

# NAG

## Previews

Portal 2

Dead Island

Red Faction:

Armageddon

Dark Souls

## Reviews

Crysis 2

Dragon Age 2

Homefront

Total War: Shogun 2

## Saints Row 3

It's like GTA but with pirates, spacemen and more purple dildo bats?!

## Hardware

GIGABYTE launches their new gaming line motherboard with the G1.Sniper.

We promised we wouldn't sexualise the new Lara Croft, but she really is a dirty little girl.

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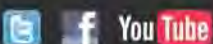
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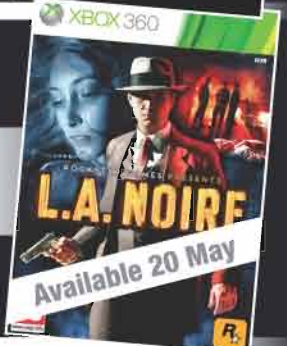
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 Bethesda

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## Regulars

- 10 Ed's Note
- 12 Inbox
- 14 Bytes
- 98 Game Over

## Opinion

- 14 I, Gamer
- 16 The Game Stalker
- 18 The Indie Investigator
- 20 Miktar's Meanderings
- 79 Hardwired
- 81 Life, Hardware and Ch@ps

## Features

- 38 **8 stupid attitudes that are spoiling it for everybody else**  
Our douch sense is tingling. How many of these are *you* guilty of?
- 40 **Saints Row: The Third**  
Come on down to Steelport, home of the Dildo Bat™!
- 46 **Online Distractions**  
Call us crazy, but we think the Internet is useful for more than just boredom-induced porn binges.
- 68 **Tomb Raider**  
We really respect this more down-to-earth, vulnerable Lara. We'd still happily get with the bangin' though.
- 92 **CPU Coolers: 4-Way Sub-Zero Shootout**  
Coolers so cool people will think you're smuggling raisins.



68

## Previews

- 26 Red Faction: Armageddon
- 30 Dead Island
- 32 Dark Souls
- 34 Anarchy Reigns
- 36 Portal 2



30

## Reviews

- 48 Reviews: Introduction
- 49 Short Reviews: Fable III DLC: Traitor's Keep / Hoard
- 50 Crisis 2
- 54 Dragon Age II
- 58 Homefront
- 60 Top Spin 4
- 62 Total War: Shogun 2
- 64 The Sims Medieval
- 65 Yakuza 4
- 66 de Blob 2
- 67 Swarm



62

## On the DVD

**Demos**  
Chernobyl Terrorist Attack / Men of War Assault Squad SP / Starpoint Gemini / Torchlight

**Drivers**  
AMD Radeon Windows XP|7|Vista (v11.2)32/64bit / GeForce 500 Series Windows XP|7|Vista (v267.85)32/64bit/ GeForce 9 Series Windows XP|7|Vista (v266.58)32/64bit

**Extras**  
3DMark Vantage v1.10 / Dragon Age 2 - High Resolution Texture Pack / Empty Folder  
**[Free Games]:** Red Eclipse (v1.0)  
**[Free Music]:** Profesor Kliq - Movements EP / Our Universe **[Free Magazines]:** Gamecca Volume 2 Issue 21 March 2011.pdf

**82 Videos**  
79 Game Trailers / 3 ScrewAttack Video Game Vault videos

## Hardware

- 76 Tech News
- 78 Lazy Gamer's Guide: Thermaltake Level 10 GT
- 80 Dream Machine
- 82 GIGABYTE G1.Sniper
- 84 HTC Mozart 7 / Kingston HyperX T1 Black 12GB
- 86 Intel Core i7 990X
- 88 Palit GTX 550 Ti Sonic / BIOSTAR TP67B+
- 90 Thrustmaster Universal Challenge Racing Wheel / Evetech i7 Gaming System
- 96 DIY - Modding 101: The Ghetto USB Cable Flash Drive



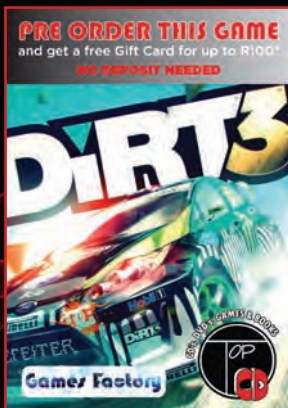
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## Dirt 3



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## The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings



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## Dungeon Siege III



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Release Date: 10 June 2011  
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## L.A. Noire



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# I thought I was safe from pain. I was wrong...

What pain? Safe? How? Why? What? Questions I'm sure you all have – okay maybe only the five of you in the front row then. The answer is simple and rather dull. I'm talking of course about the pain of public holidays. Yes, pubic (LOL) holidays! These things are great if you have a job/boss you hate or don't have anything important to accomplish each month. Here at NAG we love our jobs and have crazy deadlines to hit. Now, thanks to Easter (love the chocolate eggs I will admit) this magazine was forced through the deadline process two whole days earlier than usual (copy, design, adverts, the lot).

We're stressing two days earlier because people (apparently) can't work over religious holidays – the trucks can't drive or something. They prefer sitting at home doing nothing while the country drops billions in lost productivity. But hey, at least everyone can play games instead of earning their pay, right? The point? there might be a few spelling mistakes here and there, and if you do see any remember it's not our fault – blame the Easter bunny.

## WHEN MEDIA PARALLELS COLLIDE

We talk a lot of rubbish in the office. During any given day topics range from why *StarCraft 2* sucks as a game because we're eight games deep in an epic losing streak. Why Dane can't resist any Steam specials. Why Geoff should always use hair gel. Why Chris doesn't need any more RAM. How to fake a lightning strike to get free upgrades from insurance. What's for lunch? Why we have to wait for the coffee to be completely finished before anyone says something and so on. The garbage to useful ratio is about 100:1. One of the useful topics surfaced the other day and it was: Which movie director is similar to which creative director/developer/studio in the gaming industry? We had a lot of discussion, mostly disagreeing with each other's choices of 'top five directors' and if you could even compare stuff like this and so on. What follows is a very rough idea of where we ended up. It's not perfect... not by a long shot. Here we go.

James Cameron is similar to Crytek (*Crysis 2*) – they're both on the cutting edge of technology. J.J. Abrams is like id Software, a good solid performance overall but not breaking new ground recently. The genius Christopher Nolan (*Inception*) can be compared to Irrational Games – making deep thoughtful games like *BioShock*. Steven Spielberg is more or less like Valve, a magical and special game developer. Games like *Max Payne* and *F.E.A.R.* gave a nod to Zack Snyder and the Wachowski brothers with all their slow motion

bits. Honourable mentions go to Michael Bay, related to any *Call of Duty* game – plenty action and explosions but no depth. Uwe Boll was linked to any crap game you've ever played (*The Hell in Vietnam* for us). *Bulletstorm* and games like *Borderlands* end up drawing parallels to Robert Rodriguez. John Woo is like Hideki Kamiya (*Devil May Cry*) and Guillermo del Toro is like Masashi Tsuboyama (*Silent Hill*). Yes, it's not perfect, but it's the best we can cook up at the office – if you disagree or want to add to the list send mail to the usual address boys and girls.

## RAGE 2011

We have a new best friend. I'd like to officially welcome Samsung as our headline sponsor for rAge 2011. They've been participating at the show for a number of years and for 2011 have decided to take the plunge and put their name on it. Please remember them the next time you're out shopping for a shiny new monitor or 47" LCD 3D screen...

## COVER STORY

Geoff went to San Francisco for some hands on time with Lara (this was meant to be a sexist joke but actually he didn't get to play with her at all). He wanted me to use this valuable space to thank Karl and Chris from Crystal Dynamics for driving him around San Francisco and showing him the sites. I'm only going on about Lara and sex jokes this issue because he's been on about not sexualising this Lara – keeping her pure or something. Good lucky buddy. He also wanted to say thanks to EA for an awesome time in London. Besides *Portal 2* this issue there's plenty on *Alice: Madness Returns*, *Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning* and more in the June issue of NAG. Right, we're done.

Have a good one...

RedTide  
[Editor]

## SMS Competitions going forward

This is a disclaimer for the *Crysis 2* SMS competition in the April 2011 issue of NAG. The newly legislated consumer act has restrictions on what can be charged for SMS competitions which was effective 1 April 2011. We were only notified of all the restrictions after our April issue was already in distribution. Any campaigns which we initiate from 1 April 2011 onwards will be in line with the new act.

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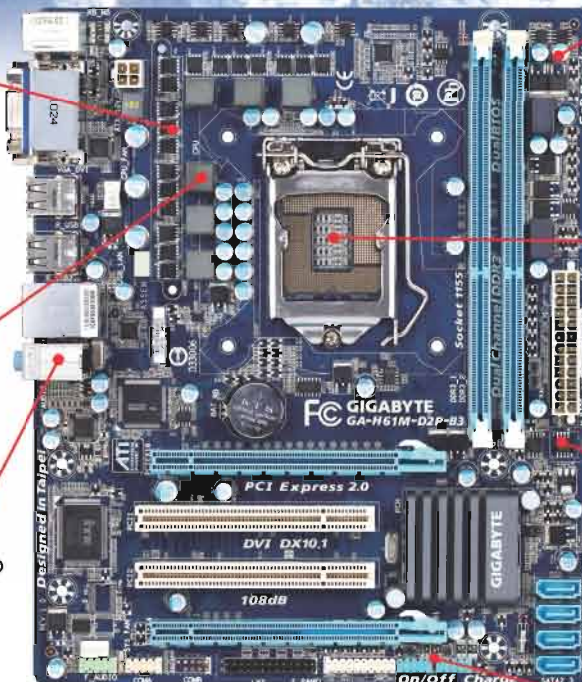
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## Letter of the Month May 2011

**From:** nUb\_Enforcer

**Subject:** Customer unsettled... I have recently decided in my own mind to go legit from now on. I bought all the main titles I have swindled and made sure I left none out (Although that really doesn't cover the fact that it was wrong in the first place). I was super happy to see the new *Crysis 2* game was a lot cheaper than most and so got in my pre-order quickly. Glad to be fully part of the gaming community, I installed the game only to find out there were so many bugs! I found the Multiplayer crashes annoying until it was fixed, then the random loss of levels (2 for me, some lost over 17!) and the amount of cheating on the servers totally pushed me to wonder why I ever went legit in the first place. It wasn't new for me either, *StarCraft 2*

had a huge amount of bugs in the beginning too, although I will admit, not as bad as this where people can change their levels to level 50 in under 5 minutes. But the point I'm getting at is why the big name developers release games, even for the sake of meeting their release dates, with so many bugs in it. It has come to the point where I won't even play a game online until I see that first patch. My question to you and the gaming community is this; why do developers feel the need to tarnish their online gaming name just because of a date. I would rather see the game come out a month later than see the forums littered with complaints and little response and experience a huge amount of frustration. A lot of moaning I know, but I guess if no one is talking about it, then the

issue becomes a way of life and nothing gets done.

*I don't believe for one second that any game developer would knowingly release a product that was seriously flawed (well, any decent ones anyway). But it does happen on occasion and be thankful for patches. Yes, I know there used to be a time when patches didn't exist. Back then we also didn't have great graphics and epic multiplayer environments and so on. I can relate to this a little with NAG. Each month we put it together with more love and attention than I think anyone would ever believe to discover when it's far too late that we missed a spelling mistake. It kills me inside, it really does, but we have to hit our deadlines or you'd only get one or two magazines a year. Ed.*



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

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**Important:** Include your details when mailing us, otherwise how will you ever get your prize if you win...

**From:** Kevin

**Subject:** Innovation not Carbon It's easy to see how desperate developers are getting to pull in gamers. After seeing *Far Cry 2*'s weapon jamming system I thought it would be common place in all future games, but I was mistaken. *Batman*'s unique melee combat, again noticed by gamers is ignored by developers. And the worst part is most of these systems are not copyrighted, yet the *Portal* system went in both *Prey* and *Portal* and is now being dropped for *Prey 2*. *Crysis 2* while it does have seemingly impeccable graphics, does it have anything we can't get from the original? And don't get me started on *Call of Duty*, when killing Russians gets old we move to slaughtering Vietcong (sarcasm). My point is, so many companies are trying things that they think are new and innovative when all they are creating are monstrosities who spit on their forbearers names, where is the innovation and creativity that used to spark this industry? *C&C 4* is a prime example of such a case, they used to be leaders in the RTS genre (or Blizzard take your pick) and they are now lying in the mud as *StarCraft 2* beats them to a pulp. Well, that's my 2 cents and with my fingers crossed I pray that *ME3* and *Deus Ex* will be all that is expected from them.

*I always say it's up to the gaming masses – they're the ones spending money on these games and developers are simply focusing on where they think the money is. If you want real change then spend some of your cash with independent developers. There are many excellent and innovative games out there and they're cheap too. Just one thing, StarCraft 2 is an amazing game but what exactly is innovative about it?;) Ed.*

**From:** Eswee

**Subject:** Dead Space 2 Review/Blog I just have to say that putting the blog as well instead of just the reviews was an epic idea. I think it's the future way of doing reviews LOL, and I hope it happens more often. It just felt so much like a

conversation that I would have with a friend, but anyway, I just had my first few plays through of *Dead Space 1*. I'm very much looking forward to the second.

*I tried calling Tarryn 'friend' once... The doctors said they couldn't save the ball but this hard latex one would feel just like the real thing. It really does, but doesn't hurt when I squeeze it like the other one – too much information? Probably, but I'm not going to miss an opportunity to put in another 'likes' the *Dead Space 2* review letter. Ed.*

**From:** Tommy

**Subject:** My life as a videogame Back in some distant issue of NAG, there was a tiny, tiny piece about *Call of Duty: Black Ops* and how Cuba, communist Cuba were reacting irrationally to the killing of Fidel Castro. I played the first *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* and it was an amazing game, but something made me think, how would the Americans and the rest of the western world (SA's part of this) react if the Russians or Iranians or any leftist bloc country would create a game based around killing American or British leaders? The rhetoric would be something amongst the lines of 'commie bastards' if they're feeling nostalgic or the new phrase 'terrorist plot' or if it's made by people of the desert 'of terrorist descent'. The general response to something like this is "it's just a video game", yes it is a videogame but it isn't just a videogame, videogames like it or not are quite possibly the easiest way to subconsciously influence a young sex-starved man boy. Videogames have become the new TV for most middle class kids, meaning what they probably see on a videogame will somehow influence the way they perceive reality or how they react to reality. Our dedication to our parents wallets have made this industry a heavy hitter, it's also made the window to our growing consciousness so much easier to burgle into. If any of you NAG writers are

**Shorts [extracts from LOL n00b from NAG reader letters]**

"I know I sound about crazy, but please, hear me out."  
– Jordan

"I love the new layout of the magazine and the feel of it."  
– Jason

"I would just like to express my disgust at the cheapness of NAG. How dare you bestow upon us, your loyal readers only one one-dollar bill."  
– Kyle

"It seems strange for such a small thing to do so much to do one person."  
– Tristan

undercover slaves to the great Satan then it's always nice to know that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.

*It's interesting how that all works – bad guys and computer games (movies and books too). I personally prefer zombies and aliens (although I wonder... one day when we've met and made peace with an alien race how they'll feel when we still make games that involve killing aliens). Do bear in mind that games set in the past will have historic enemies (Russians and Germans); Of course this is from the perspective of the people making the games. I should also include a quote here about history being written by the victors. As far as modern games are concerned... I think it's generally accepted by the civilised world that if you blow yourself up and kill innocent people then you are a bad guy. Haven't you noticed how the 'bad guys' are now all from dusty deserts somewhere. I haven't shot a modern day German or Japanese bad guy in ages. The bottom line is always going to be fiction versus reality. If you can't tell the difference get help but your underlying point is definitely on the money. Ed.*

**From:** Sebastian

**Subject:** Recommendations What videogames should I play? You guys know a lot about games and I know that you put Ed's choice on some reviews but I was thinking that maybe you could write back with a huge list of games that you love.

*Err, umm... We do that every month. You're holding it in your hands right now – a huge list of games we love (we love some of them less than others of course – but we do love them all). Ed.*

**From:** Dirk

**Subject:** Good work I want to thank the NAG magazine dream team for putting a super great magazine together with lots of fun, great and useful stuff. NAG is a good quality magazine

## NAG Fan artwork

This is the cream of the crop that we received at NAG this issue. If you 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. Remember, don't just stick the logo on a picture – use the logo in a picture or you win squat.



Bevan Wentzel, "I created this animation recently in blender it took me about 3 weeks to do. The animation is here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXKd46QL3c>. Great work at NAG - keep it up!"

for a very cheap prize compared to other boring gaming magazine's that are more than double the prize of the NAG. So all the people that don't like NAG can go screw themselves.

*I have to confess to something. I get maybe 1 letter a month where someone seriously complains about something we've done. I always respond to every letter I get and when I do reply to those nasty letters I usually get a reply back saying sorry and thanking me for even bothering to care to reply. I always publish the nasty letters because if I didn't everyone would think we only ever choose letters that sing our praises. It's my 'transparent' attempt to paint an unbiased picture of our readership. The interesting thing is, out of all the hundreds of letters we do get over a 4-5 week period I usually only ever get 1 unhappy one. So we must be doing something right. Additionally, those unhappy letter writers do sometimes make a good point and I enjoy criticism – it shows me people care about NAG. Ed.*

**From: Marius**

**Subject:** Death to DLC

Now I know millions will disagree but F-them. I hate DLC in games. I am an avid PS3 gamer, okay, I lie I'm an addicted PS3 gamer. I think DLC is the worst invention since vibrators (yes they make men less needed and likely to be needed). I cannot understand why I should pay 20, 30, 50 rand for extra levels, characters, features that should have been included in the game from release. And then I need to use my precious bandwidth to download the extra features. Look developers I've already paid 600 bucks for the game I'm not going to fork out more cash for you to drive a new Ferrari. And then worst of all, 6 months later the "game of the year" or "complete collector's edition" launch for 200 less than my original price that I paid, and it includes all the DLC on the disk! Or worst still, you need to buy the game but that just the offline game, to go online you need to pay membership fees and all sorts of donkey farts. Take TDU 2, the casino interested me, but wait that's online only, fair enough let's get connected and then umm, oops wait I need to Pay for the casino DLC WTF. Why not add the DLC for free in patches?

Until very recently games like *Diablo 2* introduced major new features, items and gameplay enhancements with a mere patch, that I do not have to pay for.

DLC is just a huge cash cow and I think we as gamers should revolt. Hey if wage increases can be reached with strikes why not better quality games? Now if only I were not so darn addicted to my PlayStation it would be so much easier.

*You make a good point and you're not the first person to complain about DLC. New, fresh and exciting content used to be a 'thank you' for buying our game, now it's something they charge for. Boo. This is the way of the world and I'm afraid to say that there's nothing you can do to change it... But wait, there is... Don't buy the DLC. LOL. Ed.*

**From: Marius**

**Subject:** Interior decorating

Need some advice. Last month I started decorating my lounge with all things game related. Things like action figures, limited edition games and a few posters. I even went as far as decorating my Sony 6.2 channel home theatre. Now the only thing that's left is an empty wall behind my TV. It's about 2,2m x 3,0m. I need to also fill it with something game related. Any ideas or suggestions – someone suggested my NAG magazine covers (magazines since 2004). I'll never do that.

*I was going to make a joke about getting a girlfriend but then I just realised my lounge looks like that too. :) I'd say a few arcade cabinets or a pinball machine or how about an oil painting of your favourite game character. Ninja swords, movie prop replicas, a juke box, your porn collection in a hidden wall section, a London telephone booth, game graffiti, and so on also spring to mind. Come on readers, any other suggestions for Marius to the usual address please. Ed.*

**From: Maurice**

**Subject:** Evil Forums

Well I bought *Killzone 2* in December month, because I'm a budget gamer and after completing it I got real excited for number 3 this month. So I went online and watched clips trying to figure out how will the next one be, hoping for secondary fire returning, bigger areas and other returning characters. I am glad to find out that we'll get bigger areas, a more detailed look into the Halgan lifestyle and I heard something about total destructible environments (not expecting a frostbite engine). Something that caught my attention is one line from the developer, he said, 'We've been reading discussions forums and listening to players and trying to make the changes in the next game', well something like that.

What really disturbs me about this is that if you look into it then the game you're playing is a game made by complainers and where do these people go to talk to the developers. I loved the first *Killzone*, unlike the people that complained. Yes, number 2 a bit better but still number 1 will still be the greater one. Luckily they listen to all the complaints and 3 looks real promising, can't wait for it. What my point really is, yes games are meant to be made for fans, but with all these complaining

## On the Forums

**Question:** Do you think Lara Croft (as we knew her before the reveal of the upcoming *Tomb Raider* reboot) is still relevant in today's gaming world – or has old-school Lara worn out her welcome? Is the character still important to you?

**Jerkydarkstar:** The old Lara will always be important to me; she's like my first girlfriend that will never be forgotten.

**echo:** Definitely still important. While other heroines are still struggling with the objectification thing, Lara has moved past that and has become an iconic character and not just boobs.

**Changsta 187:** That old Lara Croft will always be that impression of the *Tomb Raider* games.

**Darranged:** When it comes to female protagonists, Lara Croft is the face that represents them all, as the character has become the modern day basis for which everyone else has been modelled after.

**Miz3r:** All games have their main hero or character that sticks out more than others, but for games like *TOMB RAIDER* which solely dependent on a single character, that persona of the character you play as will be forever embedded in your mind, no matter how many times the character changes or undergoes drastic improvements the name will always be remembered especially if its Lara Croft the treasure hunting, gun wielding, badass in hot pants and army boots.

**EndKreator:** Lara Croft won't wear out her welcome anytime soon seeing as even if she undergoes re-modelling, the mere name still manages to re-kindle an old flame. Chicks with guns/swords, she paved the way... and that way looks damn good.

**nukehead:** The thing about the original *Tomb Raider*/Lara Croft is this: Those games were actually good, innovative fun. Is she relevant? Was she ever relevant? Meh, I dunno. I guess what I'm trying to say is that the allure of playing with / as a woman was tired after five minutes but the game lasted much longer in my mind. The sequel is still one of the best games I ever put in my PlayStation.

**Zoop:** *Tomb Raider* was never about Lara; it was about exploring caves and shooting wolves. The old Lara signifies a time when games didn't need a typical Hollywood heroine to be good.

**5h@un13:** For me, Lara Croft is like the original girl next door, and I'm sure she is for many of us. What keeps her relevant to us is all those memories that we love and share with her.

**Slither:** The old Lara Croft is still very relevant in my gaming world. She has a MASSIVE, brilliant history behind her, and to scrap all that and start from scratch...not so sure it's gonna work.

**Xperimance:** I haven't been much of a *Tomb Raider* fan but Lara Croft is the face of the series. When you think Lara Croft then *Tomb Raider* pops up in your mind so I'm guessing she's still very relevant in today's society.

**Toxyc:** Lara Croft = *Tomb Raider*. The New Chick = Bang-able Character from over-milked *Tomb-Raider*-Sequel-cow.

**ZoRPA:** Lara Croft will always relate to the game that set the benchmark for the genre. She is just as relevant today as when she first graced our screens. I cannot wait for the latest incarnation.

**Implants itch? Come talk to us. Almost everyone is welcome:** <http://www.nag.co.za/forums/>

forums the game may be made for the wrong fans.

