the 1100T. By the time you read this AMD may have cut its pricing to make the CPU attractive again but as it stands, there's really no compelling reason to buy the 1100T over the 2600K which offers Core i7 975XE beating performance, something the 1100T can't approach regardless of the overclocking.

It's a tricky situation to be in if you're AMD, but one that likely benefits the end user as this CPU will probably fall drastically in price which will allow those on tight budgets access to fairly high-end performance at budget prices.

All things considered AMD couldn't have produced a better product with their current technology and, despite not being anything revolutionary, it's still a great CPU and will get better if the price cuts actually do take place. If indeed this is the last Thuban core Phenom II we see, it certainly isn't a bad way to remember the Thuban family. **NAG Neo Sibeko**

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + 6 cores
- + Turbo Core
- + Price

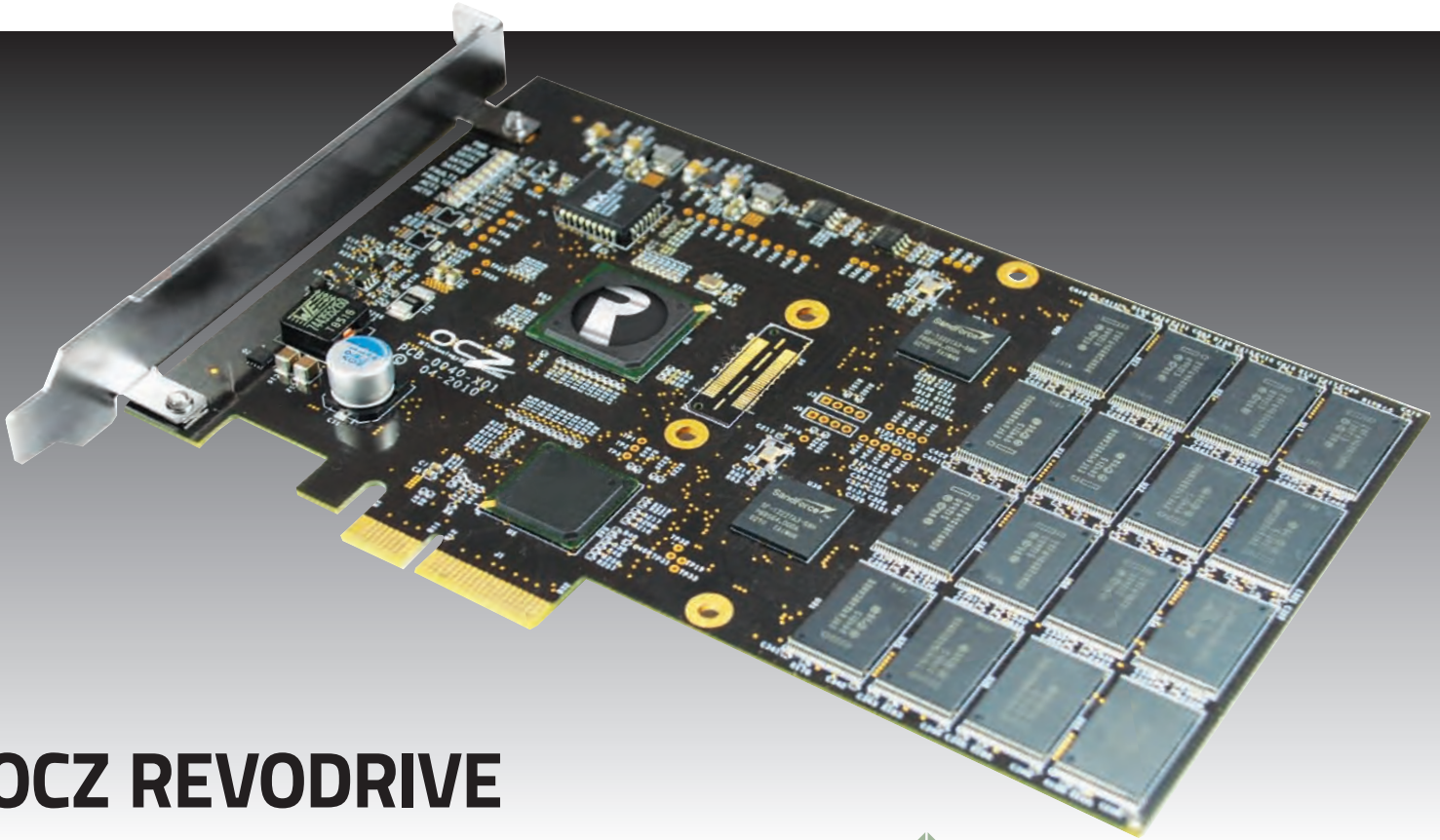
>Minus

- Nothing that a 1090T can't achieve

>Bottom Line

Likely the last Phenom II X6 based on the Thuban core, but also the fastest from AMD.