*I wouldn't worry too much about that. It's a well-known fact that the Internet is full of people moaning and complaining. They are what experts call the vocal minority and any company that listens to them exclusively is headed for certain disaster. For balance, it's important to hear all the opinions (both the good and the bad) but never to deviate from your original vision. Ed.*

## Fail to the king, baby



**B**utt-smacking: it's been coming up in games lately, which is really weird. What's also weird is that this will be the second column in which the flirtatious act has (weak pun approaching!) reared its head (warned you). Last month it was *We Dare* that incorporated the act, but this month? Well, this month it's Duke's turn.

The inconceivable has happened and *Duke Nukem Forever* has been delayed – boo! Gearbox, however, has since announced a Capture the Flag multiplayer mode called Capture the Babe – yay! Wait, wuh?

Instead of a flag you're capturing the opposing team's babe. It's politically incorrect, but, dare I say it, entirely suited to the *Duke Nukem* franchise. So where's the butt-smacking? That comes in once you've captured the babe; she'll be disinclined to accompany you and will put up a fight. Nothing a little "reassuring smack" on the butt won't fix though. Yes it's lame, it's crass, it's horribly sexist but come on people, it's Duke Nukem. It's not like we should have expected anything else.

"Is she suggesting that young women's implied delicate sensitivity needs protecting from this sort of crass, tongue-in-cheek things?"

Still, the internet imploded with divided opinions. Once the furore calmed down, Fox News jumped onto the slowing bandwagon like the champion of moral society proclaiming *Duke Nukem Forever* to be the latest threat to human existence. They even got equally indignant people, like Jamia Wilson from the Women's Media Centre, to add fuel to the hysteria bonfire by proclaiming: "these depictions of women are extremely harmful, especially to young women".

I find the "especially to young women" part a little confusing. Is she suggesting that young women's implied delicate sensitivity needs protecting from this sort of crass, tongue-in-cheek things? Are young women more fragile because they've yet to develop some sort of armour that does "+10 to defence against sexual objectification of females"? I was under the impression that gamers had above average intelligence and were thus able to discern absurd satire over blatant misogyny.

Or maybe Wilson is suggesting that young women will become the victims of real life re-enactments of Capture the Babe, as men somehow devolve into cavemen after playing *Duke Nukem Forever*. If so, then I am offended – not really, but there's so much personal offense flying around that I was feeling left out.

If players had to beat the babe senseless so that she was unconscious and easier to carry, then I would wholeheartedly object, and the camps crying foul and accusing the multiplayer mode of promoting violence against women would have my support. But the "love pat on the ass" (as worded by Gearbox CEO Randy Pitchford) is so overtly chauvinistic that I'm battling to take it seriously, especially within the context of a game that is already steeped in satire and absurdity. What's more, the mere fact that Duke is under the misconception that the only way to calm an understandably irate woman would be to administer a "love pat", makes him come across as even more ridiculous than the act itself. Is he that conceited that he considers his butt-slap to be the only calming affect a woman would ever need? Of course he is; he's Duke Nukem. He's a first class, male chauvinist asshole being held up for ridicule, so let's not take him too seriously, mmkay? Besides, there are way more realistic examples of chauvinism in an episode of *Mad Men*, but because there's an air of "that's what it was like back then" nobody gives it a second thought.

Miklós Szecsei

## Anno looks to the future



**W**ell we'll be a monkey's collective uncle – we sure as hell didn't see this one coming. The *Anno* series has always looked to the past for its management/strategy inspiration, beginning in the year 1602, then quickly leaping ahead to 1701 before heading back to the year 1404 with the most recent title. Now the developers over at Related Designs and Blue Byte have surprised fans of the series by revealing the next step in the *Anno* timeline. It's the year 2070.

So it's, like, the future man. And there are all these, like, flashy lights and stuff man. And the corporations man, like, those corporations are everywhere man. Or something. Caroline Stevens, EMEA Brand Director at Ubisoft, had this to say:

"*Anno 2070* is a very ambitious game that will feel both familiar and fresh to fans of the series. Due to the game's futuristic setting, the development team wasn't restricted by historical boundaries and was able to dream bigger than ever before. It's a new take on a great franchise that both newcomers and longtime fans will love."

Fans need not worry, because the developers have promised to stick to the fundamental formula that makes the *Anno* series so unique. The futuristic

setting, however, does mean that there'll be new gameplay mechanics, new challenges and "architectural breakthroughs" – which we're guessing means architecture *from the future* \*gasp\*. Players will be able to build cities on a scale that was previously impossible and can choose between two factions: the Tycoons or the Ecos. As their names imply, the Tycoons are an efficient industrial powerhouse, while the Ecos are all about sustainability and saving the koalas man.

The promise of a dynamic world that reacts to your play style and choices sounds very enticing. Your every decision will impact the environment, the architecture and the population of your world. Sounds like you're going to have to think things through if you don't want to screw things up irreparably. Game modes that will be on offer include a single-player campaign, the always excellent continuous mode and a host of multiplayer options. The campaign will challenge you with numerous missions, while the continuous mode is a fun exercise in endless civilization progression. It looks like this'll offer up the same enthralling gameplay that the series is known for, but with a very intriguing futuristic touch.

## Return of the Jedi

**G**amasutra brings news that LucasArts has rehired Tim Longo, who up until recently was the creative/franchise director for *Tomb Raider* over at Crystal Dynamics. We say rehired, because this isn't Longo's first LucasArts rodeo. He's worked with the company before on several *Star Wars* titles, such as *Star Wars: Starfighter*, *Jedi Starfighter* (Longo was lead designer on both those titles) and the eternally impressive *Star Wars: Republic Commando* – for which Longo is credited as creative director. A LucasArts representative simply stated that the company is "thrilled to welcome him back to the LucasArts family." Whatever unannounced project Longo is working on, we're guessing it's going to have *Star Wars* in the title.



## Three-dimensional success

Seems Nintendo has yet another winner on their hands with the 3DS, despite initial complaints from consumers about the high price point. In its first day on sale in the US, Nintendo's 3D wunderkind had the highest day-one sales of any handheld in the company's history. While Nintendo hasn't revealed the exact US sales numbers at the time of writing this, we're going to go ahead and assume that the total sales lie somewhere in the region between "crapton" and "OMG."



Meanwhile, in Europe, the 3DS shifted approximately 303 000 units in its opening weekend, with around 113 000 of those units having been bought in the UK. Again, this makes the 3DS the fastest-selling handheld Nintendo has ever released in the UK. Nintendo went on to point out that the 3DS even tops "the number achieved by Nintendo's market-leading home console Wii" in the UK. Looks like it's high fives all round for Nintendo's employees.



## Evil Dead game coming to iOS devices

Here's a fun fact: Duke Nukem was not the first ass-kicking, egotistical hero to spout forth the line "hail to the king, baby". That claim to fame goes to Ash Williams, who is played by legendary actor Bruce Campbell in the Evil Dead series of Sam Raimi horror films. If you haven't seen Army of Darkness then you really need to do yourself a favour and find a copy; you'll spend most of the movie saying, "Hey! That's what Duke says!" when in actuality you should have spent most of the time playing Duke Nukem 3D saying "Hey! That's what Ash says!"

For owners of iPads and iPhones, developer Trigger Apps is making an Evil Dead game just for you. The project even has Sam Raimi's seal of approval and is described as an "action-heavy 3D shooter". There will be thirty chapters to play through as you take on the role of Ash, armed with his boomstick and chainsaw-hand. You'll no doubt be required to slaughter thousands of evil dead creatures, and possibly possessed trees that have a lust for human women. Don't ask.

The game should be available now for \$2.99 on iPhone and \$4.99 on iPad.

Look, over here – some free stuff!

// If you've been holding off on playing Telltale's lovable *Back to the Future* games because you'd rather spend your money on far less important things like food, your child's tuition and electricity, then you've just had that excuse taken away from you. Well, sort of. The first episode of Telltale's time-travelling episodic adventure is now free on PC and Mac, but if you enjoy the hell out of that and want to play the rest of the episodes in the season, you'll have to fork over some dough. Anyone who's interested should head over to <http://www.telltalegames.com/bttf>, create a Telltale account and voila – free stuff. If you already have an account, just sign in and you'll suddenly have free things.

## Ready to drop over R2000 on DIRT 3?

// No? Well don't panic just yet, because there will be an ordinary version released. That being said, Codemasters has announced a special Ken Block Gymkhana RC Car Bundle priced at \$299.99 for the USA. While still marked as "To Be Confirmed" for Europe (and by extension South Africa), the special edition comes with a replica Ken Block remote-controlled car.

That's all very good and all, but does it have a spycam and replica C4 charge on it somewhere? No? Pffft, who wants that then?



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## "HUD gal"



Am I allowed to rant in this column? Well, I don't really know, but I guess the all-seeing powers that be would have told me if I can't. Don't read this if you're stupid. Or lazy. This is about you.

I'm going to point out firstly that I'm a bit of a grammar and spelling Nazi. I hate bad spelling, and MXIT slang most of all. If you manage to spell a word with more letters than it actually has in it just to be "kwl", I really don't understand the point.

Speaking of points - I dislike lazy gamers. Stupid gamers are merely lacking in mental acuity, although they are know-it-all's, which makes them annoying, but nevertheless you can at times overlook it. Lazy gamers on the other hand are the worst kind.

The real problem is the fact that they don't realise the questions they ask are not only rude (they're too lazy to be bothered with things like pleasantries) but the answers to which can be found freely on the Internet.

"I dislike lazy gamers. Stupid gamers are merely lacking in mental acuity, although they are know-it-all's, which makes them annoying"

Example. A message sent to me on Facebook: "Hud gal cn u tel me wen (insrt mizspld gam hre) iz cumng owt n iz it gona b on (my platform)".

**Answer I compose in my head:** Are you so lazy that you can't be bothered to write out "how you doing" so instead have to write "hud"? (Yes it took me a second). And don't call me "gal." Additionally don't call me "Pipz". Only my friends call me that - I'm not your friend and we've never met therefore you are not at liberty to shorten my name in that manner. You may call me Pippa. That's it. Nothing else. Not "gal", not "chick", not "fwend", not "Pipz". Clear? Right, moving on.

Ok, now let's get to the crux of your question. That means the point. You asked me when so and so misspelled game was due for release. Well let us think about this clearly. If you're asking about *GTA V*, "THERE IS NO CURRENT *GTA V* RELEASE DATE!" When it's announced, you'll know.

If it's some other random game, well firstly you'd think that if it was a game you really cared about you'd manage to spell it correctly. Seriously. It's not that hard. You supposedly went to school.

Secondly, you do realise you could just Google this information? You're obviously online, even if it is only on your phone otherwise you wouldn't have been able to send me this message. Which means that you could just as easily have gone to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and typed in "misspelled game release date". Or maybe that's what you did but you spell it so badly that even Google couldn't autocorrect it?

You do also know that the omnipotent (another biggie there) Wikipedia also has release dates and platforms on it? So you can type in "misspelled game" and it will magically come up with all the details including the platform and date of release across territories.

Plus even though you've heard a million times that this game is an EXCLUSIVE, you still can take the time to send me a message and ask if it will come out on your console in the hopes that I'll magically be able to make it so?

I won't be your lackey and do your dirty work for you. (Insert perfectly spelled expletive here) off.

**Answer I actually give:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ur\\_Mizspeld\\_Gam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ur_Mizspeld_Gam).

Pippa Tshabalala

## GameStop buys Impulse, Spawn Labs

Retailers may be terrified that digital distribution might eventually take over the planet, but Texas-based US games retailer GameStop isn't going to go down without a fight. They've announced that they've acquired Impulse (Stardock's digital distribution service and one of the biggest competitors to the behemoth that is Valve's Steam) and Spawn Labs.

GameStop's purchase of Impulse comes as a massive surprise. We've been assured that Stardock (developer and publisher of titles like *Galactic Civilizations*, *Sins of a Solar Empire* and *Elemental: War of Magic*) and Impulse are two separate business units, so this does not mean that GameStop now owns the developer/publisher. As such, apparently there will be no layoffs, the staff remains at Impulse and they still handle customer service. They're actually hiring new employees. Stardock's CEO spoke out about the sale:

"Not everyone's goal in life is to run a thousand person company," said Brad Wardell, founder of Stardock. "Certainly the path of least resistance would have been to just grow with Impulse and become a digital retailer, but that's not what I signed up for." Looks like game development is where Wardell's heart is.

"Last year, because Impulse's revenue was growing so much, more resources were being dedicated to it," said Wardell. "We were either going to have to become a retailer, or we were going to have to find some other way." Wardell wanted to find another company that was happy to run Impulse as an online retailer. The problem was finding the right company for the job. "At that point, who would be the best partner who was already a retailer? Not some startup, not someone who's getting into retail, but someone who knows retail and who knows games, who would provide the biggest boost to the PC market?"

"Impulse obviously is not the number one by far in terms of market share,"

stated Wardell plainly, "but it has three, four million users and is growing rapidly. So when you combine our technology, which is state-of-the-art and continuing, with GameStop's user base and retail experience, you have a pretty compelling story."

Stardock's games will continue to be exclusively on Impulse for the foreseeable future and Wardell truly believes that this sale will provide a massive boost to PC gaming. "This is such a huge win for PC gamers. As far as the PC, there's so many other ways to interact with digital entertainment than going to a brick-and-mortar store and buying a box. So having someone like GameStop get involved and become a major player in this space greatly increases the opportunities for developers like us and all of the other indies out there."

Meanwhile, Spawn Labs is a tech group working on a cloud-based gaming service similar to OnLive. Looks like Gamestop hopes to get into that game as well.

A typical example of an impulse buy. (Get it? Get it? It's like a pun mixed with an innuendo and stuff...)



## Prey 2: now with 100% less portals

Every time we hear something new about *Prey 2*, we get slightly more worried. It's not that we're assuming the game will be bad before we've even had a chance to play it, but things like the reveal that Domasi "Tommy" Tawodi won't return as the protagonist have us a bit concerned that *Prey 2* will be more of a stock-standard shooter than its much-loved forebear was. What about the Spirit Walking? What about Tommy's awkward existential quandaries?

Now news has made its way across the lands of the Internet that the portals and gravity manipulation that made the original such an interesting experience will not feature in the sequel. The

developers over at Human Head offered this explanation:

"We explored a lot of the ways you could use portals and gravity in combat, and I really wanted to shift away from making it too much of a puzzle game," said lead designer Chris Reinhart in a discussion with *PSM3*. "Portals and gravity were the functions of *The Sphere* [the mothership in the original game]. And *The Sphere's* gone."

We've got plenty of faith in Human Head Studios, but all these changes have us prematurely worried that we're just going to be lumped with a mindless shooter that boasts none of the first game's charm and panache.



## Polished maturity

In an interview with *Edge*, Tomasz Gop dropped some interesting tidbits relating to the development of *The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings*. Gop (senior producer over at developer CD Projekt) admitted that the game draws inspiration from titles like *Heavy Rain*, *Demon's Souls* and *Batman: Arkham Asylum*. It seems the team were quite impressed by *Demon's Souls* in particular, because Gop suggests that people will see elements reminiscent of it in CD Projekt's upcoming title.

He also spent a bit of time discussing their ill-fated outsourcing of a console remake of the original *Witcher*, confessing that it wasn't the best idea. The cancelled project did teach them a valuable lesson, however: that it's best to focus on one game to give it the polish it deserves. "If we were ever to do it again, like a console version for *Witcher 2* for example, we'd definitely want to do it in-house," stated Gop.

The team that is working on the sequel's script (which is being written in English and Polish simultaneously) is mostly comprised of the same bunch of writers that worked on the original. Gop stresses that this is, as with the first game, a strictly adult title. Younger players might not fully grasp the consequences of their choices within the game, but the mature, branching storyline should ensure that adults will find plenty to enjoy when the game finally hits shelves this May.



### Just Cause developer gone renegade

// Avalanche Studios, developers behind the excellent *Just Cause* series, have announced that they're working on a top-down, twin-stick vehicular shooter called *Renegade Ops* – built in the same engine that powers *Just Cause 2*. Local co-op for two players (with that number increasing to four players for online play) will feature, as will plenty of shooting and explosions and stuff. We think senior producer Andreas "Snygg" Thorsén described it best:

"The IP is all about driving or flying around blowing stuff up while playing with your friends and that to us, is a dream-project." Speaking with *Eurogamer*, Thorsén revealed that the team were looking at *Shadow Complex*, and wanted to see if they could pull off something similar: a game that sports modern graphics, but with old-school attitude. "Renegade Ops takes its cues in this regard from Konami's 1983 cult classic *Jackal*, and 1993 hits *Cannon Fodder* and *Jungle Strike*."

The game is due out sometime this year on PC, XBLA and PSN.

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## Show me the money! (Please?)



When you become an independent game developer, you implicitly agree to board the same rickety boat that many of the world's starving artists are already rowing on. There's never enough money and it's difficult to get the audience to take you seriously. Even if your final product contains enough skill and artistic integrity to wow an expert jury of your peers, chances are you'll still roll over and die before you get anywhere.

Being in a place like South Africa really doesn't help – though not for the reasons you'd expect. Our economy and local talent pool can support development studios of all kinds. The research is there. The numbers and fancy charts are there. Genuine success stories are already popping up. Going into detail would require several more pages of explanation, but the summary is this: our main stumbling block is perception. Too many South African capitalists still don't understand gaming well enough to realise how lucrative it is, or how to distinguish a

"The fate of the South African development industry – nay, the fate of the universe itself – depends on local venture capitalists brushing up on their gaming knowledge..."

genuinely promising proposal from a dud.

At QCF Design, the local studio I work for, we hear financial horror stories from our peers all the time. We have one of our own right now, and the situation seems quite baffling. QCF has been in existence for three years. Last year, it began work on a self-funded project called *Desktop Dungeons*. Throughout 2010, the freeware game received critical acclaim, press coverage from esteemed publications like *Edge*, and even had the team at PopCap addicted for months. That's the creators of *Bejeweled* and *Plants vs. Zombies* telling us that they found our game hopelessly addictive.

In March 2011, our team flew up to the GDC in San Francisco to accept an international award for excellence in game design (wrestling the title away from competitors like *Minecraft*), and all over the world the commercial version of *DD* is regarded as one of the most anticipated indie releases of the year. Heck, even Wil Wheaton and Peter Dinklage are enthused about the damn thing. We'd be hard-pressed to demonstrate the game's potential any more clearly than this, and we aren't scratching around the bottom of the achievements barrel: the GDC alone is considered a heavyweight event on any game developer's calendar (both indie and AAA) and for the most part, the numbers speak for themselves.

Unfortunately, it's still incredibly difficult to get local investors to take the game seriously. Even rattling off such a promising list of accolades will get you nothing more than a polite smile and a pat on the back from many South African businessmen when it comes to asking for small amounts of much-needed capital – even when said businessmen state that they're actively looking for projects to invest in. All the name-dropping and award listing means nothing if the listeners don't understand who or what you're talking about in the first place.

It's a weird and alarming situation to be stuck in, particularly when riding on bankruptcy. It's also not unique to QCF. The fate of the South African development industry – nay, the fate of the universe itself – depends on local venture capitalists brushing up on their gaming knowledge as quickly as possible. There's more to this industry than mobile advergaming and broken Facebook apps, and local indies have the potential to build it up. All they need is support where it counts.

Rodain Joubert

## Does whatever two Spider-Men can

Activision has announced yet another game starring your friendly neighbourhood webslinger, in development over at Beenox: the same bunch who created *Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions*. It's called *Spider-Man: Edge of Time* and affords gamers the opportunity to take on the role of both Amazing Spider-Man (Peter Parker edition) and Spider-Man 2099 (Miguel O'Hara edition). The story involves broken "timestreams" (not our words – that's from a press release) or some such as you travel backwards and forwards through time to prevent a future gone insane thanks to the early death of Peter Parker. So you're basically playing as Spider-Man, trying to save Spider-Man. Creeeepppyyy.

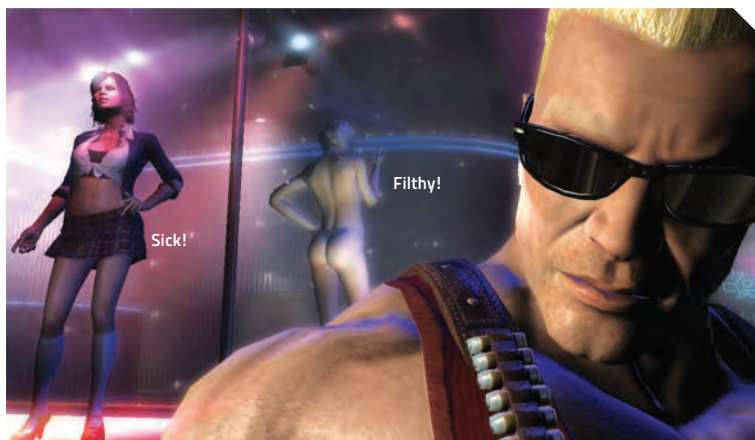
"At Beenox, we are constantly listening to the fans and looking for new and creative ways to innovate the gameplay experience for them," said Dee Brown, Beenox studio head. "We want to create a totally distinct experience in *Spider-Man: Edge of Time* by working with Peter David on the story and creating this urgent, high-stakes experience where time is working against you and the fate of Spider-Man hangs in the balance."

Peter David is a Marvel veteran, co-creator of the Spider-Man 2099 comic book series and he's working on the



game's story. Naturally, the game is set in two distinct timelines and boasts new "cause-and-effect" gameplay, where one Spider-Man changes the timeline of the other Spider-Man. If Amazing Spider-Man, for example, were to destroy a prototype robot in his time, the finished robot won't exist in *Spider-Man 2099's* timeline. Whoa. We're not sure if that's effective time manipulation or just lazy robot engineers, but we'll roll with it, because it all sounds interesting enough.

## Ban that sick filth!



A delightful (read: moronic) online petition has popped up on the Internets that kindly (but not really) requests that Walmart refrain from selling *Duke Nukem Forever*. What's the reason for all this needless petitioning, you ask? The answer is simple: sexism. They're labelling DNF as "sexist" – specifically the game's Capture the Babe multiplayer mode.

"In this disturbing version of 'capture the flag' the player is tasked with kidnapping a woman from his enemy's base, throwing her over his shoulder, and carrying her back to his base to share the spoils," says Shelby Knox, one of the

petitioners. "If she starts to 'freak out,' the player is encouraged to slap her on the butt until she shuts up. To be clear, *Duke Nukem Forever* makes a game out of physical and sexual violence against women ... the Capture the Babe mode of the *Duke Nukem* game, which will be played primarily by young people, sends the message that physical and sexual violence against women is normal, acceptable, and even funny. It's not -- and we have to say so."

Seriously people – this is a game that lets you shrink your enemies before giddily squishing them under your Mighty Boot. Try not to take it all *too* seriously.

## Life on the streets

Rocksteady Studios' Dax Ginn has revealed that 80% of *Batman: Arkham City* will take place in the great, polluted outdoors of Gotham. "Interiors are locked to specific missions, but 80% of the game takes place on the streets," said Ginn while speaking with *PSM3*. "This means you can begin the game and just start exploring. Our objective was not to make a bigger game world just for the sake of it. We want to fill it with content, and there's no better world than Batman's universe to take inspiration from."