07



OCZ REVODRIVE

OCZ CAN CLAIM TO be one of the best SSD manufacturers in the business, if not the best. The company has made all the fastest SSD's we've ever tested, be it the Vertex or Agility series, the drives have performed admirably and, where pricing is concerned, it has been rather aggressive especially with the Agility II series.

PCI-Express drives are not new to the market and, where enthusiasts are concerned, they are the natural replacement I-RAM like devices, however these PCI-Express drives are rarely affordable and, even if you could buy one, the performance is never better than what you could achieve with a dedicated RAID controller and a few drives while the cost is, as mentioned earlier, prohibitive.

The OCZ REVODRIVE is by and large the same as any other PCI-Express SSD, however it has a few differences which make it very attractive for those who want ultimate speed, but do not have bottomless pockets, which happens to be most people.

The REVODRIVE is, if you will, two Vertex II drives sandwiched into one, but this is only as far as performance is concerned, however it would be understating the REVODRIVE. OCZ promises some very impressive numbers when selling this drive, but as always our testing (which we make a point to make deviate from manufacturer recommended guidelines) is closer to what one experiences in real scenarios.

The REVODRIVE's average read speeds are truly something averaging above 460MB/sec and with write speeds at 390MB/sec. Needless to say sequential speeds are next to meaningless for everyday use, so while impressive, they don't tell us much about the drive. So for that we turned to IOMETER (a crude and definitely non-user friendly program) which gives accurate and repeatable results and one benchmark which is the most accurate representation of any drive on the market.

Total IOPS for the REVODRIVE were 50% higher than those of the Agility II drive which

for all intents and purposes uses the same SF1200 controller found on the REVODRIVE. This is to be expected as 100% scaling was never going to become a reality and 50% or so is likely where it should be for a drive using two of the same controllers.

The number may not be anywhere near what OCZ claims but our testing software was slightly different to what OCZ recommends and, as mentioned earlier, we were more concerned with scaling in comparison to other drives (that used the same software suit) rather than the raw numbers. This scaling was linear almost across all tests coming in 50% faster than our reference Agility II drive at every opportunity, in fact the results were eerily predictable and caused us to retest several times, but they stayed the same.

Results not displayed here but very important as well for some is the MAXIMUM IO response time of the drive. We measured a mind boggling 28.841ms, still 18ms slower than the fastest drive we had ever tested, it was 200% quicker than what a single SF1200 controller-based drive could deliver. That result in conjunction with an average 0.50ms IO response time translates into a drive that annihilated the SUPER TALENT RAIDDRIVE we tested some time ago in just about everything save for read and write speeds.

Now consider that the REVODRIVE costs only a little more than an equivalent VERTEX 2 drive it really is an attractive purchase. You may not be able to hardware raid them like you could SATA based SSD's but with this kind of performance there's no need for it and consider that two VERTEX 2 drives would set you back considerably more, for essentially the same performance the REVODRIVE is great value for money.

If you have the cash to spare and are considering a 120GB VERTEX 2 drive, consider stretching your budget a little and instead buying the REVODRIVE, it's fantastically fast. **NAG**