## Super Meatier Boy

If you've been looking for an excuse to click the big, flashing "Purchase" button next to *Super Meat Boy* on Steam's store page, you've just been handed one. The PC version of this excellent, deviously challenging (but highly rewarding) platformer has just been updated with a new level portal for user-generated content, dubbed Super Meat World. This portal currently serves up eight custom-made chapters (which add up to around 140 levels) that have been created by various players and developers.



In order to access all this glorious new content, you simply need to move left of Chapter 1 in the menu – but you'll only be able to do so once you've collected at least 20 bandages from the original levels. On top of this, you'll also find a public beta of the *Super Meat Boy* level editor. "The editor will allow people to basically create anything they have seen in game and upload it to Super Meat World with the click of a button," said Edmund McMillen, co-founder/co-CEO of *SMB* developer Team Meat. "Users will also eventually gain the ability to create full chapters that can be uploaded and rated by other users."

Once the level editor is stable enough, Team Meat plans to enable "The Unknown" – an exciting new feature that'll randomly gather up a bunch of user-created levels and provide you with an unpredictable, impromptu set of new challenges. The potential for a different experience and a new set of challenges each time you load up the game is fantastic, which makes the game's \$15 price tag on Steam even more alluring.



## Silent Hill: Revelation 3D movie gets a beefed up cast

Michael J. Bassett is making a new *Silent Hill* movie. The sequel to 2006's excellent game-to-movie production sees returning cast members Sean Bean, Radha Mitchell and Deborah Kara Unger. Now, two new big Hollywood names have been added to the cast: Carrie-Anne Moss and Malcolm McDowell.

Most will remember Carrie-Anne Moss as Trinity from *The Matrix* films. She also had a role in *Memento* and then pretty much disappeared from larger films altogether. Moss will play Claudia Wolf from *Silent Hill 3*. Malcolm McDowell will play alongside her as Leonard Wolf.

*Silent Hill: Revelation 3D* will hit cinemas next year. Those who haven't seen the first *Silent Hill* film should totally check it out because it is one of those extremely rare movies that made a good transition from game to big screen. In seemingly unrelated news, the first *Matrix* film came out twelve years ago – great, now we feel old.



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## "The Revenge of Sh1t Mountain"



// The Revenge of Sh1t Mountain," is one guy's opinion on a forum somewhere, referencing a *Dragon Age 2* screenshot where amazing warrior dude is jumping over what looks like a giant pile of poop. "It hits the copy/paste button one too many times," is another opinion. One more opinion: The visuals look like ass.

I wonder, is BioWare no more?

The composer for *Dragon Age 2* went on at large to mention that he was very unhappy with his work on *Dragon Age 2*. He said a lot of the musical scores in the game are just prototype tracks, nowhere near complete. His opinion was that the whole project was a rush job. Hastily slapped together, nowhere near complete or tested enough – released at the command of the publisher.

Here's what I think. Electronic Arts did wrong. They coerced BioWare to put out a crap game, and even enlisted their employees to man the good ship Viral Marketing\*. The game is sub-standard in my opinion, since

"Piracy... it's so often an overly convenient yet rather transparent scapegoat when a company rushes a game out prematurely and the product suffers in sales."

I feel with the price of games today we're paying far too much for what we sometimes get.

We all know the risks: videos that don't show the whole story. Reviews are opinions and all the pitfalls with it. Previews can be overly judgemental, or biased or shallow or glossy or feature articles, which were probably paid for in sexual favours and cover deals and thus just a giant ad... but not NAG. Dude, we don't all swing that way. Demos are short, but often intentionally misleading products.

Piracy... it's so often an overly convenient yet rather transparent scapegoat when a company rushes a game out prematurely and the product suffers in sales. Notch (from *Minecraft*, btw) said in a recent interview that, generally, piracy does not equal lost sales. A pirate is just a customer you haven't made yet. And I'm enough of a hippie to think that attitude is cool.

The gaming industry is growing up, but as it does so the shadow of the publisher father figure falls over it to control the outcome for best profit, to tell it what clothes to wear, what's appropriate, and to not do outrageous things because "what would the neighbours think?".

In less than a decade the extra maps that used to be free content packs from developers *thanking* their players, are now product. I'd rather see developers reign in their production a bit, instead of passing those costs of grandeur on to us. But, DLC keeps selling. If it's a game I like, I don't mind buying more content for it. I think DLC isn't an intrinsically destructive concept. All depends on what we get versus what we pay.

And so, BioWare. The publisher's hand has bid them to push out a product of lesser quality, for an early profit. However, if enough people think *Dragon Age 2*, for what it is, was worth their cash... I won't argue with that. I don't think EA is the "big bad publisher". No corporation gets to that size and power without bloodying a few noses along the way. Can anyone tell me with a straight face that EA's record is spotless? Corporate life is brutal and those other corporations fight hard and dirty.

**Next Month:** *Killzone 3* did not sell very well, in America. Europe likes it. Is the FPS genre dead thanks to Call of Duty?

Miktar Dracon

\* [http://www.redd.it.com/r/gaming/comments/g3td7/dragon\\_age\\_2\\_conspiracy\\_highest\\_rated\\_metacritic/](http://www.redd.it.com/r/gaming/comments/g3td7/dragon_age_2_conspiracy_highest_rated_metacritic/)

## Protest group Anonymous targets Sony in response to GeoHot lawsuit

Sony is in the midst of preparing a lawsuit against PlayStation 3 hacker George "GeoHot" Hotz. So far nothing has gone to court other than applications to acquire certain information about Hotz via his online accounts for Twitter, PayPal etc.

Now, the infamous online protest group Anonymous has decided they don't like the way Sony is behaving towards Hotz, so they have declared war against the Japanese hardware manufacturer. In a statement issued to Sony by Anonymous, they said that Sony's "recent legal action against our fellow [sic] hackers, Geohot and Graf\_Chokolo, has not only alarmed us, it has been deemed wholly unforgivable". The group then said: "you saw a hornets [sic] nest, and stuck your penises in it. You must face the consequences of your actions, Anonymous style."

Soon after issuing the threat, a number of Sony's websites went down and there were reports of the PlayStation Network suffering similar downtime. Sony initially responded by saying they were busy with PSN maintenance. A few days later, Sony acknowledged that the PSN downtime might have been because of "targeted behaviour of an outside party". They went further to say that they were looking into the matter but that if the downtime was due to Anonymous then Sony wished to "thank [those] customers who have borne the brunt of the attack through interrupted service".

Anonymous is not stopping any time soon. Apparently, a "splinter group" of Anonymous has been formed and dubbed "SonyRecon". That group is now on the hunt for personal information

of Sony employees so that they can be made the victims of personal attacks. The type of information the members are amassing includes full names, ID numbers, phone numbers, home addresses, marital statuses and whether or not the individual has children. The group then aims to launch emotional attacks on these Sony employees; one such example being discussed suggests "[sending] one of these e-postcards notifying the target that one of their previous sexual partners has a STD. Makes for an uncomfortable wait for them. Alternatively call an AIDS hotline and ask them to anonymously tell the target they could have HIV, that's [sic] a 6 month wait until the test comes back."

It's all incredibly juvenile and Anonymous is very rapidly losing credibility as a responsible protest group – if they ever were one to begin with.

Delinquent pranks and sabotaging of the PSN is not going to garner Anonymous much love from the gaming community. Already numerous PlayStation forums have erupted in condemnation owing to online attacks on services that many legitimate Sony customers make use of on a daily basis. Since this outcry, Anonymous has issued a statement, via an online press release, saying that they are suspending their action against the PSN "until a method is found that will not severely impact Sony customers". In the same press release, the activist group maintains to be "on your side, standing up for your rights... This attack is aimed solely at Sony, and we will try our best to not affect gamers, as this would defeat the purpose of our actions."

## Rugby World Cup 2011 coming in August

Here's a fun fact: our fearless editor, RedTide, will receive on average about five emails a month asking about a new rugby game. This means only one thing: jocks really are playing videogames these days. Who knew?

Publisher 505 has secured the rights to release an official Rugby World Cup game for this year's New Zealand based tournament. The game will be developed by HB Studios, which is the team behind the previous EA Sports Rugby games.

Managing Director of 505, Ian Howe, had this to say: "It's a huge coup for us to be working with HB Studios on this opportunity and we could not be any more excited about this title. Rugby World Cup is one of the top sporting events on the planet and HB Studios



have proven time and time again that they are experts in developing sports games that deliver on every level. We're thrilled to be part of this huge spectacle and to be publishing one of the most visible games of the year."

Expect the official *Rugby World Cup 2011* game to hit the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 in August. Hopefully a collector's edition will come with a mini braai, a six-pack of Castle and boerewors. If not, then we're totally not interested.

## The Agency is KIA

Sad news from Sony Online Entertainment, with confirmations that it's closed three of its studios and culled 205 jobs. The company's Seattle, Denver and Tucson studios have been shut down. In addition, the long-delayed, cross-platform espionage MMO *The Agency* (which was in development over at SOE Seattle) has been cancelled. Here's the official statement from SOE:

"As part of a strategic decision to reduce costs and streamline its global workforce, SOE announced today that it will eliminate 205 positions and close its Denver, Seattle and Tucson studios. As part of this restructuring, SOE is discontinuing production of *The Agency* so it can focus development resources on delivering two new MMOs based on its renowned *PlanetSide* and *EverQuest* properties, while also maintaining its current portfolio of online games. All possible steps are being taken to ensure team members affected by the transition are treated with appropriate concern.

"This strategic decision will have no impact on SOE's current portfolio of live games; additionally SOE will transition development efforts for the Denver and Tucson studios' suite of products to its San Diego headquarters. This strategic alignment of development resources better positions SOE to remain a global leader in online gaming and deliver on its promise of creating entertaining games for players of all ages, and servicing the 20 million players that visited SOE servers in just the past year."

We hope that everyone involved in this gloomy situation finds sure footing soon.



## 8 dollar makeover

// Fans of *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War II: Retribution* who also happen to enjoy spending money on random crap will be happy to know that they can spend \$7.50 on Steam for a purely cosmetic makeover for the game's Space Marines. The Dark Angels Space Marine chapter will apply a new skin to the faction's Tactical Marines, Scouts, Assault Marines, Terminators and vehicles to give everything a Dark Angel-y look. The Force Commander will be replaced with a Dark Angel Company Master. This makeover only applies in multiplayer.

## Better late than never

// Cliff "Cliffy B" B pissed off a ton of PC gamers with his nonchalant tweets based on the annoyance displayed by eager PC fans at the prospect of *Bulletstorm* not getting a PC demo. "BULLETSTORM DEMO COMING TO 360/PS3 JANUARY 25th. In other news, PC gamers are grumpy about this," tweeted young Clifford. Those annoyed PC gamers can now get a taste of *Bulletstorm*'s exquisite Skillshot system with the demo that's now been released, which you can download via Steam or Games for Windows LIVE. Or you can just go out and buy the full, brilliantly fun game.

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Sonic Informed	[011] 314-5800
Ster Kinekor Entertainment	[011] 445-7700
TVR	[011] 807-1390

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



## Support Lines

Got a legal boxed game and need some technical help? Before you call please do the following. Update your system software, drivers and have a look online for a game patch. Just these simple tasks eliminate 93% of all problems – it's a made up statistic but probably close enough.

**Publishers:** Activision / Blizzard 2K Games / Rockstar / Ubisoft Codemasters / NC-Soft / Namco-Bandai

**E-mail:** support@xtremems.co.za  
**Number:** 0861 987 363

**Publishers:** Microsoft Xbox  
**Number:** 0800 991 550

**Publisher:** Electronic Arts  
**e-mail:** zasupport@ea.com  
**Telephone:** 0860 EAHELP/324357

# The Sims 3 Generations expansion pack announced

Electronic Arts has announced, to not much fanfare we might add, a new expansion pack for 2009's money-printing title, *The Sims 3*. The new expansion, known as *Generations*, will not turn the game into a soap opera, but it will dramatically expand on the childhood and teenage years, which until now have been little more than launch pads for the beefier adulthood stages of your virtual people.

Children will now be able to do all sorts of other activities to enrich their formative years: they can take up dance classes, build tree houses or bring an imaginary friend to life. Similarly, the teenage years will be fleshed out, allowing sims in their teens to throw house parties and go to their prom.

The adulthood phase will also be

experiencing a bit of an expansion with the addition of more elaborate weddings. Sims can now throw bachelor and bachelorette parties and even go through mid-life crises. According to Scott Evans, GM at The Sims Studio EA, "*The Sims 3 Generations* includes new gameplay experiences and content that our community has been requesting for years including bunk beds, expansive weddings, midlife crises and more".

It's interesting that this latest *Sims* expansion is not receiving the advertising push that its predecessors used to get. Perhaps *The Sims* is a slowing IP and EA is focusing its attention elsewhere? Regardless, expect the new expansion pack to hit in early June for South Africa as it is pegged for a 31 May release in the US.



## Unreal wants your everything

At GDC 2011, Epic Games blew the hearts and minds of tech heads everywhere with its phenomenal "Unreal DX11" trailer. Even with the outrageous tech that was put on display there, people are still very interested to find out what Epic's plan is for the future of mobile games development. Mark Rein, VP of Epic Games, believes that the future of the gaming industry lies both on mobile platforms and in living rooms. In an interview with *Develop*, Rein says that mobile is rapidly accelerating in terms of both technology and business acumen at a rate that will soon blur the lines between mobiles

and home consoles.

Rein also promises that the Unreal Engine will work perfectly on any device you throw at it, well into the future. With *Infinity Blade*, Epic set the bar very high for mobile games, but Rein eagerly states that they will continue to raise that bar even higher. That's all well and good, but what about that utterly gorgeous DX11 demo, Mr Rein? It seems that all the juicy Unreal tech behind it is targeted squarely at the manufacturers of future consoles, with Rein stating that he wants that demo to be "the big leap that we think justifies that new piece of hardware you're going to build."



## Press X to smacktalk

// If you've seen the astoundingly lifelike facial animation employed in Team Bondi's/Rockstar Games' upcoming *L.A. Noire*, you probably had the same reaction we did: that of pure, slack-jawed amazement. Quantic Dream's (developer of titles like *Omikron: The Nomad Soul* and *Heavy Rain*) David Cage clearly isn't as impressed as the rest of us, because he seems pretty indifferent towards the motion-capture process that Team Bondi employs to create their eerily lifelike visages. "I think it's an interesting solution to a problem for now," said Cage in an interview with *CVG*. Fair enough, Mr Cage, but we sense a "but" in there somewhere. "Their technique is incredibly expensive and they will never be able to shoot body and face at the same time." Ah, there it is. According to Cage, Quantic Dream is utilising mocap technology that'll let them do just that: capture startlingly accurate facial expressions while simultaneously implementing full-body capture. "We see a huge difference between shooting the face and body separately and shooting everything at the same time. Suddenly you've got a real sense of acting that is consistent." Time will tell if Cage is right to question Bondi's method.



## 4th & Battery is PopCap's new, mini development studio

PopCap is practically a household name thanks to casual titles like *Bejeweled* and *Plants vs. Zombies*. The development studio is wildly successful thanks to those two titles, and part of the reason for that is the tremendous amount of polish that goes into their games. This fastidious approach to game development is a lengthy procedure, and the result is that many of their staff members start to get a little twitchy. Executive Vice President of PopCap, Ed Allard, blames the "creativity pumping through [their] collective veins" for this phenomenon.

In order to prevent their staff from dying due to suppressed creativity, PopCap has set up 4th & Battery, a micro development studio where PopCap staff can run wild with whatever other games they have floating about their heads, while they continue developing larger PopCap titles of course. Neat idea!

The games that will be coming out of 4th & Battery will be tiny, slightly quirky titles similar to the PlayStation Minis we suppose. One such 4th & Battery game is *Unpleasant Horse*, which allows players to take on the role of a decidedly pissed off pony as it stomps on birds and smaller, happier ponies in order to exact its gloom-filled will on the world. It sounds awesome – so awesome that Apple rejected its sale on the App Store due to "mature content". Now THAT'S a pissed off pony.

*Unpleasant Horse* will (possibly) be hitting the iPhone and iPad via the App Store for the great price of "absolutely free". If 4th & Battery's appeal goes well it should be available by the time you read this.

## Mega Man's dad gets serious

Keiji Inafune, famously known as the creator of *Mega Man*, has just put on his ambitious pants and started not one, but two new game companies. These companies are called Comcept and Intercept, and they're based in separate offices – and each of them is focussed on different endeavours.

Comcept's business plan lies in creating and distributing various forms of entertainment media. Consumer, online and mobile games are all on the cards for Comcept, as are tie-in books, movies and events.

Intercept, however, is set to focus purely on game development and apparently lives by a three-tiered creed. As translated by *Andriasang*, the three parts of that creed are: "Originality – Cannot be copied by others"; "Gravity – Has the power to pull people in"; and finally, "Beyond the Age – Things that cross era." Sounds epic, Keiji. So far, the pair of companies have raised 10 million yen in capital each.



## Look & Listen



Pre-orders / [www.lookandlisten.co.za](http://www.lookandlisten.co.za)

### PC

The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings	17th May
Might & Magic: Heroes VI	27th May
Brink	May

### Xbox 360

Dirt 3	24th May
F.E.A.R. 3	May
Dungeon Siege III	June

### PS3

L.A. Noire	20th May
Duke Nukem Forever	20th May
Battlefield 3	November

### Wii

Rugby League 3	May
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2011	6th May
Dance Party with Mel B	June

### 3DS

SpongeBob SquigglePants	May
Lego Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game	May
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	June

### DS

Kung Fu Panda 2	June
Zhu Zhu Pets Puppies Bundle	10th June
Transformers: Dark of the Moon	24th June

### Kinect

Child of Eden	17th June
Super Me	17th June
Dance Party with Mel B	June

### Move

Nat Geo Challenge	May
PlayStation Move Ape Escape	June
Dance Party with Mel B	June

## I just don't have the power!

// We've known for a while now that Microsoft's Kinect is not functioning at full capacity with the games currently available for it, but just how much power is left underutilised? According to developer Rare, Kinect's power is "virtually limitless" – yet they've only tapped into "10 to 15 percent" of Kinect's technical capabilities so far.

At a talk in London, Rare's (who recently took home a BAFTA award for *Kinect Sports*) software director Nick Burton said that the developer's next Kinect title would take advantage of more of the gadget's features. Rare is apparently especially interested in the device's 3D infrared depth reading, its ability to track body points and its voice recognition capabilities. It'd be great to see a title that accurately shows what Kinect is truly capable of. Rare's next title might do just that.

## New Killzone 3 DLC incoming

// Guerrilla Games has announced a new DLC pack for its PS3-exclusive FPS, *Killzone 3*. Entitled the Steel Rain pack, the DLC will feature two new multiplayer maps for online shooter junkies to sink their teeth into. "Junkyard" is a guerrilla warfare map set in a scrap processing facility complete with moody rainfall. "Stahl Arms" is another map set in one of Helghan's biggest weapons factories.

The map pack will be available via the PlayStation Network on the 6th of April in Europe. It will launch six days later on the US PSN store.

## What's that noise?!

Thanks to the redesign we were rushed for time to come up with a new story for the badger. So, instead, we'll just tell you the truth. We're sick of him; we stole him from a stupid flash video like years ago and kept modifying him with more and more ridiculous ideas and stories. We've effectively washed away everything that was good and wholesome with our plagiarised garbage and now it's time to move on. Whoa! That felt good. Instead we're going to whore out a marketing concept and make you find Scarlett from rAge. See if you can find her hiding in the magazine...

**Clue:** It's in NAG magazine somewhere. Send your sighting to [ed@nag.co.za](mailto:ed@nag.co.za) with the subject line 'May Scarlett' and don't get it wrong or deleted it will be.



## April Winner



Bradlee Gopaul, Page 65

## Win!

One person who finds Scarlett will win a NAG mystery prize to the value of a mysterious amount. Ohhh sneaky!



**NAG**

## 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 *UFC Undisputed 2010* for PS3 from Ster-Kinekor Entertainment. Send your captions to [ed@nag.co.za](mailto:ed@nag.co.za) with the subject line 'May Caption'.



**NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT AT HUMOUR** / The dangers of popping that pimple prematurely.



**LAST MONTHS WINNER** / Just about everybody was trying the upside down "Spiderman Kiss", after the release of the first movie. - Gareth Mason

## So, Minecraft has made a ton of cash

Everyone kind of already knows that *Minecraft* has made Markus "Notch" Persson an obscene amount of money, but do you actually know how much? In an open Reddit Ask Me Anything thread, Persson spilled the beans on just how large his company's mountain of cash is.

When the game began selling in its Alpha stage, it got purchased and downloaded over 800 000 times at €9.95 per copy. Then when the game moved to the Beta phase, it sold a further 1 million copies but this time for €14.95. All in all, the mountain of money equates to €23 million, or just less than R230 million.

How does Persson feel about all of this? "I try not to look at it," he says, explaining further, "I get a normal salary these days for day to day stuff, but there's a big pile somewhere. Paypal takes a cut, there are taxes, and such, but it's still a huge wad of money".

Not bad for a game that hasn't been officially released yet.

## Earth- quakes be damned! The NGP won't be delayed

So in case you've been living under a rock these past few months, on the 11th of March Northern Japan suffered a horrific earthquake and subsequent tsunami that pretty much flattened entire cities and killed thousands of people. A lot of the factories that develop components for Sony's upcoming portable gaming device are in Northern Japan. President of Sony Computer Entertainment America, Jack Tretton, commented that the disaster in Japan might be "the straw that says 'maybe we get to just one market by the end of the year'".

Now, a spokesman for Sony Computer Entertainment Japan has said, "Hey Jack, WTF? Why you no ask us first before opening your mouth?" Alright, so Satoshi Fukuoka probably didn't say those exact words, but ten bucks says he was thinking them!

According to Fukuoka: "So far we see no impact from the quake on our launch plan." He added that SCEJ would continue to monitor progress, but for now Tretton is "wrong" and the NGP will stick to its original, staggered release schedule in late 2011.

It's great to see that Sony has such high levels of communication between its regional headquarters.

# BATTLEFIELD 3

EXPECTED RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2011

As bullets whiz by, walls crumble, and explosions throw you to the ground, the battlefield feels more alive and interactive than ever before. In *Battlefield 3*, players step into the role of the elite U.S. Marines where they will experience heart-pounding missions across diverse locations including Paris, Tehran and New York.

*Battlefield 3* leaps ahead of its time with the power of Frostbite 2, the next instalment of DICE's cutting-edge game engine.





## This is what Kameo might have looked like in *Kameo 2*

We bet most of you are bummed Rare didn't stick with a sequel now. A former senior graphic designer for Rare, Sergey Rakhmanov, has revealed some concept art for a cancelled project. That project looks like it could have been a sequel to the Xbox 360 launch title, *Kameo*. That game was decidedly cartoony in appearance, but the concept art from Rakhmanov's portfolio shows that had *Kameo 2* seen the light of day, it would have been a big departure from the initial game's feel and appearance.

Too bad, because this concept art sure is pretty. Whether or not the drastic shift in tone and appearance would have sat well with fans of the first game is debatable. Of course, it's quite possible that this is all just experimental stuff on behalf of a graphic designer. Still, it's fun to see what direction a possible sequel might have taken.



## Does a new *Burnout* exist?

According to the Australian Classification Review Board, it totally does. They've revealed *Burnout Crash*, an unannounced PG-rated title published by Electronic Arts. It's listed as being a multi-platform title, but not much else is known. There's a good chance that Criterion is working on a new *Burnout* now that they're done with *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit*, because EA senior VP Patrick Soderlund assured us last year that the *Burnout* franchise is far from dead.



## Release List

Dates subject to change without notice



### May: Week 1

Kung Fu Panda 2	Xbox 360 (Kinect) / PS3 (Move) / Wii / DS
Red Faction: Armageddon	PC / Xbox 360 / PS3
The Sims 3 Generations	PC
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2011	Xbox 360 / PS3 / Wii

### May: Week 2

Lego Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game	PC / Xbox 360 / PS3 Wii / 3DS / DS / PSP
Magic: The Gathering: New Phyrexia	Collectible Card Game

### May: Week 3

SBK 11	PC / Xbox 360 / PS3
White Knight Chronicles II	PS3
White Knight Chronicles: Origins	PSP
MX vs. ATV Alive	Xbox 360 / PS3
SpongeBob SquigglePants	Wii / 3DS
The Witcher 2 Assassins of Kings	PC
L.A. Noire	Xbox 360 / PS3

### May: Week 4

Dirt 3	PC / Xbox 360 / PS3
--------	---------------------

### May: Unconfirmed

Rugby League Live	Xbox 360 / PS3
F.E.A.R. 3	PC / Xbox 360 / PS3
Brink	PC / Xbox 360 / PS3
Dead or Alive: Dimensions	3DS

## Hush child: *Crysis 2* will definitely do the DX11 dance

The PC community has shown much disdain towards Crytek's decision to release *Crysis 2* without support for DirectX 11. People cried, some boycotted the game in disgust and others have disappeared into the desert searching for a new place to call home now that they've tasted bitter disappointment. It's all excessively melodramatic really, but Crytek have now officially stated that DirectX 11 support is definitely on its way. "We are working to get the best out of DX11, so we'll wait to announce the features until a little closer to release," stated Crytek on the official forums.

## Max Payne comes out of hiding

It's been a while since we've heard anything relating to *Max Payne 3*. Thankfully, a tiny amount of juicy details about the much-anticipated third title have surfaced, and we're here to share them with you. We've known for a while now that the game is set in São Paulo, Brazil, but what we didn't know is that the game will feature fully destructible environments and an all-new cover system. Bullet time is back and is accrued by killing enemies.

Most surprising of all the new details lies in the reveal of a multiplayer component, since Max Payne has traditionally been a single-player experience. What this multiplayer portion will entail remains a mystery, but it's intriguing nevertheless. The cutscenes will retain the awesome comic-book panel style, but they'll now be rendered in-engine "to show an animated collage of action footage." Voice actor James McCafferty returns as the voice of Max. It's been revealed that four of Rockstar's studios (Vancouver, Toronto, New England and London) are collaboratively working on the title. That's all we know for now, but hopefully we'll learn more in the coming months.

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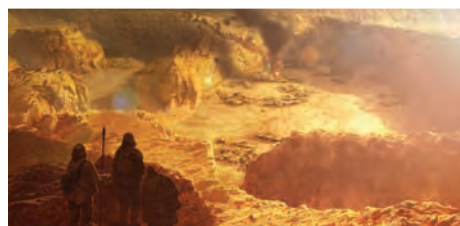
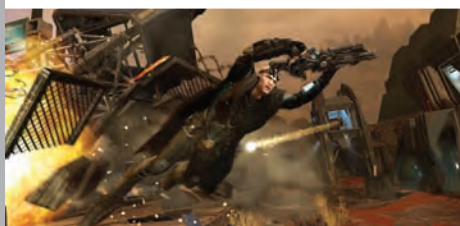
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# Red Faction: Armageddon

Falling away from me



## [ details ]

Release Date:  
**Q2 2011**  
 Platforms:  
**360 / PS3 / PC**  
 Genre:  
**Third-person action**  
 Developer:  
**Volition, Inc.**  
 Website:  
**www.redfaction.com**  
 Publisher:  
**THQ**

## [ trivia ]

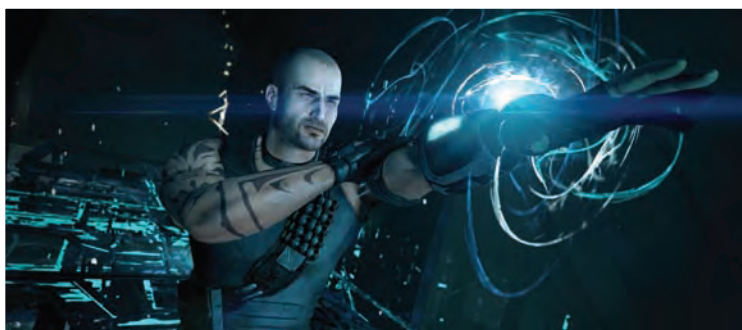
// While there's no snap-to cover system in *Armageddon*, there's still a need to play with a modicum of tactical concern when engaging the enemy. Some boss battles, for example, will require you to keep the precious little cover nearby intact to have Darius avoid taking too much damage during the boss's super-attacks.

Volition, Inc. has made quite a name for itself in the thirteen years since it broke away from Parallax Software to release *Descent: Freespace* in 1998. Right from the start, it was clear that this is a studio that understands what's expected of it, and delivers that, but spices up everything it does with interesting gameplay mechanics and depth. It's that depth, quite literally, that made *Red Faction* stand out among the many first-person shooters of the early 2000s, as well as other impressive titles of its time like *Diablo II*, *The Sims* and *Age of Empires II*. *Red Faction* did what other games were afraid to do: it gave players big, powerful weapons and let them use those weapons to destroy the world around them. The technology that made this possible was named Geo-Mod, and aside from beginning with the best possible combination of three letters, it put *Red Faction* on a path from which it could never return. Players had tasted the sweet chaos and we wanted more. Now, the lifespan of a fresh teenager has passed and the fourth title in the series, *Red Faction: Armageddon*, is around the corner. We recently had a chance to play a few levels, experiment with the weaponry and upgraded Geo-Mod technology, and blow up a lot of stuff. It was fun, and we'll tell you all about it.

In *Armageddon*, players will take on the role of Darius Mason: grandson to *Guerrilla's* protagonist Alec Mason. Forty years after Alec saved the day by repeatedly driving big trucks into government watchtowers and prisons;

"With the renamed Nano-Forge, Darius can quickly repair any nearby broken objects, reconstructing entire buildings, cover, bridges, stairs and anything else."

NAG Magazine





## GUNS, GUNS, GUNS!

What good is a world for you to render FUBAR if you haven't got the tools to get the job done? The weaponry in *Armageddon* has taken a leap to the next level of crazy with some inspired designs and a collection that screams "fun!" at passersby. Here are a handful of the weapons you can look forward to:

// **Magnet Gun:** Fire once to tag an object and then again to have that object fly, at great speed, towards your target. We had a blast with this weapon above all else. You can use it to pull enemies together; throw explosive barrels at the supporting columns of a bridge that your opponents occupy; bring down entire structures upon the head of a bothersome alien; or just use it to fling about debris when it's in your way.

// **Plasma Beam:** By firing a steady, glowing line of plasma, this weapon cuts through enemies and structures like that Shogun commercial claims their knives do to wood and chicken-wire, only with much more death and screaming.

// **Plasma Grenade:** Line 'em up and knock 'em, their friends, the building they're standing on and probably Darius as well, down. The Plasma Grenade might not be great for close-quarters, but that didn't stop us from trying.

// **Singularity Cannon:** The Singularity Cannon creates miniature black holes that look fantastic with the updated Geo-Mod technology. Structures peel away into the vortex of death and begin to topple over as they do so. Enemies tend to just die rather spectacularly.

// **LEO exo-suit:** You'll only have access to the LEO on occasion, but when you do, you'll feel like Superman with less flying and more shooting rockets out of your giant, armoured hands. The one thing the LEO suit lacks is a repair function, which is sadistically replaced with a charge command that makes quick work of those stairs you were about to climb.

The wardrobe selection for this game is simply exquisite, Darius models the Autumn/spring collection. It says I'm tough, but I still look fabulous doing it.



the surface of Mars was rendered almost completely uninhabitable after a meteor strike wiped out crucial terraforming and life-support equipment. Ten years later, Alec's penchant for leadership has clearly been passed down the family bloodline; players soon find Darius on the receiving end of "having to save the world" duty after he accidentally opened an entrance (a real one; nothing hocus-pocus) to the hive of dormant and aggressive aliens that have been beneath the surface of Mars this whole time. So there's Darius, a pissed-off group of colonists, a crazy group of cultists, a rabid alien species, a ruined Mars landscape, and a dozen or so ridiculously powerful weapons at your disposal. Surely this game is open-world, right?

Wrong.

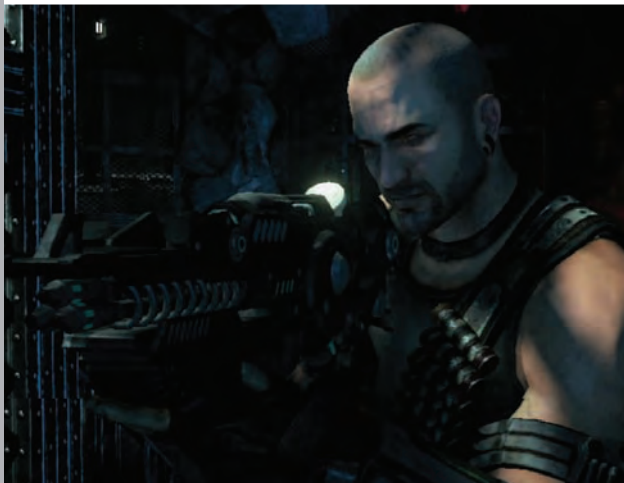
Volition has done the unthinkable by taking *Guerrilla's* open-ended missions and objectives and burying them deep underground. The result is an almost completely linear, narrative-driven single-player campaign that the studio swears is better for the series. By having tighter control over the gameplay through scripted events and story-focused missions (which we hope means less repetition than in *Guerrilla*), Volition aims to drive the player through a compelling story with interesting characters and more purpose. Going beyond that, there's a prequel been

squeezed in before *Armageddon* that is not even a game, but a film called *Red Faction: Origins*, which should be available by time you read this, to fill the gaps between *Armageddon* and its preceding *Guerrilla*.

We had a chance to play through two quite different parts of the campaign, as well as a purpose-built playground of destruction with infinite weapons and plenty of buildings to bring crashing down. The first level we played involved Darius on the surface of Mars, fighting cultists led by a particularly nasty piece of work called Adam Hale. Darius fights alongside a few militarised colonists still loyal to him, making his way through the ruins of various factories and foundries. The surface combat features a mix of outdoor and indoor; with the latter incredibly dependent on your ability to destroy and now repair the spaces around you. If an enemy decides to start tossing grenades at you while you're sauntering along a four-storey-high catwalk, you had better hope that one of those grenades doesn't land nearby and send the catwalk, you, and about half of the building crashing down to the ground below. This is where the afore-mentioned repair ability comes in: Alec's Nano-Rifle from *Guerrilla* has also been passed down the family chain, and now Darius wields it with restorative purpose. With the renamed Nano-Forge, Darius can quickly repair any nearby

[ trivia ]

// The updated Geo-Mod engine means that buildings will collapse in a more realistic way than before. Not content to simply drop at the first sign of attack, structures will slowly crumble with time; each material type in the structures has its own weight, as well as a threshold for how much weight it can support. According to the developers, this lead to some complex design requirements for level designers who are generally used to making content that only looks good.



**"As the combat gets tighter, so the enemies get more bunched up, which means explosive weapons take precedence over high-accuracy rifles and pistols."**

*NAG Magazine*

broken objects, reconstructing entire buildings, cover, bridges, stairs and anything else – even objects that were destroyed before you came along with your big guns and started shooting everything. This new feature not only plays a part in level progression, but allows Darius to call his own time-outs from enemy fire whenever the need arises: when you're low on health, crack open a shipping container, pop inside and rebuild it from within. Then, when you're ready to re-engage the enemy, simply blow open a hole and get back to the killing. That's about it for the Nano-forge, however; don't expect any physics-based puzzles like those found in *Epic Mickey* or *Singularity*. Volition has made it clear that *Armageddon* is an action game from beginning to end.

The second level we played involved Darius heading underground to deal with the alien menace. The gameplay shifted slightly and took on a bit of a *Dead Space* feel with more confined combat spaces and faster enemies that used abilities like wall-walking, leaping and ambushing the player to keep them

on their toes. Of course, as the combat gets tighter, so the enemies get more bunched up, which means explosive weapons take precedence over high-accuracy rifles and pistols. Of course, when the game comes out, you can play it however you will, but it's good to see that some thought has gone into the diversity of gameplay environments that directly have an effect on combat.

There's no denying our equal parts concern for, and interest in this new *Red Faction*. On one hand, the idea of a stronger, story-focused game makes us happier than a unicorn at a gay club, but the sandbox approach from *Guerrilla* is going to be missed by many. We sincerely hope that *Armageddon* won't get lost among the *Gears of War* / *Dead Space* crowd, as the series deserves better than that. With a strong story and the addition of four-player horde mode, it might just rise above expectations and prove to the industry that going backwards doesn't always mean going bad. **NAG**

**GeometriX**





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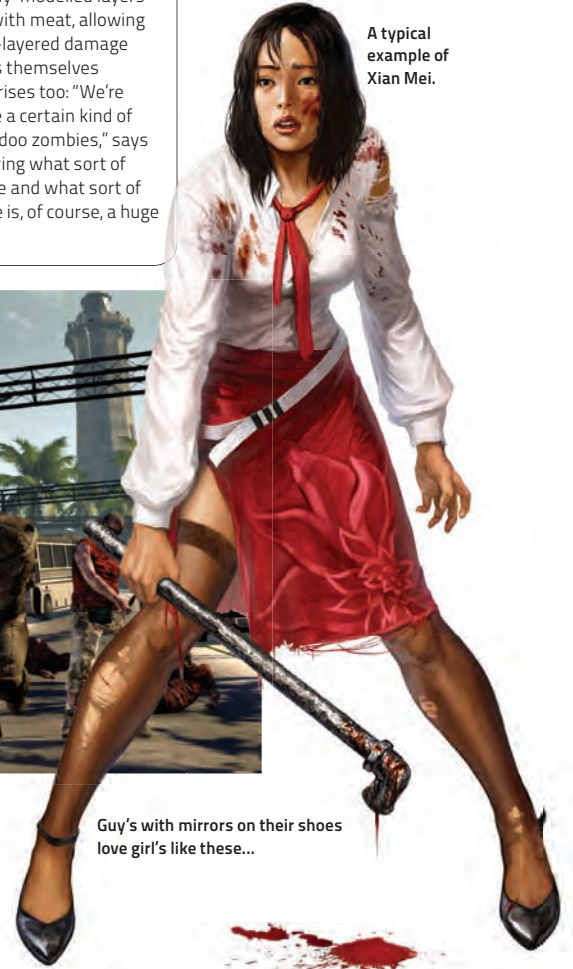
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### ZOMBIE DELUXE

Every zombie has fully-modelled layers of muscles covered with meat, allowing for a real-time multi-layered damage system. The zombies themselves may have a few surprises too: "We're not trying to recreate a certain kind of movie genre, like voodoo zombies," says Krakowiak. "Discovering what sort of zombie is in the game and what sort of unique twist we have is, of course, a huge part of the story."

A typical example of Xian Mei.



Guy's with mirrors on their shoes love girl's like these...



This is where I say "Brains" and you try run away.

## Dead Island

Someone shot the geographical feature!

### [ details ]

Release Date:  
Q3 2011  
Platforms:  
PC / 360 / PS3  
Genre:  
Action-adventure,  
Horror  
Developer:  
Techland  
Website:  
<http://deadisland.deepsilver.com/deadisland.php>  
Publisher:  
Deep Silver

### [ trivia ]

// There is a fungus that controls ants by turning them in zombies. *Ophiocordyceps camponoti-balzani*. Go on, Google it – enjoy the nightmares.

For more info on Dead Island, check out NAG Online's exclusive interview with producer Sebastian Reichert.

<http://www.nag.co.za/2011/04/dead-island-interview-with-sebastian-reichert/>

It's understandable that zombies, along with aliens and terrorists, make for great videogame villains. There are plenty of them, you don't have to feel bad about killing them, and they can be as smart or as dumb as developers want them to be. But when it comes naming their zombie games, developers really need to think a little harder. *Dead Space*, *Dead Nation*, *Dead Rising*, *Left 4 Dead*, *Red Dead Redemption*, *Dead Island*... you get my drift [now that you mention it, Ed].

Polish developer Techland, known for their western-themed first-person lasso simulator *Call of Juarez*, first unveiled some shots of *Dead Island* back in 2008. Generic and uninteresting, it was quickly forgotten. More recently, they hit up the Internet with a slick-as-hell CGI trailer [[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ialZcLa17Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ialZcLa17Y)] which did a much better job of grabbing your attention. It's not every day you see a little girl die in such a spectacular fashion.

The game itself, having transmuted from a first-person shooter into a kind of open-world *Dead Rising/Left 4 Dead* mash-up, has been given a significant graphical boost since those 2008 screens. The on-paper specifics sound wonderful: four-player co-op, melee-focused, with a narrative-driven main quest-line punctuated by optional side-quests. You build weapons out of things you find in the environment (at a workbench, no less). It's less about bucket plus drill, and more about car battery plus machete, to imbue the knife with electricity. Techland's international brand manager Blazej Krakowiak compares it more to *World of Warcraft's*

"The on-paper specifics sound wonderful: four-player co-op, melee-focused, with a narrative-driven main quest-line punctuated by optional side-quests."

NAG Magazine



enchantment system. Since the game takes place on an island resort, guns are rare. Baseball bats, knives and other normal items degrade with use, so it's going to be tense.

Each of the four playable characters (who are luckily immune to the zombie virus) has their own special move sets. Sam B, a former rapper, loves heavy weapons like sledgehammers and can trigger a 'fury mode' for critical hits. The other characters are Xian Mei, a staff

member at the hotel, Logan, a surfer, and Purna, a female bodyguard.

Of course, a fresh zombie game isn't complete without adding new named terrors to the genre or bringing back favourites: you'll have plenty fun getting to know the 'Drowner' (self-explanatory), the 'Suicider' (a.k.a. Boomer), the 'Ram' (a.k.a. Charger) and the 'Butcher' (who uses his own bones as weapons). **NAG**

Miktar

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### NOT A SEQUEL

Even though *Dark Souls* shares much thematically with *Demon's Souls* - game design ideology, loading screen font, and the people who worked on it - it is not a true sequel. "In terms of the world and story, they are completely different" says Hidetaka Miyazaki, creator of *Demon's Souls*.

Aesthetically, there is a much greater variety in the look and feel of locations over the drab 'gothic' of *Demon's Souls*. Mist-covered eldritch forests, resolute mountain peaks, grand fantasy architecture and more. There is more flexibility in the combat system as well, such as weapons in the same class having different swing speeds.

# Dark Souls

Spiritual sequel to a spiritual sequel...

### [ details ]

Release Date:  
2011  
Platforms:  
PS3 / 360  
Genre:  
Action-adventure,  
Role-playing game  
Developer:  
From Software  
Website:  
www.fromsoftware.  
jp/darksouls/  
Publisher:  
Namco Bandai Games

### [ trivia ]

// *Demon's Souls* was tough but fair.

// *Demon's Souls* was the spiritual successor to *King's Field*.



Expectations are high for the "sequel" to the phenomenal cult-hit *Demon's Souls*, a game so radically counter-culture to mainstream gaming it's become an institution all its own. With a new story, improved features and radically upgraded visuals, *Dark Souls* blazes the trail even further.

Where *Demon's Souls* was very fixated on battle, *Dark Souls* focuses more on the RPG side of things, rewarding exploration and collaboration but not at the cost of what set *Demon's Souls* apart: its relentless difficulty. While other games seem to fall over themselves to reward a player's slightest actions, *Dark Souls* demands a player learn from humbling experiences and crushing setbacks. Brazenly running up to a three-story tall griffon, ignoring the danger inherent in the scenario, results in swift player death. Avoid detection and return later better equipped (or with co-op friends) and more experienced with the combat system and you might survive. The game highlights the difference between insincere praise and genuine accomplishment.

The various regions now connect seamlessly to each other, removing the loading screens (except upon death) and feeling of disconnectedness brought upon by the teleporter room of *Demon's Souls*. The genuinely inspired asynchronous multiplayer element - whereby players could leave messages of

"Dark Souls demands a player learn from humbling experiences and crushing setbacks."

Your Mom



warning or advice anywhere on the ground - has been expanded upon to include treachery or misdirection. As a counterpoint, players can also assist each other by dropping beacons of sanctuary, leaving recovery items for other players to find in their own campaign.

Player vs. Player returns, letting you invade another's world (or be invaded), but balanced out by a new ability:

disguise. If you're weak and being stalked by a high-level player, you can turn yourself into an inanimate object within the game world. New quests involving finding items other players might have on them mix things up. The seamless cooperative elements will also return, though the team has yet to elaborate on how they've been improved. **NAG**

Miktar



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ESRB: M



Stomach in, chest out!



How much more Black could the Blacker Baron be?

## ANNOUNCED CHARACTERS

**Jack Cayman:** Lead anti-hero from *MadWorld* on the Wii, Jack uses a retractable double-chainsaw named Gator Tooth.

**Sasha:** Snow-spike ice-blade sex queen with the ability to freeze opponents.

**Zero:** Nothing less than a katana dual-wielding cybernetic ninja. His blades are called Onimaru and Juzumaru.

**Big Bull:** Another cast-member from *MadWorld*, this cyborg with a human brain is in a huge bull-robot body and swings a jet-propelled hammer.

**Blacker Baron:** "Blacker, bigger, better" is this brawler's tagline. Also from *MadWorld*, he punches with Super Sexy Fists of Fire.

**Matilda:** The Baron's assistant, Matilda uses an iron maiden in combat, a spiked club full of mystical energy.

# Anarchy Reigns

Basically "MadWorld Online" but in colour!

## [ details ]

Release Date:  
Q4 2011  
Platforms:  
PS3 / 360  
Genre:  
Third-person  
beat-em-up  
Developer:  
Platinum Games  
Website:  
[www.sega.co.uk/games/anarchy-reigns/](http://www.sega.co.uk/games/anarchy-reigns/)  
Publisher:  
SEGA

## [ trivia ]

// In Japan, the game is known as Max Anarchy.

// Steve Blum who voiced Jack in *MadWorld* returns to voice him in *Anarchy Reigns*.

With *Anarchy Reigns*, Platinum is making their first entry into the online space and instead of trying to compete head-to-head with the Halos and the CodBlops, they're aiming for a more niche market: the 3D arena battle royal.

There are plenty of shooters super-saturating the online realm and Platinum Games knows this. Even though their past games (*MadWorld*, *Bayonetta*, *Vanquish*, *Infinite Space*) haven't been the runaway successes they deserve to be, each one still manages a strong cult following and long-tail sales. Platinum Games doesn't play by industry rules, and their fans seem to appreciate this. In fact, their unique style and penchant for tongue-in-cheek design shows clearly in *Anarchy Reigns*.