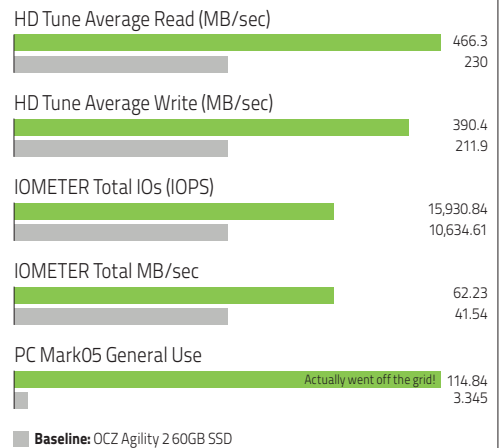
Neo Sibeko



Specifications

Capacity: 120GB
Controller: SF1222TA3x2 (SIL3124)
Interface: PCI-Express x4

Benchmarks



THE SCORE

>Plus

- + Incredibly fast
- + Relatively cheap

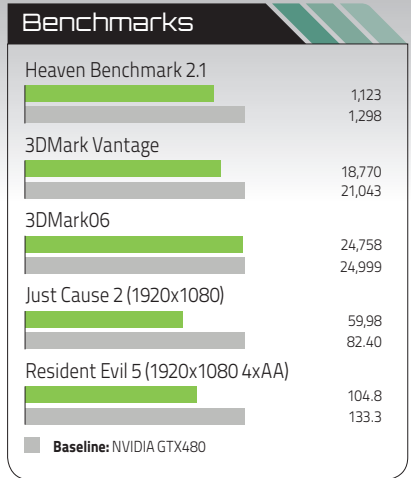
>Minus

- No Trim

>Bottom Line

The OCZ REVODRIVE costs slightly more than a similar capacity Vertex 2 drive but performs significantly better.

09
out of ten



ASUS EAH6950



IT WOULD BE NOTHING short of a lie to suggest that it was any other IHV but AMD which brought DirectX11 to the masses at reasonable prices and stellar performance. Not only did AMD manage to jump it's competitor by several months, it released the fastest graphics cards (at just about all price points) the market had ever seen at some truly attractive pricing.

Fast forward twelve months or so later and the situation changed a little, as this time it was NVIDIA which released their DirectX11 refresh ahead of AMD. Having said that, this was more important for NVIDIA than AMD, which was already leading in the DirectX11 race (both in units sold and market share).

Not too long ago we reviewed the Radeon 6850, graphics card; while we had initially thought it to be the Radeon 5850 replacement, it was actually the replacement to the Radeon 5770 and with all things considered it succeeded in every area, but most of all, maintained the very high performance to price ratio that AMD cards traditionally had starting with the 4000 series.

So after about a month or so of delays, AMD finally released the 6900 series of graphics processors and, we will say it now, that for the price, there just isn't anything the competition can boast about, as the 6900 series is better in every way than the outgoing 5800 cards, but happens to retail at lower average prices which means that despite not being able to claim the performance crown in the case of the 6970, for what AMD is asking in monetary terms these cards are winners through and through.

Technically there isn't much that changed

with the new Cayman cores over the previous generation Cypress GPUs. The dies may have grown to about 2.6Bn gates, a good 400 million more from Cypress; however the stream processor count has decreased. Do not though, be fooled into thinking the configuration of these stream processors is the same as on the Cypress core. The core has been reworked into what AMD believes is a better and more efficient VLIW4 arrangement, offering more capable stream processors as a result. Instead of a 5-way core that features a single SFU and 4 other simpler execution cores, this new design offers 4 fully functional units, with 2 of them having previous SFU capabilities.

What this translates into is a more efficient GPU than before for the same die area. Having said that, AMD has also boosted the number of tessellation units in the GPU die, pushing it up 3 fold. This significantly improves tessellation performance bringing it almost in-line with what the competition is offering in some cases. An additional enhancement for the GPU as well is a re-worked memory controller which is responsible for the insanely high GDDR frequencies.

The only down side about the 6950 and not unique to the ASUS model is that AMD's 3DVision alternative is next to useless still, as there's no single package or screen you buy that ensures compatibility with games and movies. It still relies on third party applications and hardware. In this day and age and especially for the 6900 series we expected more.

Regardless of how you feel about 3D though, what will excite everyone is that

Specifications

Core: 810MHz Cayman Pro (40nm)
Processors: 1408
Render Outputs: 32
Memory: 2GB GDDR5 5GHz (160GB/sec)
API: DirectX11/OpenGL4.x/OpenCL1.x

the 6950, including this ASUS model, can be unlocked to enable the full 1536 stream processors of the 6970. With a small memory overclock and a few utilities you can get yourself 6970 performance at 6950 prices. This makes the 6950 an absolute bargain considering how close the 6970 is in performance to the GTX580 which can cost double the price. Keep in mind though that doing such will likely void your warranty and at the time of writing AMD was refreshing the reference boards and in all newer boards this "free" upgrade will no longer work. So if you're going to buy a VGA card, you better buy it sooner rather than later. AMD and by extension, ASUS, has a winner here. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + Price
- + Performance
- + Potential Radeon 6970