Playing in terms of a combat system more like *MadWorld* and less like *Bayonetta*; players pick from a roster of bizarre characters (each with their own special moves and weapons) and enter the *Crackdown*-like Neo-Tokyo inspired city. The camera stays third-person and you can lock-on to enemies, unleashing combos, throwing cars or leaping from buildings into the fray. In Battle Royal, eight players free-for-all while waves of increasingly more powerful monsters add some texture. Action Trigger Events, giant disasters that change the landscape, drop buildings or throw up volcanoes right in the middle of the brawl.

There is a Survival Mode for up to three players, co-op versus



"...impromptu Duels to the Death which slam two players into a cage to sort out their grievances."

NAG Magazine

increasingly difficult monsters and bosses and impromptu Duels to the Death which slam two players into a cage to sort out their grievances. Screenshots hint at a persistent levelling system, improving abilities and tweaking move-sets, but nothing concrete has been announced. There will be a single-player campaign, also no details yet.

The whole package is wrapped up and delivered with the same coquettish butt-slap as the team's Capcom game, *God Hand*. Stylishly sadomasochistic, full of whips, chainsaws and over-the-top graphic violence, *Anarchy Reigns* is walking coarsure into unknown territory on an entirely new scale. **NAG**

Miktar

PRE ORDER NOW & COME GET SOME - 10TH JUNE 2011

# DUKE NUKEM FOREVER



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PS3  
PlayStation 3



XBOX 360

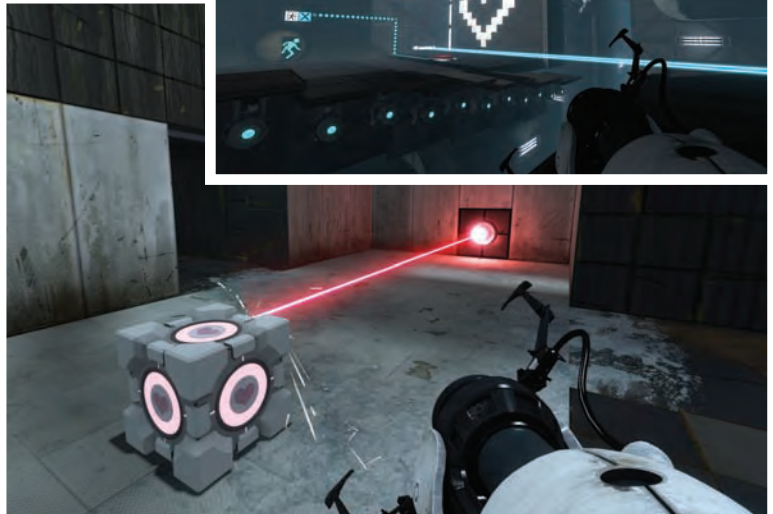
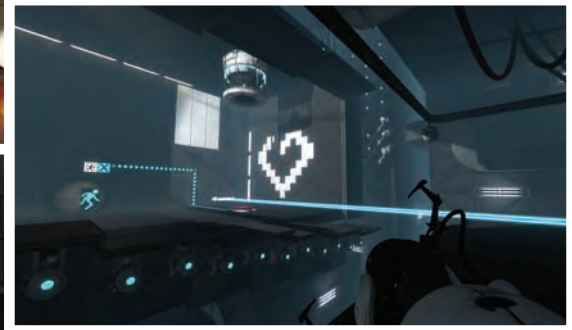
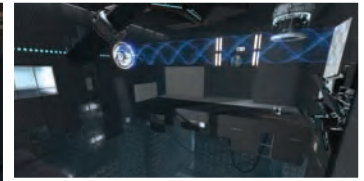
XBOX LIVE



megarom



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# Portal 2

Just another day at the office



## [ details ]

Release Date:  
**April 2011**  
 Platforms:  
**360 / PS3 / PC**  
 Genre:  
**First-person puzzle game**  
 Developer:  
**Valve Corporation**  
 Website:  
**www.thinkwithportals.com**  
 Publisher:  
**Electronic Arts / Valve Corporation**

## [ trivia ]

// Soon after finding the Portal Gun, you and Wheatley will accidentally re-activate GLaDOS. As it turns out, she has a "sort-of black box quick-save feature" and is not only incredibly disappointed in you, but is now intent on running Chell through endless experiments to make up for lost time.

// Following on from the concept of the companion cube, you'll have to carry Wheatley with you through certain parts of the game to allow him to attach himself to outlets scattered throughout the complex. Doing so gives you access to the many hidden rooms and corridors within the facility.

The first *Portal* was accidentally a massive success. While Valve knew it would be entertaining, they were so sceptical about how the public would perceive the game that instead of selling it individually, they packaged it into the *Orange Box*. As it turns out, *Portal* is a huge success with massive profit margins for the publisher and thus, here we are with *Portal 2*, which Valve CEO Gabe Newell claims is "the best game [they've] ever done". So how does one create the sequel to a game that fluked its way into the hearts of millions of gamers? You go bigger: triple the size of the development team, spend huge sums of money on marketing, and take every gameplay element from the first game and run wild.

If you haven't yet played *Portal* to completion, you'll find that the paragraph up ahead spoils a few key story elements from the game. Really, you should just go and play it right now. It's only three hours long at the most. It's fine; I'll wait.

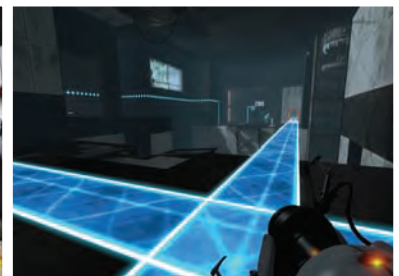
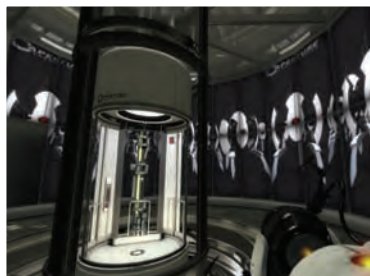
Done? Excellent.

*Portal* is a puzzle game, but one with great attention to story and even character development; the sequel takes that notion even further. You begin the game as Chell, the player character from the first game, who finds herself awakened in a suspension chamber where she's been kept for what could be hundreds of years. The Aperture Science Enrichment Centre is in ruins; tens of thousands of test subjects have died in suspension and the entire centre is running on auxiliary power with nothing but the most basic functions left. The schizophrenic artificial intelligence GLaDOS is just as dead as she was when you destroyed her chamber at the end of the game. You do remember *just* how dead she was, right?

You're rescued from suspension by Wheatley, one of many stand-alone personality spheres that gained independence without GLaDOS being there to boss them around. Wheatley guides you into the testing rooms of

**"The Aperture Science Enrichment Centre is in ruins; tens of thousands of test subjects have died in suspension and the entire centre is running on auxiliary power with nothing but the most basic functions left."**

NAG Magazine



Aperture Science, where he asks you to find the infamous Portal Gun. Doing so requires that you revisit similar areas from the first game, but with the centre now in disarray, you'll have to use even more cunning than usual to make your way through. As an example, fewer walls support portal deployment now, and from early in the game there's an increased focus on momentum puzzles. You'll have to take every lesson you learned from

the first game and apply it to the campaign that Valve claims to be over twice as long as *Portal's*.

From our brief time with *Portal 2*, it's clear that it's going to be a winner. It manages to convey the same charm as the first game but takes every element to the next level: more humour, more challenging puzzles and a much deeper look behind the scenes (literally and figuratively) of Aperture Science.

**NAG**  
**GeometriX**

# Balls of Steel competition

\* Balls of steel not included



## Exclusive for NAG readers

Help Duke decide what he should do in the proposed situations, go here to enter the competition:

[duk34eva.asp](http://duk34eva.asp)

### Grand Prize:

- 1 x Balls of Steel Edition
- 1 x Vintage Duke Figurine
- 1 x Duke Forever Figurine

### Weekly prizes:

Multiple Duke Nukem Forever figurines given away each week on Twitter [BTGamesStores], Facebook and with lucky pre-orders until 31 May 2011.

### Running Time:

Expires 31 May 2011

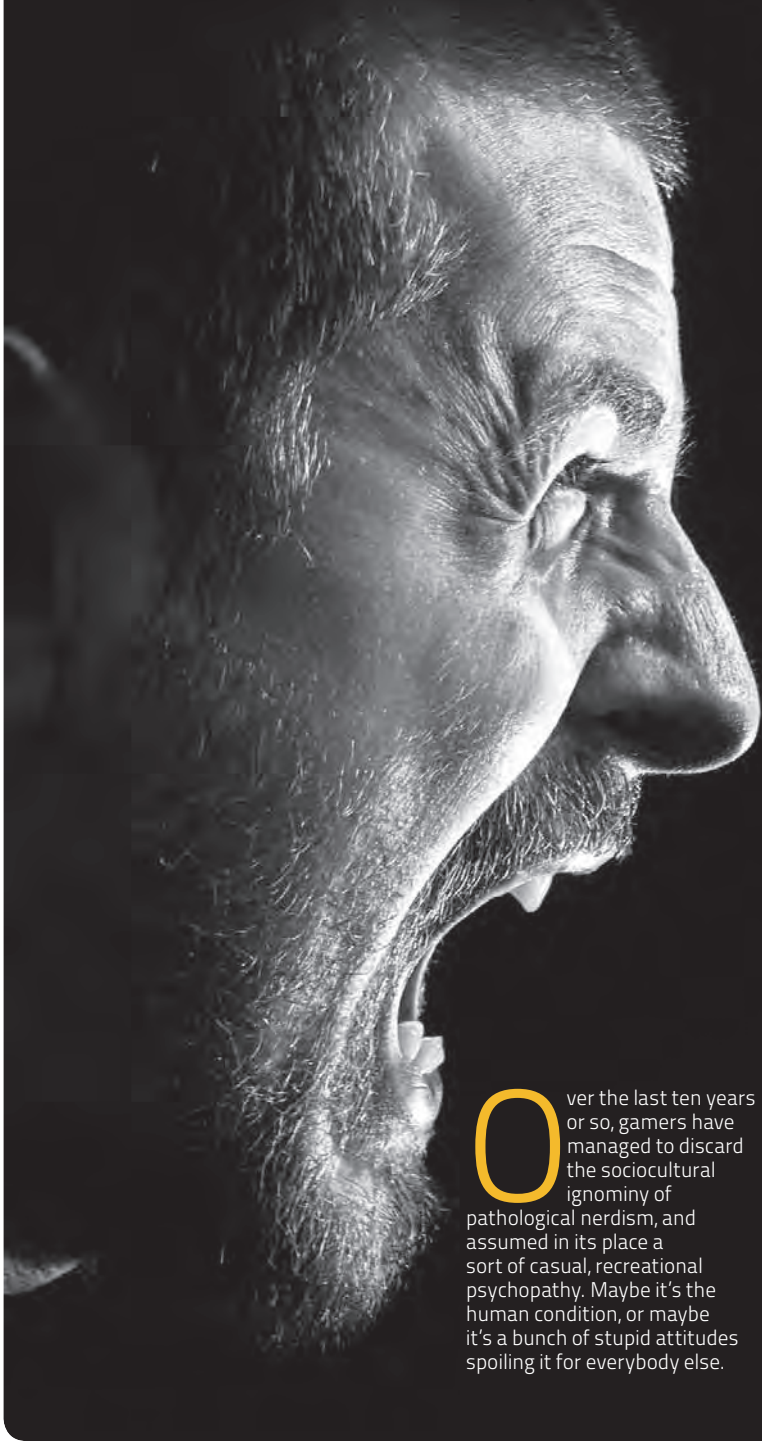


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# 8 STUPID ATTITUDES that are spoiling it for everybody else



Over the last ten years or so, gamers have managed to discard the sociocultural ignominy of pathological nerdism, and assumed in its place a sort of casual, recreational psychopathy. Maybe it's the human condition, or maybe it's a bunch of stupid attitudes spoiling it for everybody else.

## 8 The console war matters

Because it doesn't. And why should it, anyway? I mean, what difference does it make that <number of unit sales here, updated to the most recent nanosecond, editeditedit> other people randomly bought the same console you did? Oh, that's right. It makes no difference whatsoever, actually really totally.

Platform fanboyism is just existential validation masquerading as brand marketing, and nobody's paying you for either of those things. I'd recommend shutting the \*\*\*\* up, and playing some games instead. That's kind of the point of being a gamer, isn't it? Oh, that's right. It is.



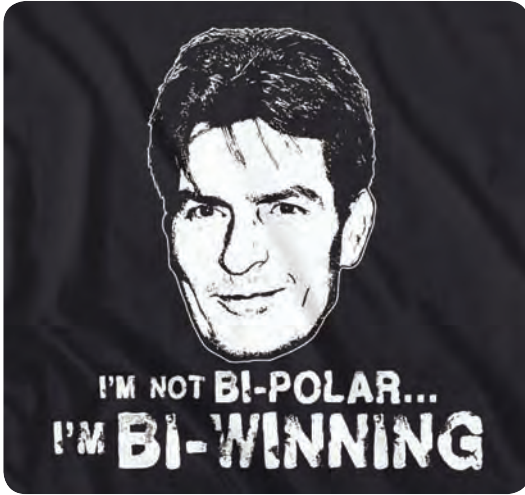
## 7 PC gaming, PC gaming über alles, über alles in der Welt!

It would be so nice to be able to talk about console gaming without the PC Master Race turning up, pushing in, and loudly, proudly, perhaps somewhat under-endowedly reminding everybody that it looks better on PC with a 46.3 million dynamic pixel mesh in the hyper-volumetric ultra-ambience mega-dithering super-buffer, with only 20x FSAA enabled at a screen resolution imported from the future, LOL. Also, do you know why you play better with a keyboard and mouse? Because you don't know how to play properly with a controller, LOL.



## 6 Winning is EVERYTHING!

We make such a big thing about sore losers, but what about sore winners? If you can't say "GG" at the end of a game and really mean it, you should probably look into doing something else for a bit. Like, maybe volunteering to work with rape victims. Get some real perspective.



## 5 Casual gaming is the bane of the gaming industry

NEWSFLASH – the entire gaming industry was built on casual gaming. Or do you have some other clever way, perhaps, to describe Alexander Douglas's OXO, a noughts-and-crosses game developed on the

University of Cambridge's ESDAC mainframe back in 1952? Besides, anybody who knows anything knows *Robot Unicorn Attack* is pretty much the greatest game ever made. There will be no shame.

## 4 IMO, LOL

Oh, everybody has an opinion. Here's the thing, though – opinions aren't definitive facts, and no amount of accompanying Cro-Magnon pointing, grunting, and chest-thumping is going to change that. Just because you think X, Y, or Z, doesn't make the same true for anyone else too. You didn't like NAG's review of *Dead Space 2*, just because whatever? That's okay. Just stop expecting that the entire planet should also stop liking it, just because whatever.



## 3 Sequels are bad

I could simply say "*Fallout 2*" and leave it at that. So I guess I will, although I'd also quickly add *Diablo 2*, *BioShock 2*, *Crisis 2*, *Left 4 Dead 2*, *Gears of War 2*, *Mass Effect 2*, and *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*.

## 2 BOYCOTT IT

In theory, of course, conscientious objection could be an interesting concept in the context of gaming consumerism. Maybe you feel that a game violates your morals, values, or intellectual principles in some way or another, and you'd rather not support it.

All too often, however, calling for a boycott is nothing much more than outrageous self-righteous entitlement dressed up as protest, which not only undermines legitimate criticism, but makes you look an outrageously, self-righteously entitled brat in the process. Especially when you just pirate the game instead.



## 1 Gaming used to be better than this

It wasn't. Or maybe you just never played *Circus Charlie*.



Release Date: October 2011 / Platforms: 360 / PS3 / PC / Genre: Open world action / Developer: Volition, Inc. / Website: [www.saintsrow.com](http://www.saintsrow.com) / Publisher: THQ

# SAINTS ROW:

## *The Third*

Is that a dildo bat in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?

Central Illinois is not an interesting place, particularly in the middle of winter. It consists mostly of vast, barren farmland dotted here and there with tiny, one-stoplight towns populated by very large Americans driving even larger pickup trucks. (Those are bakkies to you and me.) There are Amish country stores. This place is, in a word, plain.

But drive long enough and you'll eventually come to the quaint town of Champaign, home of the University of Illinois and also Volition, Inc., a game development studio that has created a roster of franchises that are anything but plain. The worlds of *Descent*, *Freespace*, *Red Faction*, *Saints Row* and others have all sprouted from this studio nestled amongst the cornfields of Middle America. One of Volition's latest titles, *Saints Row: The Third*, scheduled to be released in October, is about as diametrically opposed to the place it was created as is conceivable.

*SR: 3* is an open-world, gangland-crime action

game often compared to the *Grand Theft Auto* franchise. The first *Saints Row* was even called a *GTA* clone. *Saints Row 2* tried to set itself apart from the *GTA* series by taking itself less seriously and was infused with crude humour and ridiculous action. (In one side mission you are tasked with spraying down people with faecal matter from a septic tanker truck.) Now with *Saints Row: The Third*, Volition has taken a firm grip on the absurdity dial and turned it up to 11.

"*Saints Row 2* really solidified its identity differentiating itself from other open-world games and in *Saints Row: The Third* what we really want to do is take that over-the-top style and make it a cohesive experience," says Greg Donovan, the lead producer on the game, during a presentation to journalists at the studio in February. "It's everything you experience playing the game; be it character models, weapons, visual effects, the situations you find your character in, as well as the art direction. We want to take what was successful in *Saints Row 2* – the over the top







// Scattered throughout the city you'll find shops like Let's Pretend where you can dress your character up in costumes ranging from pirates to spacemen.



– and make it apply to everything.”  
Comparing this to other games doesn't do justice to the pure insanity that went into creating it, but we'll try anyway. Imagine the *Just Cause*, *GTA* and *Dead Rising* franchises got together and had a wild orgy while falling out of an airplane, gave birth in mid-air, dressed the baby as a circus clown, set it on fire and shot it out of a cannon into a bus full of old ladies.  
“Crazy sh1t can happen at any time,” Donovan said. “Oh, sorry, I tend to swear a lot. I hope that doesn't offend anybody, but it just sorta fits with the game.”

### PLAY HOW YOU LIKE

If you haven't played either of the first two instalments in the series, don't let that deter you too much. All you really need to know is that you play the leader of the notorious gang the Third Street Saints. After paying your dues and working your way up the ranks in the first two games, you are now in control of a vast business and criminal empire. Not only do the Saints rule the streets,

but they are a bona fide brand name that has spawned consumer products and merchandise from lunchboxes to bobble-head dolls to energy drinks. They even have a dedicated theme store, Planet Saints.

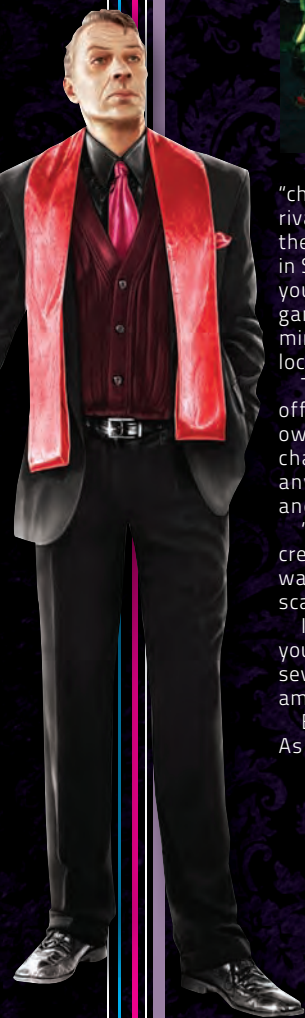
The key thing to take away from this is that the Saints have made it, you are in charge, and the choice of how to proceed is entirely up to you.  
Donovan, “The player is the catalyst. You're at the top of the Saints. You're the one calling the shots. You're the one telling your lieutenants what to do, and as a player you also get to choose in what order you do them.”

This concept of customisation and player choice is one of the driving forces behind the design of the game. While there are a number of set, scripted storyline missions, when and how you tackle them is up to you. And in the meantime, you have an entire city to explore – and destroy.

The game takes place in a city called Steelport, not the Saints' home town of Stilwater. Steelport, an entirely new venue designed with what Donovan described as “gameplay density” with

“You're at the top of the Saints. You're the one calling the shots. You're the one telling your lieutenants what to do, and as a player you also get to choose in what order you do them.”





"choices around every corner," is the home of a rival group of gangs called the Syndicate. One of the primary goals of the game is to build an empire in Steelport and slowly take over the town. How you do it is up to you. You can engage the rival gangs in combat, take part in side missions and mini games, or through financial clout by buying local businesses.

Throughout all of this, the player will be offered options to tailor the game to his or her own style, beginning with an incredibly powerful character creation tool which will let you design anything from a common street punk to a purple and green superhero.

"We have one of the most robust character creators out on the market," says Donovan. "If you want to play as a naked pirate, a ninja or a battle-scarred tattooed thug, you can do that."

In similar fashion, you'll be able to customise your clothing and vehicles. Weapons will have several levels of upgrades offering things like more ammunition, faster rate of fire and splash damage.

Even the skyline of the city is customisable. As you take over sections of Steelport from the

Syndicate, you'll have the option to replace their skyscrapers with your own, with four levels of upgrades. And the improvements you make to your strongholds will be more than purely cosmetic, but have impact on gameplay such as providing garages for your cars and landing pads for helicopters.

All of your actions in the city – even driving down the wrong side of the street or punching a pedestrian in the nuts – earn you respect, which is akin to experience points. Once you've earned enough respect you'll be able to spend it on new abilities and attributes in a perk store.

And since everything is more fun when you do it with a friend, the game will feature seamless drop-in/drop-out cooperative play online or via system link. "Saints Row is all about having fun your way, playing it how you want to play it," Donovan said. "Customisation, player choice: those are staple features in the franchise."

#### OVER THE TOP

Maybe it's the boredom and isolation of living in the middle of a cornfield. Or maybe they're just

"If you want to play as a naked pirate, a ninja or a battle-scarred tattooed thug, you can do that. Ninjas, gimps, pirates; all those crazy options."



// Steelport is an industrial, Middle American city that fell under the control of the Syndicate, who completely ran it into the ground. Inspired by the real-world city of Chicago, it now more closely resembles Bangkok. The game's art directors wanted everything about Steelport to be colourful and lively and took a comic book approach to the visual style.





“Like a lap dance with a porn star, it’s naughty fun – better than anything you’re getting at home. This game is all about over-the-top guilty pleasures.”

going out of their way to try to impress the college girls at the University of Illinois. Whatever the motivation, the team at Volition has created a contender for one of the year’s most ridiculous, bonkers open-world games.

One of the forces that drove the development of *SR: 3* was the philosophy of “Holy Sh1t Game Design”. Every mission in the game was designed to have a “holy sh1t” moment, such as the one that was demonstrated to us by Donovan and Scott Phillips, the game’s design director.

In the game’s second mission, the Saints are kidnapped by the Syndicate and forced on board a private cargo jet. All hell breaks loose during the flight and you and your gang are forced to shoot your way out of the plane, fighting thugs through the cargo bay out the loading ramp at the rear of the plane. Jumping out the back, you hurtle down, dodging falling cars and cargo pallets while you try to catch up to Shaundi, one of your gang members who doesn’t have a parachute, and at the same time still you’re shooting it out with the thugs who are freefalling with you. Half way down, the jet steers directly toward you trying to hit you

in mid-air. But instead of becoming a bug on the windscreen, you shoot out the cockpit window, fly *through* the jet, and grab a parachute just before you fly out the back again and finally save Shaundi just before you hit the ground.

Holy sh1t!

And Donovan and Phillips claim this is one of the more tame missions they’ve designed in the game.

Moments like this aren’t confined to the set-piece story missions. This penchant for fantastic absurdity spills over into the open-world mechanics of the game as well.

“Because you start at the top, you go over the top,” Donovan elaborated.

Take for example one of your rival gangs in Steelport, the Luchadores. In a normal game, they’d be a bunch of street thugs wearing basketball jerseys, baggy pants and backward baseball caps. In *Saints Row: The Third* they’re a gang of Mexican wrestlers wearing spandex body suits and full facemasks.

The theme extends to your choice of firepower in the game as well. Phillips demonstrated the appropriate way to take out a group of





// Say hello to my little friend!



// Extreme Russian roulette, while freefalling without a parachute.

Luchadores hanging out on a street corner: call in targeted strike from a satellite. If that's not to your liking, you can launch a Predator drone and shoot Hellfire missiles from above, think *Modern Warfare 2*. Phillips also demonstrated one of his favourite new weapons in the game, the Remote Control Gun. You can fire the weapon at any vehicle in the game and take over control of it. Phillips showed off the gun by taking over an Apache attack helicopter then blowing up a few dozen police cars before crashing it into a group of pedestrians.

Then there's the Dildo Bat. It's just what it sounds like: a baseball bat handle attached to a meter-long purple rubber gentlemen's sausage.

"Contextually, there's no reason that this is in the game except that it's part of the *Saints Row Gestalt*," Donovan said. "It just fits."

Every melee weapon in the game will also have its own customised nut-shot, because let's face it; there really is nothing more fun or satisfying than punching someone in the grapes.

Donovan and Phillips also showed off one of the mini-games they brought back from *Saints Row*

2, called Mayhem where you try to cause as much damage and destruction as you can within a short amount of time. Only now you get a tank.

"We asked 'How do we make this more fun?'" Phillips said. "Well let's put people in tanks and then they can really blow sh1t up!"

It's not just the huge explosions and holy-sh1t missions that embody the over-the-top philosophy of *Saints Row: The Third*, it's the little details that truly give it its charm. Even the act of getting into your car pushes the envelope: instead of opening the door, you jump into the air and crash through the window.

"Some people on the team asked, 'Can you just get into the car normally,'" Phillips said. "And the answer was, 'Yes, but why would you want to?'"

And that's the real beauty of *Saints Row*. It isn't concerned with being gritty or authentic. Realism takes a back seat to entertainment value.

"Like a lap dance with a porn star, it's naughty fun – better than anything you're getting at home. This game is all about over-the-top guilty pleasures," Donovan said. "If you want realism, go pay your taxes." **NAG**

**AxL**

"*Saints Row* is all about having fun your way, playing it how you want to play it. Customisation, player choice: those are staple features in the franchise."





# Online Distractions

# Flat, Sexy, Free Online Games

You're tired of kitting no longer cute? Tired of pretend studying/working? We got just what you need, and it won't cost you a cent. To save on space, we're not putting direct links to the games, just the sites. We're sure you know how to use a search box.

## Sexy Stuff on Kongregate.com

[kongregate.com](http://kongregate.com)

**T**he hot new kid on the block, Kongregate is all about badges and competitions to win cards for the card game Kongai. Lots of good games here, easily ranked by number of plays or user-ratings.

**Pros:** Achievements, competitions, Unity (3D) games, friends list, leader boards.  
**Cons:** Video ads during game loads, chat rooms are cesspools.

### CELLCRAFT

The future of the platypus race is in your hands. Learn how cells work, help them build defences against different types of virii and marvel at the surprise ending.

### SOLIPSKIER

Draw the terrain for your skier, making sure to leave ramps and gaps where the on-screen prompts indicate. It gets furiously tricky fast.

### THE COMPANY OF MYSELF

By resetting time and time again, you create an army of past-selves with which to overcome obstacles and solve the platforming puzzles.

### KONGAI

*Like Magic: The Gathering* but with more emphasis on distance between characters, you get cards for this by getting badges in other games.

## Sizzling Stuff on Armorgames.com

[armorgames.com](http://armorgames.com)

It's a flash game, it's on Armorgames. While the site itself isn't all that great, there's more than enough here to distract you.

**Pros:** Achievements, friends list, leader boards.  
**Cons:** Lots of ad banners, lots of crappy games.

### EXIT PATH

Run and jump through a death trap-laden level as the crowd cheers your every move. Die and time rewinds to the last checkpoint. Multiplayer races available.

### SPACE IS KEY

Sometimes simpler is better. Using only the space bar, help your little square navigate a series of increasingly difficult platforming levels.

### ELEPHANT QUEST

Damn buffalo stole your hat. Upgrade your stats, explore the giant open world, complete quests for other elephants and get your hat back.

### CACTUS MCCOY

Course turned you into a cactus-man. Use your

# Deliciousness on Newgrounds.com

newgrounds.com

**T**he largest collection of flash products anywhere on the Internet, Newgrounds has games and animated features to help stave off boredom.

**Pros:** More than just games, achievements, friends list.

**Cons:** Tons of ads everywhere, hard to find good games.

## NOT YOUR WAR

Decent-enough top-down scrolling shoot-em-up with fancy pants visuals and some inspired enemy designs. Shooting things is fun.

## GRAVITY BOY

You control gravity. Use your reality-defying powers to collect coins and reach the exit. It's a puzzle game, so expect to be puzzled.

## PORTAL DEFENDERS

Punch, kick and bomb your way through hordes of stereotypical Newgrounds users in an attempt to defend the honour of the site.

## ROAD OF THE DEAD

Upgrade your car to better withstand driving through the zombie hordes as you try to make it out of the city alive. Contains gore and blood.

# Flat stubb on Gingpop.com

omgpop.com

**T**he main draw to OMGPOP is that every game has a fully-featured multiplayer mode. The more you play the more coins you earn with which to buy small aesthetic frilly bits for the various games.

**Pros:** Achievements, friends list, "join my game" shareable URLs, random matchmaking.

**Cons:** Micropayment-gated content, lots of video ads, infested with teenage girls.

## DRAW MY THING

It's like Pictionary but online. Everyone gets a turn to draw a randomly-chosen word while others must guess what it is. Surprisingly few penis drawings.

## SUPER FLEET FIGHTER ALPHA TURBO

Next-generation Battleships with power-ups and cute fleet commanders to unlock. Both players make moves at the same time, so it's zippy.

## POOL

In a strange far-away fantasy land you must use a stick to hit numbered balls into holes at the sides of a table. It's pool, really.

## LETTERBLOX

Using a randomly selected set of letters, everyone has to type out as many words as they can think of using the letters, for high score.

**N**ot all amazing flash games are on the big sites that collect them like shiny trinkets. Here are a few you might have missed:

## GIRP

<http://www.foddy.net/GIRP.html>

A valid reason to have a 101-button controller (your keyboard). GIRP is a rock-climbing and finger-jujitsu simulator. Hold the keys that match the pegs in the walls to reach for them, click to

stretch. Difficult and entertaining.

## QWOP

<http://www.foddy.net/Athletics.html>

A finger-bending classic; you control the thighs and calves of a runner trying to make it down the track (and if you're good, over some hurdles). It takes some practice to get to grips with how to make the runner move forward without face-planting, but that's part of the charm.

# Floncentration

## The Reviewers

**Question:** You've got a dream date with Lara Croft tonight. What do you intend to do with her.

### R.A.V.E.N.



I'd take her somewhere quiet (and on the ground floor!), in an attempt to avoid interruptions by zombies/killer animals/assassins hired by rivals/etc. My plan would fail.

### RedTide



Chloroform...

### Miktar



Do each other's nails or some sht. How the f\*\*k should I know...

### Azimuth



We'd eat chocolate ice-cream, talk about how gross boys are, and deconstruct patriarchal hegemony within neodialectic narrative as a means to denote a self-justifying reality. And maybe kiss.

### Mikit0707



Dress up like Nathan Drake; spend the evening being a wise-cracking douche. Take every chance to remind her that my games are better than hers; girls love guys who are assholes.

### Geometrix



Order a pizza, crack open a bottle of wine and spend the night playing two-player *Guardian of Light*.

### Barkskin



I'd tell her she totally looks fat in those pants and go down in history as that glorious nerd who intentionally screwed up a date with Lara Croft, all in the name of LOLs.

### Ramjet



Well, I think she would like to do something out of the ordinary, for her... so, stay at home, rent a DVD and don't go anywhere where she might be tempted to climb stuff and steal antiques.

### SAVAGE



Raid her Tomb.

### ShockG



Neo didn't reply to the mail. We suspect it's a colour thing. Boy is he going to be pissed when he reads this. LOL.

# Anatomy of a Review

A quick guide to the NAG reviews section

**/1/ Totally interesting stuff:** Developer, publisher, platform, random junk and more – this is where you can find all those things. Absorb this information and then regurgitate it later to impress girls/guys/homunculi so they'll sleep with you. Best of luck with that.

**/2/ Obligatory words (i.e. a review):** This is the stuff you probably won't read before ogling the shiny pictures, glancing at the score and then flipping the page. We don't blame you – word-reading is hard derp.

**/3/ Screenshots:** These are the pretty pictures you'll probably stare at before peeking at the score, ignoring the wonderful review and then flipping the page. You should probably ask your mom to make your sandwiches too. Just to be on the safe side. You might cut yourself herp.

**/4/ Captions:** Funny. Informative. Touching. The captions are usually none of these things. Except maybe touching, when we put some innuendo in there.

/ review /

## Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds

An amazing dog saves the universe. Woof.

**1** Details: Developer, Publisher, Platform, Genre, etc.

**2** Synopsis: A brief overview of the game's story and premise.

**3** Gameplay: Screenshots of the game's action.

**4** Graphics: Screenshots of the game's visual style.

**5** Sound: Screenshots of the game's audio.

**6** Controls: Screenshots of the game's controls.

**7** Extras: Screenshots of the game's extra content.

**1** Details: Developer, Publisher, Platform, Genre, etc.

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**5** Sound: Screenshots of the game's audio.

**6** Controls: Screenshots of the game's controls.

**7** Extras: Screenshots of the game's extra content.

/ Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds /

190

**/5/ Game name:** The most reading you'll do will likely happen in this bit right here.

**/6/ Award:** This is in three delicious flavours. See below for maximum info.

**/7/ Those things with extra info:** These things have extra info.

## THE AWARDS

**Editor's Choice:** If a game gets this award, you know it's more than just good. It means it pulled the editor away from *Call of Duty* for long enough to actually play another game – and we can't think of anything more remarkable than that.

**Must Play:** It means exactly what it says: you must play this game. Beg your parents for cash, dole out sexual favours, etc. – fight past the pain and do whatever it takes to get your sweaty paws on it. You'll thank us for it later.

**Pony:** You know how everyone wants a pony? Yeah, that's not the case here and we're not just being mean. We're trying to protect you from the horror of being punched in the nether regions by thoroughly rubbish games.

## THE SCORE BOX

**/1/ Plus:** These are the great things that make us happy.

**/2/ Minus:** These are the rubbish things that make us sad.

**/3/ Bottom line:** The waffle stops here. Hundreds of words distilled into a tiny bit of text that can either damn a game to the depths or shower it with praise.

**/4/ The Score:** It's a number out of 100. It lets you make an informed decision as to whether or not you should spend money on this game. This isn't rocket science people.



1

**/ PLUS /** Very detailed / Enthralling setting / Amazing graphics

2

**/ MINUS /** Not enough detail / Boring setting / Rubbish graphics

3

**BOTTOM LINE GOES HERE, KEEP IT UNDER 15 WORDS, 15 WOULD BE IDEAL. THANKS.**

4

**69**



## QUICK HITS

### Hoard

*Hoard's* premise is simple: you're a dragon. You fly around a fantasy kingdom terrorising towns, burning crops, toasting knights, kidnapping princesses and generally being a massive pain in the ass, all in the name of collecting as much gold as possible for your hoard. As you earn gold, you can upgrade your dragon's abilities (like its speed or fire breath).

There's a surprisingly strategic side to all this though, because getting huge amounts of gold requires some planning. Do you let the towns around you grow and prosper, thereby generating more gold for you to steal (allowing towns to grow also means more defenders will spawn to protect it), or do you just torch everything and get lots of small amounts of gold very quickly? Is it worth risking your life (and score multiplier) to destroy that wizard's tower for the valuable gem within? Throw in more dragons by engaging in some four-way competitive (or cooperative) multiplayer, and things can get very crazy, very fast.

// *Hoard* offers an unexpectedly strategic distraction when you need a quick dose of fun.



### Fable III DLC: Traitor's Keep

Having finished *Fable III* with a rather sour taste in my mouth (see *NAG* December 2010), I was eager to give the game a chance to redeem itself with this collection of quests that centre on a prison called Ravenscar Keep.

*Traitor's Keep* continues directly from the events of *Fable III*, beginning with an attempt on your character's life. Soon after, you're tasked to travel by ship to Ravenscar where it turns out that a prison riot has turned the entire place on its head. You'll have to quell the rebellion by returning three key prisoners to their cells through a series of quests that won't win any awards for originality, but take place in interesting locations. Throw in a ton of hidden items to collect as well as a few new outfits and you've got yourself another three hours of predictable but nonetheless enjoyable game time in the land of Albion.

// If you're not quite finished with your adventures in *Fable III*, this is a decent way to get back into the game.



## 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

### The Sims Medieval



79  
77  
77

### Crysis 2



91  
87  
86

### Dragon Age II



87  
82  
79

### Total War: Shogun 2



90  
90  
90

### Homefront



71  
70  
70

### Top Spin 4



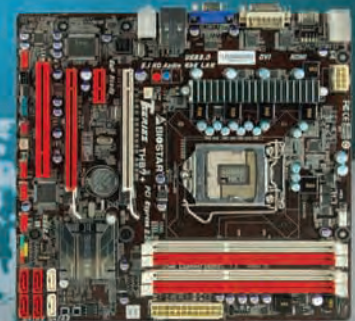
80  
85  
84



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- \* Support USB 3.0
- \* 100% X.D.C solid capacitor
- \* BIOSTAR Toverclocker utility



**TH67+**



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# Crysis 2

New York, New York...

I'm perched on the roof of a multi-storey parking garage, overlooking the remains of what was once a bustling street. The constant drone of a city formerly abuzz with regular people going about their daily lives has been replaced with the sound of distant warfare – probably instigated by my earlier exploits. New York's streets now provide a different set of challenges to the usual dodging of impatient taxis or fighting off potential food poisoning at the hands of a hot-dog vendor. Avoiding rape by bullets has become the primary concern when a casual stroll is in order – and the street below is no different.

A quick scan reveals about a dozen enemies, ready and waiting for their chance to peel this ultra-valuable Nanosuit off my person. They haven't spotted me yet. I say a quick prayer to the gaming gods, thanking them for the gift of cloak. Opening my tactical visor, I'm presented with several recommended options. I could go the stealthy route, sneak right past these losers without ever firing a shot: but where's the fun in that? I could flank them instead, gain the tactical advantage and unleash a torrent of death without putting myself at too much risk: but that seems like far too



## [ details ]

Platforms:

PC / Xbox 360 / PS3

Genre:

First-Person Shooter

Age restriction:

16+

DRM:

Internet connection required

[mycrysis.com]

Multiplayer:

Online versus:

16 players

Developer:

Crytek Frankfurt

/ Crytek UK

(Multiplayer)

Website:

www.ea.com/

crysis-2

Publisher:

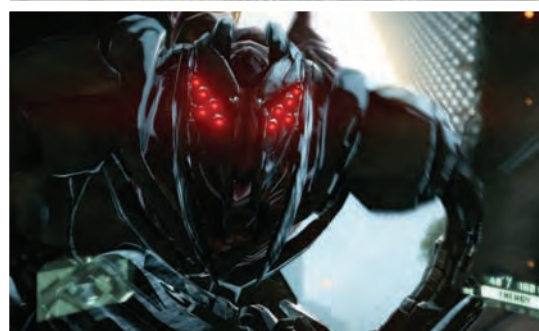
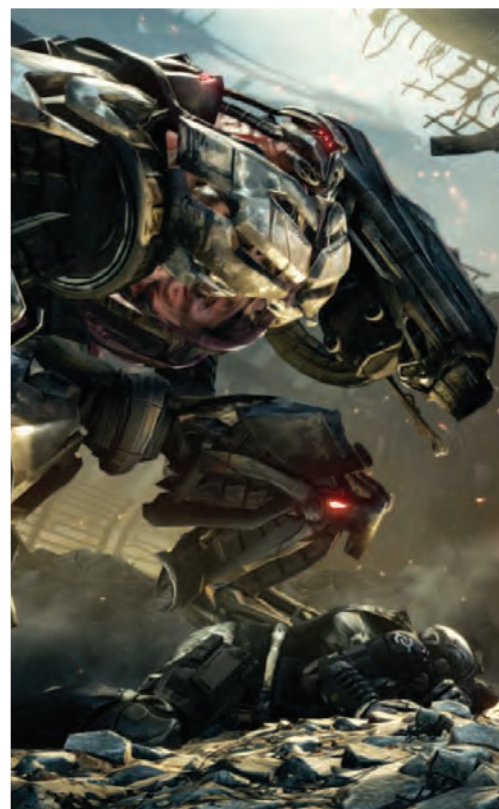
Electronic Arts

Distributor:

Electronic Arts

much work. What I'd prefer to do is majestically (or clumsily – whatever) leap down from this cosy rooftop and slam down on the ground right in the middle of the biggest group of bad dudes, taking a few of them out with the sheer force of impact before switching back to stealth mode and playing an impromptu game of cat and mouse with the rest of them. It'll definitely work. I take another look. It'll probably work. Screw it. Throwing caution to the pigeons, I dive off the roof. About halfway down, I realise: this isn't going to work. Hooray for auto save.

Crytek's games have always prided themselves on their ability to showcase the technological future of gaming. Gameplay always felt secondary to the visual feast spread out before you. That's not to say that *Far Cry* and *Crysis/Crysis Warhead* featured sub-standard gameplay. That's not it at all: Crytek's previous games provided plenty of solid, enjoyable gameplay. Having said that, Crytek have always been visionaries when it comes to the technical side of things while never truly pushing any boundaries when it comes down to the actual game. *Crysis 2* aims to change that perception by focussing less on system-destroying technology (although it's still amazing what the





Hide and Seek is infinitely more fun with Nanosuits and guns.



techno-wizards at Crytek are capable of) and simultaneously upping the quality of the gameplay to create a game that is outstanding on both fronts. Has it succeeded? Yes. Yes it has.

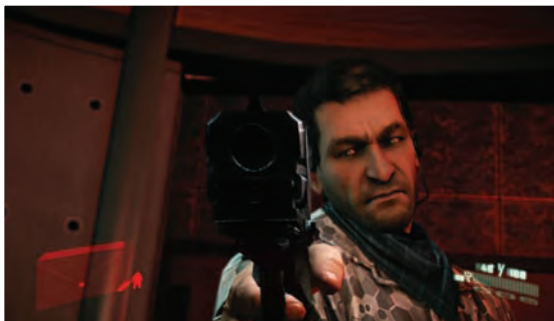
*Crysis 2* casts players as Alcatraz – former US marine turned Nanosuit-wielding badass who fills in for Nomad (protagonist of the original *Crysis*). Your mission is simple: save humanity from the brink of destruction. Okay, so maybe it's not simple, but it's definitely a mission. Heroes have to start small, so for now you're handed the small responsibility of saving New York, which has come under siege on so many fronts that I'm surprised they didn't just nuke the place at the first sign of trouble. There's a face-melting virus plaguing the populace. There's cataclysmic seismic activity literally tearing the city asunder. There's a throng of mercenaries from some Crynet-employed private military company enforcing their special brand of justice on the remaining civilians and these pricks are making a real mess of things. Oh, and there are aliens. Can't forget about those pesky aliens. They're called the Ceph and they're your primary concern. All of these factors set the single-player stage for a game that manages to feel fresh despite there being several thousand other FPS offerings out there.

This is largely due to the multitude of options available to you in any given combat situation. The shiny new Nanosuit 2.0 enables you to play this game the way you want to. It's been streamlined too, refining the experience we were offered by the original game. The suit's Strength and Speed modes

have been combined to form Power mode, which you'll spend the majority of your time using. Armour and Stealth modes return, each affording you the chance to overcome obstacles in myriad ways. Choices relating to weapon and Nanosuit customisation come into play as well, allowing you to set up the perfect combination for each fire fight. Environmental factors play a huge role, because where you are is as important as what you're doing. The urban jungle shakes things up a bit by shaving off a ton of the horizontal space you had to work with in the original game. Don't fret, however, because you'll quickly realise that moving vertically through this wonderfully created urban environment offers as many (if not more) tactical options than those wide-open tropical jungle environments did. The gunplay itself offers up a satisfyingly brawny experience. I'd hazard calling it the most tactile FPS experience out there. There's a good weight to everything you do in the game, making you feel like you truly are this super-powered badass wielding high-powered weapons that look, sound and feel meaty. Excellent sound effects enhance this greatly. Switching to Armour mode, for example, makes each footstep sound earth shattering – like you're a walking tank - while Stealth mode mutes the ambient audio slightly for extra immersion. Even the aliens are more fun to fight this time around as they lithely leap about the environment to take you down. Aside from the often idiotic enemy AI, *Crysis 2*'s gameplay is frenetic and enthralling. It's tighter than an elephant in a leotard.

**/1 & 2/ Multiplayer**

*Crysis* and *Crysis Warhead* both featured multiplayer components that passed by the gaming community largely unnoticed. *Crysis 2* aims to fix that by including a multiplayer mode that matches *Call of Duty's* furiously fast gunplay while adding in Crytek's secret weapon: the Nanosuit. Everyone has one, immediately turning every match into a vicious battle between customisable superheroes. Everyone can cloak, use Armour mode, sprint at ludicrous speeds and jump twelve feet in the air, injecting that delicious multitude of options presented by the single player straight into the multiplayer arena. Numerous unlocks, persistent stats and exceedingly interesting variants of classic game modes are all here and make for an addictive online experience. There are some niggles like disappearing stats, lost unlocks and broken servers, but the developers have sworn to absolve the game of these problems soon. Crytek UK (developers of the multiplayer component) have done a great job creating an online experience that manages to feel entirely unique despite deriving a good chunk of its features from other games. It feels like a mix of *Halo* and *CoD*, and it's an absolute blast.



Gesundheit...



In terms of narrative, *Crysis 2's* story takes a long while to truly kick in. It's painfully slow and nonchalant in the beginning, to be brutally honest. Thankfully, once you hit the halfway mark (or somewhere around there) the story really starts picking up and drawing you in, snowballing its way towards the game's stunning climax. It's a bit fragmented in places, but stick with it, because it all comes together in the end. I especially appreciated the fact that the Nanosuit is now as much a part of the story as it is of the gameplay. Then there are the visuals that back up the story. *Crysis 2's* graphical prowess is simply mind blowing. I don't care how many people point out that CryEngine 3 cuts corners when compared to CryEngine 2, because whatever compromises they've had to make don't change the fact that *Crysis 2* is now the sexiest game out there. Crytek's vision of New York in peril is hauntingly beautiful, with an eerie sense of hopelessness that perpetuates throughout the game. The lunacy of the jaw-dropping set pieces that the last half of the game throws at you has to be seen to be believed. These are tastefully done and rare enough that when they do show up, the ferocious kick to your eye sockets is all the more rewarding for it. Every inch of this game is meticulously detailed, offering up an immersive, engaging romp through recognisable locales.