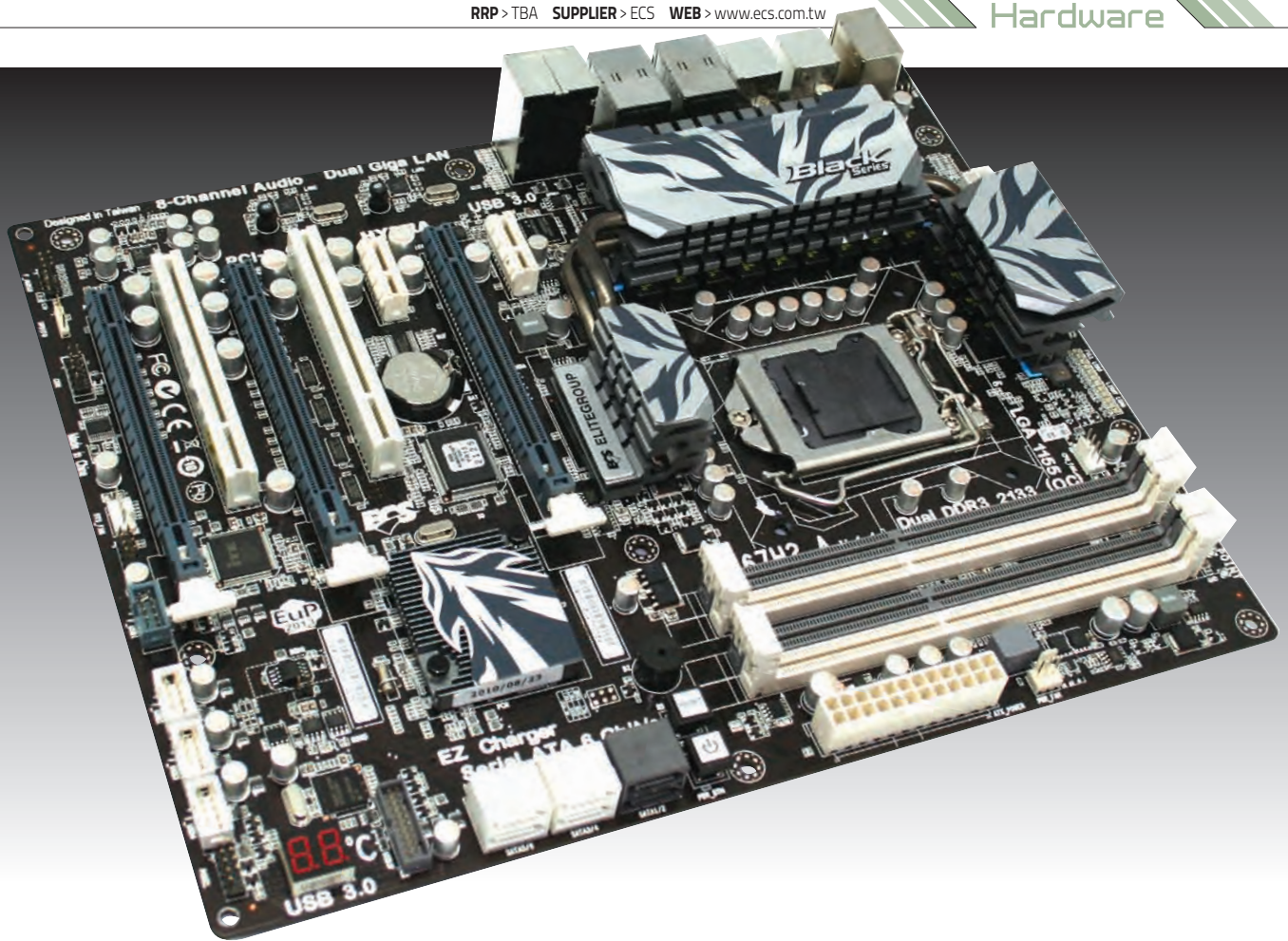
>Minus

- 3D implantation still questionable

>Bottom Line

High value graphics card that offers high-end performance at mid-range prices. Certainly worth the purchase if you're in the market.





ECS Black Series P67H2-A

ECS AMONGST OTHER LOW-END to mid-range motherboard manufacturers probably benefit the most from the P67 platform with its very limited overclocking. This is because despite numerous attempts, catching the likes of ASUS, GIGABYTE, EVGA or MSI, matching these manufacturers is proving difficult.

More than these top manufacturers pouring more resources into their products, they actually have regular and mostly constant contact with power users whom they cater for.