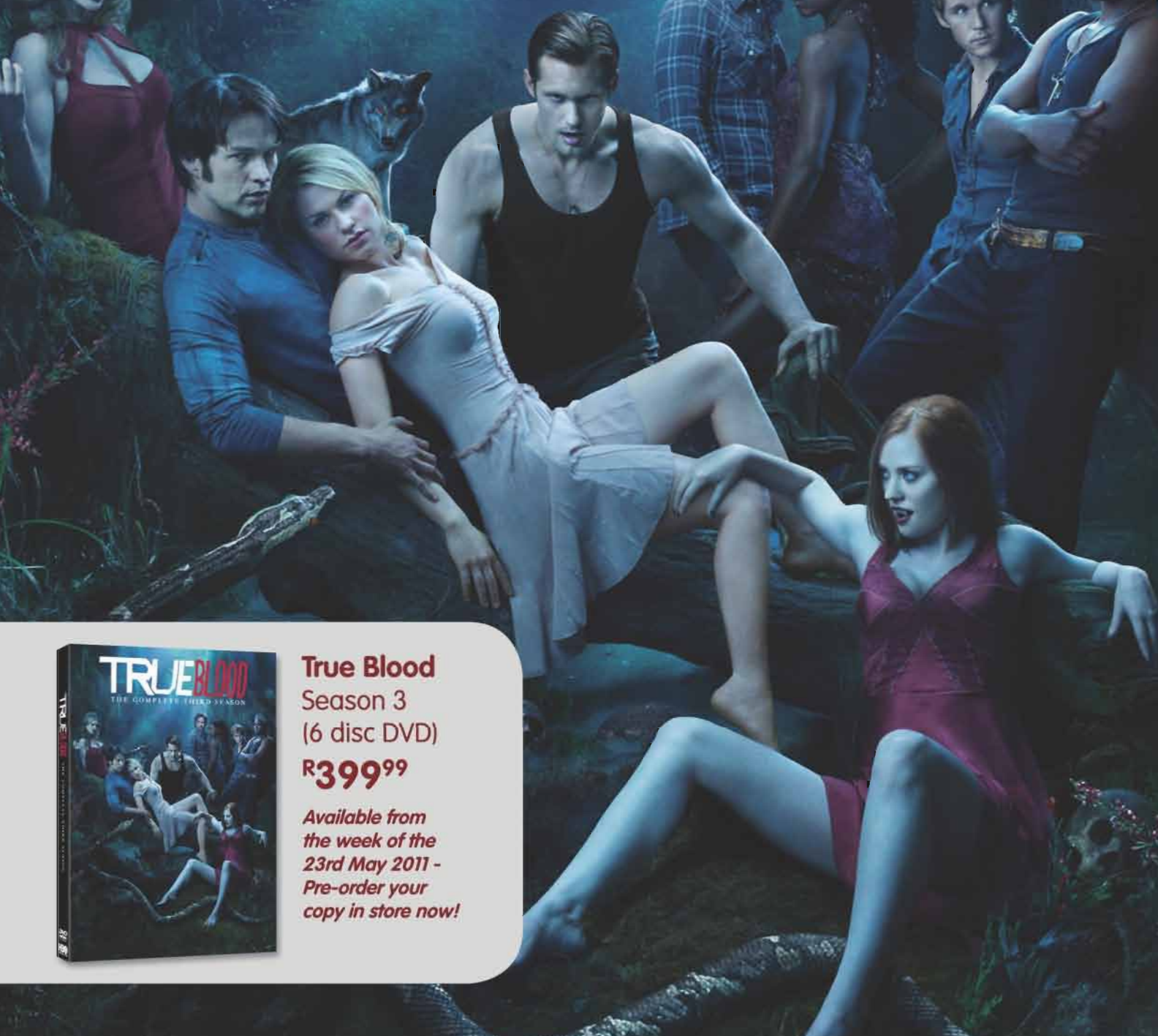
It's a shame then that a game as

polished and as brilliantly realised as this is riddled with frustrating bugs and glitches. These range from graphical anomalies to lost progress, but each of them is made more annoying because they detract from an otherwise excellent experience. One such annoyance involves the Nano-Catalysts (collectable alien bits that are used to upgrade your Nanosuit), which are prone to getting lost whenever you quit the game. Anyone saving up for the more expensive upgrades had better be prepared for maximum heartache should they choose to end their game before acquiring it. Folks at Crytek have assured us that issues such as this will soon be addressed, but it's frustrating that my first play through of the game was afflicted by issues such as that.

Bugs and annoyances aside, Crytek have unleashed a truly awesome game with *Crysis 2*. It easily surpasses its predecessor in many ways, most importantly by being a much better game rather than a massive graphical improvement. They've proven that they've got the chops to create a multiplatform title that can stand tall alongside the competition with its meaty campaign, phenomenal tech and thoroughly enjoyable multiplayer. Excellent work Crytek. Now make *Crysis 3* even better. **NAG**

**Barkskin**

**/ PLUS /** Technologically astounding / Varied gameplay / Meaty single player / Addictive multiplayer  
**/ MINUS /** Numerous bugs/glitches / Occasional AI hitches  
**CRYTEK HAVE PROVED WITH RESOUNDING SUCCESS THAT THEIR AMBITIONS AREN'T RESTRICTED TO TECHNICAL SUPERIORITY.**



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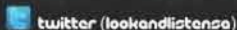
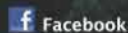
THE COMPLETE THIRD SEASON



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Look & Listen  
 For the Fans

# Dragon Age II

If you love RPG, you'll love this. Period

In *Dragon Age: Origins*, the Hero of Ferelden was recruited by the Grey Wardens to serve against the impending Blight. A new Archdemon had arisen, driving a horde of darkspawn north across Ferelden. King Cailan's forces and all the Wardens save the Hero and one other young recruit were wiped out, leaving the two to stand against the Blight. The Hero rallied the human forces of various feudal lords, enlisted the aid of the dwarves by settling a dispute over succession to the throne, and dealt with an outbreak of demonic possession at the Mage Circle to gain the support of the mages or the templars. In the Breccian Forest, the Hero ended a conflict between elves and werewolves, siding with one of the groups to win its loyalty. Lastly, the Hero dealt with the traitor Logain, and then installed a new monarch on the throne. Yes, the Hero had to make a lot of choices!

In *Dragon Age: Awakening*, after the Blight there were still many darkspawn about, now leaderless and making a nuisance of themselves, some of them led by a sinister entity, the Architect, in conflict with a



## [ details ]

Platforms:

PC / 360 / PS3 /

Mac OSX

Genre:

Role Playing Game

Age restriction:

18

DRM:

Internet connection  
required (to register);

CD-key

Multiplayer:

None

Developer:

BioWare

Website:

<http://dragonage.com>

Publisher:

Electronic Arts

Distributor:

Electronic Arts

powerful darkspawn broodmother. Once again, the Hero was called upon to make some choices, this time to save and rule the city of Amaranth, the new home of the Grey Wardens.

## MEANWHILE...

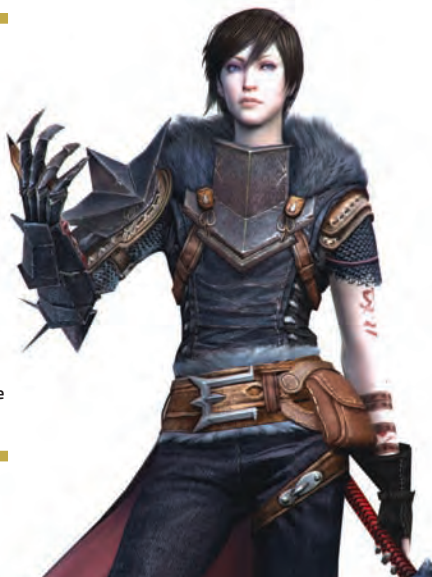
One of the first human settlements to fall to the Blight was Lothering, where the Hero spent some time. One of the families to flee the destruction was the Hawkes, and this is where the story of the Champion of Kirkwall begins. With nothing but the clothes on their backs and the weapons in their hands, the mother, the Champion, and the Champion's apostate mage sister, along with some other refugees, decide to make their way to Kirkwall, in the Free Marches, where the Hawke family's roots lie. The mining city was formerly part of the slave-powered Tevinter Imperium, and therefore its character is rather grim: stone walls and fortifications, and well deserving its nickname, 'the city of chains'. Here, from humble beginnings as a penniless refugee, the Champion of Kirkwall will rise to greatness, and just like the Hero of Ferelden, will have



/1/ Macro-scale travel is handled on this map, which roughly represents the structure of the city. From here you can access city day, city night, and the nearby Free Marches wilderness locations.

/2/ With the optional hi-res texture pack, environments, particularly architecture, truly come to life, with authentically weathered-looking stone walls, occasional moss or ivy creepers, and so forth.

/3/ No longer do you have to keep all companions happy: as well as unique skills for becoming friends, they can earn skills for becoming rivals, and sometimes the latter are more suitable.





many choices to make in the process. The earlier events and choices will influence the coming story.

### AND NOW...

As with all of BioWare's RPGs, *Dragon Age II* boasts a complex and detailed plot-line within a deeply developed game world. As with previous releases, the company has chosen not to further explore a prior area, but to expand the scope of Thedas within a new territory. Besides the in-game action, there are numerous "codexes" to be found, detailing various random bits of lore, and if you like, these provide quite a wealth of fiction reading.

Unlike *Origins*, *Dragon Age II* doesn't span the larger part of a continent, but rather takes place in and around the city of Kirkwall. While this may suggest a more limited scope, this is not, in fact, the case. The overall size of the playable areas rivals those of the previous title, and the diversity of environments is at least as rich. There are wilderness areas, urban areas, underground dungeons, and various interiors. Furthermore, the city can be roamed during the day or at night and its character changes accordingly: shops are mostly only open during the day, and there are many people about, while at night things are generally quieter, except for the gangs

of criminals to be found lying in wait for prey. There is much more city to become familiar with, and one actually gets the sense of its scale. The architecture is simply amazing! However, there is one bummer: for some reason, BioWare got a bit lazy with interior layouts, and the game tends to re-use several maps extensively, merely blocking different doors in order to "vary" them. Thus, almost all rich houses look the same inside, for example. This cookie-cutter approach is a pity, and detracts somewhat from the overall experience.

The Champion will have an important political role to play, and consequently gets embroiled in all sorts of intrigues. Sometimes, the non-player characters' motives are hard to divine, and their claims can be downright deceptive. The player will have to get used to making decisions based on imperfect information – much like in real life, really. There is a lot of dialogue, and now the player is offered choices of tone, being able to choose between (depending on situation) do-gooder, confrontational, witty or sarcastic, mercenary, compassionate, and so on. Trends in these choices shape the nature of the player character's default dialogue – for example, if the player has consistently been aggressive, his non-chosen comments will tend to become

/4/ Complex environments make it possible, may necessary even, to make use of the terrain for tactical advantage, such as placing ranged characters on high ground and controlling access to it.

/5/ The game is called Dragon Age for a reason. This one's still a "teenager", though – they get MUCH bigger!



brusquer. Unlike *Origins*, *DAII* takes a page from *Mass Effect* by having the player character also speak all dialogue choices – a definite improvement. Much effort has gone into the dialogue in this game, with some very entertainingly witty repartee in evidence, and good voice acting to deliver it. Different companions will, naturally, trigger unique conversations in certain locations, or will unlock special conversational options with encountered NPCs. They also tend to discuss recent events amongst themselves, as you travel around.

Much like in *Mass Effect 2*, the player now only has total control over the armour of the main character – the companions all wear their own distinctive garb, and are always recognisable as a result. However, their weapons and jewellery can still be upgraded. This results in more consistent companions' appearance, and a more streamlined equipment management system – as well as the game actually being mainly about the main character. Speaking of armour, the variety and detail on the new armour graphics is incredible, and cannot be done justice in any screenshots; the same is true for weapons. Oh, and male mages no longer look quite as 'feminine' as they used to... The mechanics behind the character stats have also been revamped into a slicker form. The result is even greater re-playability, as there are many viable character strategies and party compositions to try out. On the downside, there is no longer provision for two weapon sets and fast-switching between them, which is a real shame.

Combat is even more dynamic than previously, especially in terms of the animations: there is more variety in attacks, and particularly mage staves

benefit from this – no longer do mages fire a measly 'pew-pew', but now they really look like they're unleashing arcane powers. Powerful enemies will use potions, and overall enemy AI has been jacked up, so fights are now both more interesting and more challenging. Unfortunately, the camera has suffered a downgrade: there is no longer a total zoom-out option that is unlinked from any character, so targeting long-range area-effect spells is sometimes tricky.

Being a role-playing game, *DAII* will have you running around completing quests, of course. There are lots of these; some take the form of "take this thing-that-you-found to so-and-so at such-and-such location" – these are the menial but lucrative "easy money and XP" ones that you'll want to carry out as quickly as possible to earn those precious level-ups. However, many others are far more intricate and story-driven, and many interlink with each other, sometimes even across the three "acts" that the game is unofficially divided into. Overall, the quests are most engrossing and enjoyable.

### AND ALL THE REST

While playing *Dragon Age II* you can expect (without spoilers): faster and more interesting loading screens (they're practically art!); a clever narrative style; humorous banter in dialogue; political intrigue, and a conspiracy; dungeon crawls; family drama; a haunted house; bio-terrorism; a loan shark; a red lantern district; an adventure in the Fade; a serial killer hunt; a crossbow named Bianca; and a hint of something bigger going on behind the scenes (*Dragon Age III*?) And that's just scratching the surface...

**NAG**  
R.A.V.E.N.

/ PLUS / Spectacular graphics / Intriguing story / Improved combat system / Strong dialogue  
/ MINUS / Somewhat buggy / Recycled area maps

THIS GAME IS, DESPITE ITS FEW ISSUES, AMONG THE FINEST STORY-DRIVEN FANTASY RPGS TO DATE. AT AROUND 80 HOURS PER PLAY THROUGH, IT'S ALSO EXCELLENT VALUE.



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# Homefront

## Swing and a miss

In the days before its release, all signs pointed to a future where *Homefront* had impressed the hell out of us. Its multiplayer component looked promising and the single-player campaign seemed to be taking a different, more emotional approach than the usual FPS fare of "shoot things, watch explosion, stab bad guy, start next mission, repeat." Most importantly, its premise was immediately intriguing: America has been occupied by Korean forces and you join a resistance group fighting to retake their home turf from the invading force. Now that the game's been released, it turns out that we don't live in a future where we walked away from *Homefront* feeling satisfied. Instead the game has left us disappointed.

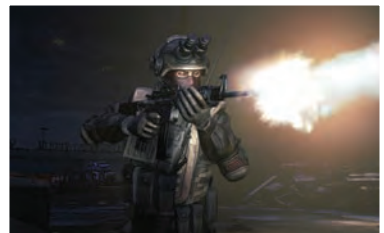
Our biggest issue with *Homefront* is the length of its measly campaign. Clocking in at around three hours, there's just not enough time to build any connection between you and the occupied America that is your playground here. This is no fault of the game's presentation. *Homefront* is a gorgeous game filled with many visual treats that'll have you in awe of all the minute details that have been crammed into its world. The developers have evidently poured a ton of resources into ensuring

### [ details ]

Platforms: PC / Xbox 360 / PS3  
 Genre: First-Person Shooter  
 Age restriction: 18+  
 DRM: Internet connection required [Steam]  
 Multiplayer: Online versus: [32 players]  
 Developer: Kaos Studios / Digital Extremes  
 Website: [www.homefront-game.com](http://www.homefront-game.com)  
 Publisher: THQ  
 Distributor: Ster Kinekor Interactive

that every obliterated suburban neighbourhood and recognisable landmark looks authentic, lending every new experience that the game throws at you a sense of plausibility. You're never left with any reason to question the developer's notion that this is truly what the US would look like were it to be invaded by a superior force. Kaos Studios has succeeded with the look and feel of the game, but from there things start to unravel.

As I write this, I'm struggling to remember the names of the virtual people that fought alongside me. This is partly due to your status as nothing more than a tagalong character, never really pivotal in any conflict unless someone needs you to provide a remote-controlled drone with some targets to shoot, or when someone barks some words in your direction to get you to snipe yet another enemy in the distance. Other games suffer from the same shortcoming, but it's taken to ridiculous new heights in *Homefront*. I spent the entire game being forcefully shunted out of cover by my so-called "companions," left to die in a hail of bullets because they decided I wasn't worthy of recovering health behind that particular piece of scenery. I opened one door throughout the game and that's only because an NPC was nice enough



1/ The game's vision of America under siege offers so much promise, but fails to realise its full potential.

2/ Michael James is rewarded with cook duty after yet another friendly fire incident.

3/ White phosphorous mortar shells provide one of the few intense moments in *Homefront*'s ridiculously short campaign.



to let the kid that got picked last finally have a go at turning the next doorknob. The rest of the time I was forced to wait for people to climb ladders before me (again, I was violently pushed aside by my buddies whenever I attempted to ignore the ladder-climbing hierarchy), forced to wait while someone else opened trapdoors for me, as if I couldn't be trusted with any of these seemingly mundane responsibilities.

This wouldn't be as much of a problem were you ever given any reason to care about the characters and story in a game that is otherwise just another military shooter. There's not enough time to develop any kind of relationship with these characters, even though it's clear that the developers have tried to make you care about what's happening around you. They brazenly attempt to squeeze some emotion out of you with their set pieces, but you can't ever really sympathise with the characters or their plight because they're never fleshed out. The last hour starts to pick up a bit when the more intense action kicks in, but just as things are starting to look up, the game abruptly ends. What you're left with is a disappointingly meaningless experience peppered with a handful of memorable moments. The enticing premise is there – the game just can't back it up.

Thankfully the multiplayer manages to redeem the experience, because it's really good fun if you're playing with the right crowd. It's a familiar sight these days, seeing a series of weapon and perk unlocks, but *Homefront* changes things up just enough to make its multiplayer appealing. Vehicles exist here, as do remote-controlled

drones that you can send out to do your bidding while you hide in a bush somewhere. These are bought using Battle Points (BP), which you accrue by killing Internet people and completing objectives. Things like body armour and missile strikes can all be bought if you've got the BP. It's actually a brilliant way of handling performance rewards – until someone calls in a tank and circles the map shelling everything that vaguely resembles a human. In doing so they accumulate enough BP to call in another tank the moment they die and a vicious cycle is suddenly perpetuated, rudely killing any fun you were having. The large, open maps provide ludicrously large firing lanes for snipers to abuse. These guys then quickly shoot up the scoreboard with nobody to stop them before they buy themselves a tank and cement their dominance. As such, seemingly everyone's taken to sniping. You'd swear there are no other weapons available here. This may be exclusive to the PC version, populated by an online community where your kill/death ratio is supposedly tantamount to your worth as a human, but it's caused every PC server to empty just two weeks after the game's launch. There's a fun, worthwhile multiplayer offering here, but imbalances such as those above will make it difficult for you to find a populated server if you buy the PC version.

All in all, *Homefront* definitely isn't a bad game. It's just not good enough to compete with similar offerings – even with that promising premise. It's worth playing if you've got nothing else going on – but personally I'd much rather play *Crysis 2* again. **NAG**

**Barkskin**

/ PLUS / Well presented / Solid multiplayer / Intriguing story / Some memorable moments  
/ MINUS / Painfully short single player / Forgettable characters / Disappointing campaign

HOMEFRONT IS A DECENT FPS, BUT THE SHORT CAMPAIGN RUINS THE STORY'S POTENTIAL.

71

# Top Spin 4

## Smashing!

One of the best things about watching a sporting event – we're talking live here, not on the couch with a light dusting of chip crumbs – is the atmosphere that they generate. The crowd gets swept up in the excitement of the sporting event, hanging on every motion that the athletes make. Now, if it's that exciting for the crowd, can you imagine what it must be like for the athletes?

That is something that *Top Spin 4* manages to capture, to a large degree. The added atmosphere in the title is a triumph for the series, because it is the first tennis game that not only manages to capture the subtle nuances of the game, but also the enthusiasm of the crowd.

Where other tennis titles – like *Virtua Tennis* and numerous Wii games – have been all about smacking a ball about, the *Top Spin* series has tried to capture the delicacies and strategy of the game. The first three times they came close, in varying degrees, but *Top Spin 4* is the first title in the series that manages to capture the feeling of this excellent sport, without becoming bogged down in controls that are too complex

### [ details ]

Platforms: 360 / PS3 / Wii  
 Genre: Sports simulation  
 Age restriction: 3+  
 DRM: Disc-based  
 Multiplayer: Local: 4 players  
 Online versus: 4 players  
 Developer: 2K Czech  
 Website: www.topspin4.com  
 Publisher: 2K Sports  
 Distributor: Megarom

(something that *Top Spin 3* was guilty of.) Rather, the development team behind this game managed to balance simplicity (in terms of control) with complexity (where strategy and nuance comes into the picture.) The control scheme is easy enough for the player to effectively use a wide variety of carefully placed shots, without having to spend three years in a tutorial.

Speaking of which, *Top Spin 4* places great emphasis on training. The Top Spin Academy tutorial will train the player from the very basics – the four shot types, which are flat, lob, slice and top spin – through to advanced tactics. The four shot types are all accessed through the face buttons of the controller, with shoulder buttons adding modifiers for power or precision.

While the training may seem like a bit of a deep-end at first, the simplicity and effectiveness of the controls soon becomes apparent, and the player will – with a little practice – look like a tennis pro in no time. The tutorial goes a long way to explaining what the strengths and weaknesses of various shot types and strategies are, allowing the player to see how the game develops as



/1/ The faces of famous players are really well recreated. But you won't run into them for a while in the career mode.

/2/ What would tennis be without hotties in short skirts? Players can even create their own court goddesses using extensive character creation tools.

/3/ OK, maybe this one is pre-rendered... but the overall graphic quality in *Top Spin 4* is top notch.





these shot types are used. It's very complete, and one of the nicer sports tutorials we have seen in a while.

Once the player gets to the career mode, things get exciting. Sure, you can jump right into a quick match and play as Nadal or Federer (or Borg or Becker, for that matter, thanks to the game's large roster of well-known tennis heroes) but the real meat and bones lies in the career mode. The player can make their own character, using a set of character creation tools that is extremely detailed and rather fun to work with. From there it's on to the courts around the world as the player slowly battles their way up to the number one slot.

It's a long slog, but the battle to get to the top makes the final destination all the more rewarding. The player won't see a top name competitor on the other side of the net for a long while, which makes running into them all the better. And, with the lengths that the developers went to in capturing individual player styles, the authenticity makes the journey even more fun.

Along the way, the player's character

picks up experience, new kit and a whole bunch of other stuff that shows a steady growth in the character – yet another way for the player to appreciate their achievements in this fine tennis simulator.

With great graphics, excellent character animations and an almost perfectly captured sense of actually being at a tennis match, the game has come a long way from its overly complicated predecessor. *Top Spin 4* looks and feels great, and is one of the most rewarding sports simulators in some time.