This is however not the case with ECS as the communication is mostly one way. The company releases a product such as the P67H2-A, only to receive negative feedback about it from users and press alike. This makes it impossible for the company to improve its products, and even when it does it's a hit and miss affair, as they don't know what they are doing right or wrong.

It's the attention to detail that is lacking in the P67H2-A which mares an otherwise great product. On paper this looks like the best motherboard ECS has ever produced. It features dual gigabit LAN, Lucid Hydra logic (HydraLogix 200), 6 USB3.0 ports, POST LED, Clear CMOS button, on-board power and rest switches, up to 20 USB ports in total and 13-phase power regulation circuitry. Indeed where specifications alone are concerned the P67H2-A had to be a competent product.

You can imagine then our surprise when the board turned out to be anything but competent. Sure enough it works as advertised, but we feel let down by the board with some basic aspects of the motherboard that we thought ironed out last century

proving to be problematic. Examples of such oversights are the mounting holes where standard ATX standoffs would fit. South west of the South Bridge where there's supposed to be a mounting hole, there are components, and so you'll never be able to mount the motherboard in any standard case using just four screws at the corners. Add to which you'll have to place a piece of rubber or some other non-conductive material between the standoff and the motherboard to avoid any potential shorting of the board.

How this happened is puzzling to say the least. However moving on to the BIOS, we believed things would improve but they didn't and this is largely the biggest downfall of the P67H2-A. It's clean and neat which is always appreciated, but it uses an unconventional naming scheme for some settings while others are just absent completely, like sub timings for memory. All you have access to is the command rate, and the primary settings, IMC and VDimm voltage. That's about it for memory.

Then to make matters worse, you have options such as "Long duration maintained" which is described as "Time window which the long duration power is maintained (Tau)" and other such confusing options. It's difficult to imagine what exactly ECS was after with this product, especially when they've had better documented BIOS features in their previous products. ICC (Integrated Clock Control) is another sub menu with plenty of options whose options shall for the most part remain a mystery.

However given that overclocking is near impossible on the P67 platform save for

Specifications

Chipset: Intel P67
Memory: 4x240-pin DDR3
CPU Support: Intel Core i3/i5/ i7 2XXX
Slots: 3xPCI-E 16x, 1xPCI-E1x, 2xPCI 2.2

using multipliers, it's sad that multiplier adjustments don't work on the motherboard even when using an unlocked CPU. Regardless of what we tried even a re-flash (there's no flashing option within the BIOS) with the latest BIOS (which remains the latest from October 2010 well before P67 was released) didn't help matters.

So as you can imagine, we are not in any way moved by the P67H2-A motherboard. Yes it works in as far as it turns on and you'll be able to build a functioning computer around it, but it doesn't do much more than that sadly and for a Black Series product we thought the requirements were a little higher. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + 6xUSB3.0
- + Best looking ECS board ever
- + Great Specs

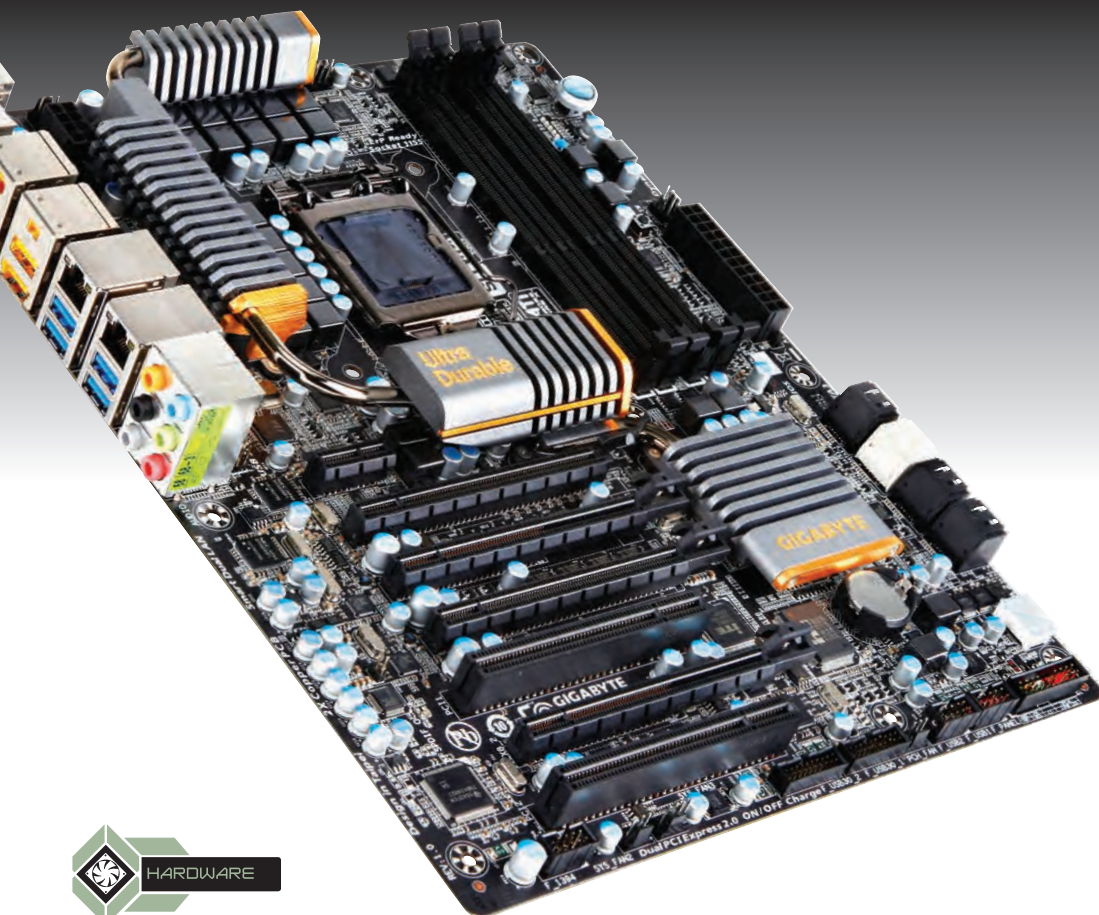
>Minus

- BIOS issues

>Bottom Line

We will review this motherboard again with a new BIOS to see if the issues have been ironed out.

N/A
out of ten



GIGABYTE P67A-UD7

AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS OF rumours and “leaked” results, Intel’s next generation Sandy Bridge architecture made its way to retail stores and with that was a mix of great and the not so spectacular reviews.

As far as a successor to the P55 platform is, the P67 chipset (socket 1155) is a healthy upgrade and most certainly a step in the right direction for Intel. We won’t hold back and say it any other way but the P55 platform was probably the most pointless chipset from Intel ever. Coming almost a year after the X58, it offered nothing that was remotely attractive. It was supposed to be value orientated, catering for entry-level right up to the performance segment, but the pricing invalidated all of this.

The H55 platform in a way had more purpose and, as far as we’re concerned, this was the chipset that made the entire x55 experience remotely worthwhile.

Having said that, it’s a new year now and hopefully we have heard the last of anything P55 related. Apologies to those who invested in the chipset, as it’s truly “dead and gone”, having had a short and useless life cycle. Fortunately the P67 looks to have a future and we can see this chipset lasting just as long as X58 at the least, which is in computing terms a long time.

So before we get into what makes the GIGABYTE board ticks, you should know that the P67 platform places relatively heavy restrictions on what manufacturers like GIGABYTE can do to set their motherboards apart from the rest. Intel has integrated the Bclk PLL into the CPU which now controls all “external” clocks. What that means, is

overclocking has essentially been broken; at least as far as Bclk overclocking is concerned. So the days of buying the cheaper CPU and achieving \$999 CPU performance are behind us where P67 is concerned. The reasons for this we will cover in the 2600K review, but for now think of it as the end of overclocking as you know it.

With such restrictions, one would have thought that GIGABYTE amongst others would have a difficult time customising their motherboards into something to set them apart; however this is not the case. GIGABYTE has taken the time to introduce its new black and gold colour scheme. A stark contrast from the blue and white we had grown fond of, the new GIGABYTE colours remind us of the Adidas Limited Edition sneakers and, just like the apparel, the motherboard looks much better in the flesh than in pictures.

The colours may take some getting used to, but they grow on you and once settled in you’ll not want to see another blue and white board from GIGABYTE.

GIGABYTE, not one to dub any motherboard “UD7” that didn’t deserve it, has provided their board with 3-way SLI support with full 16x lane PCI-E2.0 support on at least 2 slots, 4-way crossfire support, an incredible 6xSATA6Gbps ports and an even more amazing 18-USB ports. It’s not a typing error, and yes it is overkill, however if you’ve ever seen or heard of the X58A-UD9 you’ll know that “overkill” isn’t in GIGABYTE’s vocabulary. Even more interesting is that 10 of those USB ports are actually USB3.0 capable, with 6 at the rear and 4 additional

Benchmarks

CineBench 11.5	7.03	9.34
3DMark Vantage CPU	24,307	33,737
Everest Read	19,082	17,111
Everest Write	18,377	16,627
Everest Copy	22,243	16,441
Everest Latency	45.3	49.1
Super Pi 8M	117,000	125,175

■ Baseline: ASUS Rampage III Gene

Specifications

Chipset: Intel P67
Memory: 4x240-pin DDR3
CPU Support: Intel Core i3/i5/ i7 2XXX
Slots: 4xPCI-E 16x, (2 running x8), 1x PCI-E 1x, 2x PCI 2.2

ones via headers.

The rest is as you’d expect from a premium GIGABYTE motherboard including “Unlock Power” which is basically the ability to disable or enable OCP in the BIOS, 2 layers with 2 ounce copper traces, dual bios, XHD and the usual barrage of features that GIGABYTE packs into its high-end boards.

Basically the UD7 would be a good place to start if you were looking to build the ultimate P67 based machine. It may not have the EFI “BIOS” that other competitors are pushing heavily but it more than makes up for that in the vast amount of features it has.

NAG
Neo Sibeko

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + 10xUSB 3.0 Ports
- + Looks Great
- + Plenty of features

>Minus

- Price
- No EFI

>Bottom Line

GIGABYTE has done well given just how crippling the P67 chipset is for manufacturers.

08
 out of ten

Alienware M11x

MAKE NO MISTAKE – Alienware's M11x is a beast of a machine, considering its size. We've seen other ultraportable notebooks cry silicon tears of shame when the M11x struts into the room. They cower in corners and explode into thousands of tiny, shameful bits at the mere mention of the M11x. The M11x that was sent to us wasn't even the top of the M11x range (which costs a good deal extra, of course), yet it still impressed us with its mix of netbook portability and gaming notebook power.

The M11x was designed for PC gamers who want an ultraportable solution to their mobile-gaming woes. Alienware even provides the option to have Steam pre-installed (with a copy of *Portal*) on the machine for you. The device's performance is astounding – provided you've got the power cable plugged in. Running the *Resident Evil 5* benchmark on Alienware's machine spits out an impressive average FPS of 41.7 at a resolution of 1360x768 (as close to the M11x's native res of 1366x768 as we could get it) with 2X AA enabled. Unplug the power cable, however, and the average FPS drops to 23.2 – even with the power-saving settings disabled. That's still playable, but games that are more demanding than *Resident Evil 5* will require some tweaking of the graphics settings to maintain a decent framerate. Keep that cable plugged in, however, and most of today's games can be enjoyed at high settings with completely playable frame rates.

Unigine Heaven in DirectX 10 mode with no AA and 16X AF gives the M11x a respectable score of 463. Under heavy load, we managed to squeeze around 2 hours worth of battery



Specifications

Processor: Overclockable Intel Core i5 520UM (3M Cache, 1.06GHz)
GPU: 1GB NVIDIA GeForce GT335M (performance) | Intel integrated graphics (power saving)
RAM: 2GB Dual Channel DDR3 800MHz
Hard Drive: 160GB SATAII 5400 RPM
OS: Windows 7 Home Premium

life out of the M11x – which is great for a netbook, especially one as powerful as this. It's comfortable to use and Alienware's bundled AlienFX software lets you customise stuff like the colour of the notebook's LEDs. The screen is vibrant and bright. It's incredible that the folks at Alienware managed to cram so much power into an 11-inch notebook. This notebook would've scored higher, but we know that the model we were sent is not the most powerful M11x out there. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + Impressive performance
- + Good battery life
- + Ergonomic

>Minus

- Very expensive
- Irremovable battery

>Bottom Line

This really is the most powerful 11-inch notebook in the universe – but it's also the most expensive in SA.

08
out of ten

PIRATING OF GAMES IS A CRIME!

Don't Support Criminals!

Report them!



Thank you for Supporting Original Product!



GIGABYTE™

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Quality Innovation Performance



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Max CPU Power

Maximum CPU Power = Maximum CPU Performance

2X
Copper PCB



P67A-UD4



P67A-UD5



P67A-UD7



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