It's not perfect, though – no game is, really. The biggest problem is one that more than likely came about thanks to licensing issues. See, the game features a number of well-known tennis stadia, like Roland Garros and even the O2 arena, but misses out on others. The biggest omission is Wimbledon, which is nowhere to be found in the game.

Still, while this is disappointing, it doesn't ruin the overall experience that is to be had with *Top Spin 4*. And that, in short, is a great one.

**NAG  
Ramjet**

/ PLUS / Great controls / Good graphics / Captures the essence  
/ MINUS / Where's Wimbledon? / A little deep end

**CERTAINLY THE BEST GAME OF THE FRANCHISE, TOP SPIN 4 CAPTURES TENNIS BEAUTIFULLY, WITHOUT GETTING TOO COMPLEX.**

**80**

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# Total War: Shogun 2

...because walls are for ninnies

The *Total War* series has always excelled at taking history and making it its b\*tch. It's a series that offers up the chance to alter the past and play a role in determining the outcome of brilliantly crafted "what if" scenarios. What if Portugal had been a major military power throughout the Middle Ages? What if Denmark had successfully conquered the whole of England and made it a vassal state? What if Joel Schumacher had never been granted the power to put nipples on Batman?

The Creative Assembly's most ambitious take on the series so far arrived back in 2009 with *Empire: Total War*. That iteration's mad, all-encompassing scope was mindboggling, unlocking the potential for endless gameplay possibilities, but many fans felt that *Empire* stretched itself too thin and suffered for it. Now, with *Shogun 2*, the developers of this beloved, critically acclaimed series have opted to return to the series' roots, taking fans back to 16th-century Japan, during a time where the islands of Japan were the scene of an epic conflict to decide which of the major clan leaders would ultimately become Japan's new Shogun (the Tokugawa came out on top in real life). You are the *Daimyo* (leader) of one of these clans



## [ details ]

Platforms:  
**PC**  
Genre:  
**Turn-based/Real-Time Strategy**  
Age restriction:  
**16+**  
DRM:  
**Internet connection required [Steam]**  
Multiplayer:  
**Online co-op: [2 players]**  
**Online versus: [8 players]**  
Developer:  
**The Creative Assembly**  
Website:  
[www.totalwar.com/shogun2](http://www.totalwar.com/shogun2)  
Publisher:  
**SEGA**  
Distributor:  
**Nu Metro Interactive**

(there are nine in the standard edition, with one extra clan offered with the game's limited edition) and it's up to you to ensure that your clan rises in power until your military and economic might changes Japan's history.

This step back from *Empire's* globe-spanning campaign immediately makes *Shogun 2* a tighter, more polished experience, but it also feels like a regression. *Empire* was brave and bold with all the maniacal tinkering that it allowed for, a move in a new direction for the series, while *Shogun 2* reverts to the sensibilities of the titles that preceded the gunpowder-fuelled antics of *Empire*. As such, this'll feel overly familiar to anyone who's played every game in the series, which I imagine will annoy some of you after the numerous changes that *Empire* implemented. Don't be put off by that though, because *Shogun 2* is the most refined experience in the series to date, with excellent design overflowing from the game's every orifice.

For those new to the series, *Total War* marries turn-based strategy with real-time tactical battles. The game is divided between the turn-based campaign map and the real-time tactical map. The former is where you manage your clan's inner workings by constructing buildings, managing infrastructure, recruiting



troops, manoeuvring armies and deviously scheming. It's like *Civilization* light. The tactical map is where battles (of both the land and sea variety) are resolved when two armies/navies are resolved when two armies/navies from warring clans clash, or when a castle town is under siege. Land battles can involve thousands of troops, making the larger conflicts absolutely epic affairs. Each unit/ship has its own purpose and each clan in turn has its own minor specialty (for example, the Shimazu have superior katana samurai and their generals have increased loyalty, while the Chosokabe have expert bowmen and their farms receive a slight buff). Gunpowder units return from *Empire*, but they're not essential and there's a much greater emphasis on melee troops here.

The campaign map is littered with intricacies like agents (whose skills and abilities can be upgraded via an RPG-style system, as can your generals) that can be sent out to sabotage opposing clans' efforts. Technology is unlocked by mastering Arts, which grant new buildings, technologies and bonuses that benefit the clan. This takes time though, requiring a number of turns to unlock each Art. Managing the loyalty of your generals so that they don't aspire to overthrow your rule comes into play,



as does your *Daimyo's* honour - which affects your dealings with other clans as well as certain factors within your own holdings. The disposition of the other clans towards you is particularly important, because they will happily unite against you if they feel you're becoming too powerful, or jump at the chance to take you out if they sense even the tiniest weakness. Those are just a few of your worries (lack of space means I can't list everything here) while playing *Shogun 2* and it can be quite challenging juggling all these factors as your rule expands across Japan, but that's part of this series' charm.

Sieges deserve special mention, because they've changed a bit. The Japanese built their strongholds to withstand earthquakes and as such, traditional walls are out. Instead any infantry unit is able to climb the walls leading up to the castle grounds and eventually these castles are upgraded to become multi-stage battlegrounds as you make your way onto the first level of the castle, defeat the troops there, then climb another wall to reach the castle's next tier and do battle again until you

/1/ Certain units can hide in woodland, allowing for epic ambushes.

/2/ Sending cavalry hurtling headfirst into a group of spearmen never ends well for the horses.

/3/ Your starting position has a massive effect on each campaign's difficulty. Finding yourself wedged uncomfortably between two aggressive clans early on makes things mighty tricky.



eventually capture every node within the castle walls or slaughter all the defenders. These new castle sieges are actually awesome, with the ability for any infantry to scale the walls offering many flanking opportunities (which the AI is quite adept at taking advantage of). Siege weaponry returns, but it's not an absolute necessity for all but the most heavily defended of castles.

The Japanese theme is wonderfully presented, with fantastic visuals and audio driving it home. Tiny details on the battlefield (such as cherry blossoms that glide about on the wind) show the amount of passion that went into this game. Multiplayer options include two-player competitive/cooperative play on the campaign map, while up to eight players can duke it out online in massive battles on the tactical level. All of this comes together to create an experience that, despite the fact that it's far less ambitious than *Empire*, is impressive on every level. If you hate *Total War*, chances are you'll hate this. If you can't get enough of the series, however, you'll adore *Shogun 2*. **NAG**

Barkskin

/ PLUS / Excellent presentation / Pleasantly addictive / Deep, engrossing gameplay  
/ MINUS / Overly familiar

IT'S A TIGHTER, MORE FOCUSED EXPERIENCE THAN *EMPIRE*, BUT *SHOGUN 2* BENEFITS FROM THAT GREATLY.

90

# The Sims Medieval

## King for a Day

When *The Sims Medieval* was announced, there were some that thought it would be a cash-in on a well-established franchise, and others who thought that this new spin-off IP had great potential for new experiences. Both camps are right, to a degree... *The Sims Medieval* offers the player a new approach to the long running, super popular *Sims*, but some of the depth and freedom that they could have enjoyed has been stripped away in this new game.

The player takes on the role of the Watcher, a sort of deity that guides the growth of a medieval kingdom. The player will get to place buildings (in prescribed positions, mind you) and control a number of 'hero' characters as they go on quests to improve the kingdom. Some quests will require one character, while later quests may require a few of them. Each character can gain up to ten levels

### [ details ]

Platforms:  
PC  
Genre:  
Simulation  
Age restriction:  
13+  
DRM:  
Disc-based  
Multiplayer:  
None  
Developer:  
EA Games  
Website:  
www.  
thesimsmedieval.  
com  
Publisher:  
Electronic Arts  
Distributor:  
Electronic Arts South  
Africa



of experience, which allows them to perform their core tasks better.

Aside from completing quests – which are generally a series of actions that the character needs to undertake within the kingdom – the heroes can also interact with other characters, much like other versions of *The Sims*. The interactions are more limited than *The Sims 3*, but there will likely be expansions that will sort that out. Also, the heroes have to perform two daily tasks within each game day cycle. And that, more or less, is it. The player will need to only look after two needs, namely food and sleep.

While it may have been necessary to dumb the core mechanic of *The Sims* down a bit to include the necessary quests in this title, it feels like the developers weren't sure when to stop pruning, and went overboard. It simply is too easy. Sure, the game is quite literally what you make of it, but the exclusion of

/1/ Yes, there is a lot to do in the game, but it really is what you make of it – and long time *Sims* fans may find it more limited than they like.

/2/ You get to play up to ten different characters in each kingdom, and each character can be created from scratch.

some of the more challenging aspects of *The Sims 3* makes the game feel more like a dollhouse than ever before.

Speaking of which, the buildings are all pre-defined, in their position and their structure. The player can alter interiors to a degree, including limited décor options, but the shell of the building stays the same. This strips away much of the expected creativity, but does keep things relatively simple.

Each Kingdom has an ambition that the player selects, and once it is fulfilled, more ambitions become available. The problem is that you cannot change the ambition for a kingdom... to try a new one you have to start a new game and many of the quests you will get in the new game will be repeats.

In the end, *The Sims Medieval* is fun, but it is far more limited than previous *Sims* titles. **NAG**

Ramjet

/ PLUS / Fun new ideas / Unique approach  
/ MINUS / Limited / Repetition / Too easy

IT'S A FUN GAME, BUT LONG-TIME FANS OF THE SIMS FRANCHISE MAY BE SORELY DISAPPOINTED.

79



# Yakuza 4

## The Mean Streets

### [ details ]

Platforms:  
**PS3**  
Genre:  
**Third-person action**  
Age restriction:  
**18+**  
DRM:  
**Disc-based**  
Multiplayer:  
**None**  
Developer:  
**SEGA**  
Website:  
**www.sega.com**  
Publisher:  
**SEGA**  
Distributor:  
**Nu Metro Interactive**



The Yakuza franchise certainly is a taste driven one, with many people attracted to the "interactive movie" feel of the game, while others balk at the long, subtitled cut scenes and the lack of spoken dialogue in game. Just like its predecessor, *Yakuza 4* manages to bring together many elements that are traditional to Japanese video games, and meld them with a newer approach. Despite this, the game still manages to (every now and then) feel like it is securely behind the times, more prone to be a cult hit than a classic.

The game once again returns to the semi-fictional Kamurocho red-light district of Tokyo, and weaves four stories for the player to enjoy. The four characters of the game – a loan shark with a kind heart, a corrupt cop, a murderous thug and, of course, the series stalwart Yakuza boss who runs an orphanage – don't interact much until the finale, though.

The game is crammed with combat, mini-games and overly-long cut scenes. It's enjoyable enough, but it does feel like it is lagging behind the times. It also seems that the developers spent more time working on complex and widely varied mini-games – from karaoke to golf tournaments – and not enough on the core of the experience. Fans will probably love it, because it is an improvement over the previous game. But, like so many things with a strong Japanese flavour, this one is an acquired taste. **NAG**

Ramjet



/ PLUS / Deep story / Detailed setting

/ MINUS / No in-game speech / Too many mini-games

ULTIMATELY AN ENJOYABLE GAME, BUT VERY MUCH A MATTER OF TASTE.

# 79

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# De Blob 2

## Splashing Out

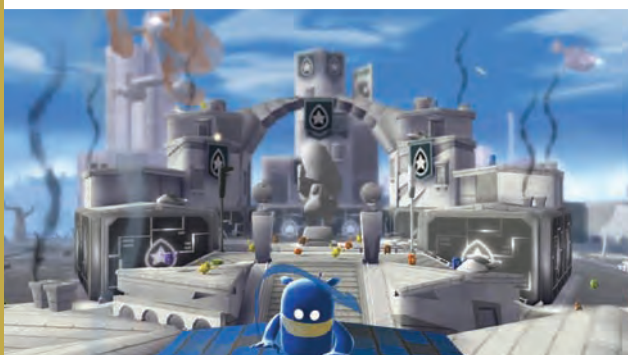
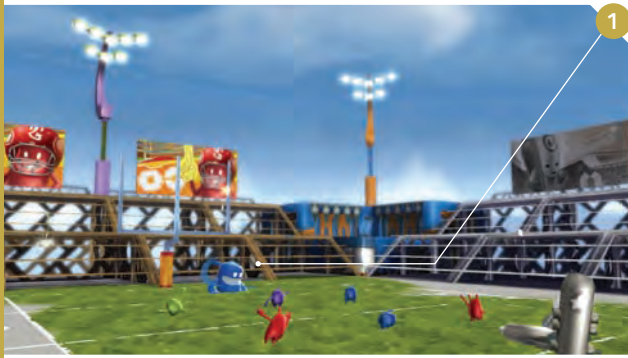
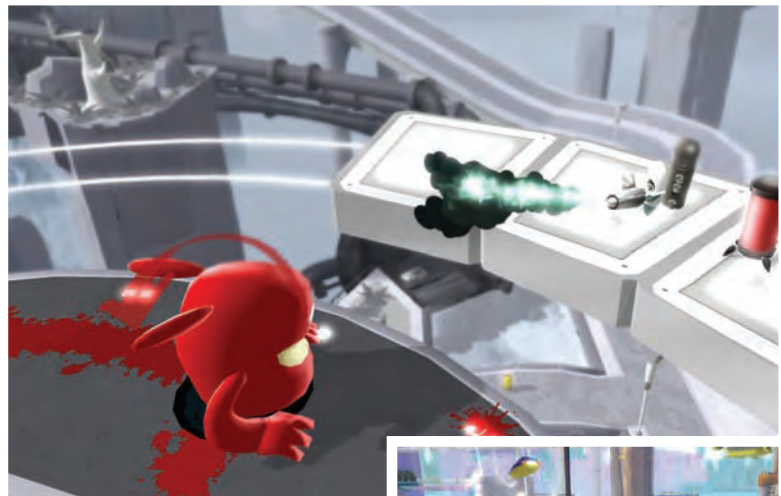
Platform games certainly have evolved over the many years that they have been around. And we mean many... these titles are a stalwart of video gaming, and were one of the first easily definable genres that came about. But the side scrolling action that they presented has changed greatly, leaving us with games like *De Blob 2*.

*De Blob* made its debut on the Wii, but has since migrated to the HD consoles as well. The player takes on the role of Blob, an amorphous dude-thing that has the ability to soak up and distribute paint. He lives in a world where the evil INKT Corporation, under the leadership of the nefarious Comrade Black, a character that wants to see the world stripped of colour, so that he can be in control. But Blob and his friends in the Colour Underground have different ideas...

*De Blob 2* is an uncomplicated game, clearly aimed at a younger market. The cleverly designed, busy levels are full of things that need colour added to them – buildings, trees, cars, people and such. By bouncing into objects, Blob changes their colours. Okay, it's a little more

### [ details ]

Platforms:  
**PS3 / 360 / Wii / DS**  
Genre:  
**Platform**  
Age restriction:  
**3+**  
DRM:  
**Disc-based**  
Multiplayer:  
**Co-op: 2 players**  
Developer:  
**Blue Tongue**  
Website:  
**www.deblob.com**  
Publisher:  
**THQ**  
Distributor:  
**Ster Kinekor Entertainment**



**/1/** No place is safe - *De Blob 2* takes the player through a wide variety of cleverly constructed levels.

**/2/** Comrade Black hard at work... most of his actions are shown in humorous cut-scenes.

complicated than that, but it really is a game that gamers of all ages can enjoy. While its simplicity speaks to a younger audience, it still allows older players to have fun and relax with a session of colour splashing.

There are mild puzzle elements to the game (like different levels that need to be painted different colours, meaning the player would have to strategize their approach) and the colour mixing elements of the game will be fun for youngsters particularly. The game also features numerous underground levels, presented in a more traditional 2D fashion. These are great sub levels, thanks to good design and decent pacing.

The game has a very gentle learning curve, and does not demand much from

the player until much later on. It also has a timed element, but this, too, is very forgiving, and once a level is complete, the player can tool around and finish side quests and goals without any time constraints. The player – particularly more experienced ones – will hardly be taxed at all. The most frustration they will likely encounter is falling off of a ledge or getting taken out by an enemy that they didn't see.

The simple nature of the game may see hard-core players dismiss it outright, but the humour and relaxing nature of the game dynamic – which does feature a few challenging bits – combined with a fun aesthetic and very clever level design make *De Blob 2* an enjoyable title for the whole family. **NAG**

**Ramjet**

**/ PLUS /** Fun for everyone / Lots to do  
**/ MINUS /** Very easy / Some repetition  
**A FUN GAME FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY, BUT HARD-CORE GAMERS WILL TURN THEIR NOSES UP AT IT.**

**78**

# Swarm

The intergalactic, blue creature genocide simulator

**S**warmites: they're blue, they're dumb as mud and they're expendable, which is a great thing because the planet they've crash-landed on makes Mordor look like a five-star beach resort. Hothead Games has produced a macabre downloadable title that sees you trying to guide an inept swarm of creatures across a gauntlet of death as quickly as possible.

The game is all about multipliers and high scores. You're not supposed to save all fifty of the swarmites; in fact it almost helps to do the complete opposite. Each level contains purple orbs and DNA strands that need collecting to net you points. The more you collect, the higher your constantly draining multiplier will climb as well. The idea is to reach a par score for each level so as to progress to the next. The moment you kill a swarmite, your score increases but

## [ details ]

Platforms: PS3 / 360  
 Genre: Platformer  
 Age restriction: 12+  
 DRM: None  
 Multiplayer: Online Leader boards  
 Developer: Hothead Games  
 Website: www.swarmites.com  
 Publisher: Ignition Entertainment  
 Distributor: Xbox Live Arcade / PlayStation Network



your multiplier begins depleting as well. It's a gory little catch-22 situation.

You'll face a smorgasbord of death-doling implements and your fifty-strong swarm can be reduced to nothing in mere seconds if you don't guide them carefully. Once you lose all of them, you

lose your progress and have to start at a recent checkpoint. Fortunately there are sporadic swarmite replenishing stations throughout each level – those prove invaluable at times, especially during the game's imaginative boss battles.

**NAG**  
Mikit0707

/ PLUS / Wickedly funny / Dozens of ways to die / Deceptively tricky  
 / MINUS / Controls take getting used to / Game-freezing bugs / Tad repetitive  
**IS IT A PLATFORMER OR A PUZZLE GAME? WHO KNOWS? IT'S QUITE A BIT OF FUN THOUGH, AND WORTH CHECKING OUT.**

70

# GEARS OF WAR 3



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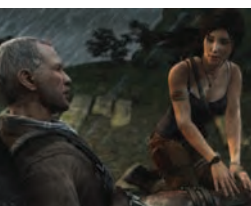
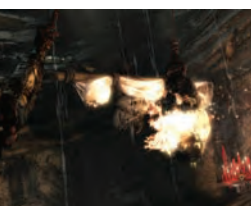
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Release Date:  
TBA (but not 2011)  
Platforms:  
PC / 360 / PS3  
Genre:  
Survival action  
Developer:  
Crystal Dynamics  
Website:  
www.tombraider.com  
Publisher:  
Square-Enix



> *Tomb Raider* will be M-rated, but that doesn't mean the game will feature loads of gratuitous violence and dirty language. The developers opted for this rating to allow them to create realistic scenarios without being limited by the need to keep things family-friendly.

It takes more than just guts to wake up in the morning and decide "I'm going to reboot the *Tomb Raider* franchise, starting with a new Lara Croft." It also takes a hell of a lot of planning and, as Crystal Dynamics would have it, a good sense of timing. With that said, I'd hazard to say that fortitude for public backlash should be pretty high on that list of requirements too. While the *Tomb Raider* series has arguably gone a bit stale over the years, it's still an incredibly popular game franchise with over 35 million sales in total, ranking it number 30 in total game franchise sales worldwide. That's a lot of opinions to contend with. So, when NAG was invited to visit Crystal Dynamic's San Francisco studio, we jumped at the opportunity to get into the minds of the developers and, in the nicest way possible, ask them what the hell they're doing.

As it turns out, Crystal Dynamics is doing a *lot*. This new, boldly-titled *Tomb Raider* isn't just about rebooting the franchise, it's about changing the way people look at Lara, story-telling in games and adventure games in general. It's a statement game if ever there was one, and the developers are extremely keen to take ownership of this refreshed IP to bring Lara into an age of gaming where we aren't all thirteen year-old boys who try to trick the in-game camera to give us up-close boob shots of our favourite heroine.

To give us a taste of things to come, *Tomb Raider* brand manager Karl Stewart and Crystal's general manager Darrell Gallagher took us through two segments of the game called Day 2 and Day 4. The names are not necessarily representative of actual in-game time (it's still early days in development), but they're from an early portion of the game nonetheless.

Lara's loading screen's voiceover tells us that she, her mentor Conrad Roth and the rest of the crew of the sea-faring *The Endurance* have been shipwrecked on a small island off the coast of Japan while hunting for treasure. Lara was knocked unconscious and awakens to find herself unarmed, bound from chest to foot, hanging upside down in a cavern lit only by a few burning torches. She's alone but for a few long-rotted corpses that didn't manage to break out of this mess and she decides to make an alteration to her fate. Immediately, the player has control and must swing Lara side-to-side to set her alight, thus burning her bonds and sending her plummeting to the cave floor, where she lands on a metal spike. After a bit of button-mashing, Lara removes the spike from her side which subjects the camera to a blinding assortment of blur effects as Lara staggers out of the cave. It's a shock to see the once near-superhuman adventurer in this kind of vulnerable position. The visuals are gruesome, the cave is claustrophobic and Lara says "shit" a lot.

Whoa. This *is* different. It's almost uncomfortable to watch.

Out of the first cavern, Lara continues through a series of caves and corridors in a desperate attempt to escape to

# Tomb Raider

Lara, like you've never seen her before.





"This new, **boldly-titled Tomb Raider** isn't just about rebooting the franchise, it's about changing the way people look at Lara, story-telling in games and adventure games in general."

> **New allies for a new heroine**

**Real Name:**

Conrad Roth

**Age:**

52

**Nationality:**

British (Sheffield/  
Southern Yorkshire)

**Occupation:**

Treasure-Hunter/  
Expedition Leader

**Appearance:**

6'1", stocky but athletic

A veteran of two combat tours with the RMC (Royal Marine Commandos), Conrad Roth now puts his unique skills to use as a wreck diver and freelance treasure hunter. Roth is renowned for his hardiness, his proficiency and his willingness to bend the tiresome laws restricting the "trading" of historical artifacts. He will lie, he will cheat and he will go beyond the law's boundaries to ensure that he gets his prize.

He commands respect from his crew and no one would dare question his orders. Roth's military training kicks in when things go awry, remaining level headed even in the most chaotic of situations. Roth has gradually acquired a series of ever-larger ships and currently captains a large, well-equipped salvage vessel known as The Endurance. Roth jokingly remarks that he's married to the sea. He dreams of enjoying his retirement aboard a 60-foot yacht – but first he needs to hit his big payday.

> If the game can be summarised in one word to express what it represents, that word would be "character". Lara is undoubtedly the star of the show, and the developers want the player to experience her growth right from the beginning by being along for a challenging adventure that will constantly push her beyond her comfort zones.

the outside. A clanging noise nearby tells us that Lara is not alone. As she moves through the space, the dynamic camera shifts position to give players a cinematic feel. Lara's expertly-crafted animations show us how terrified she is, but her frequent monologue lets us know that she's determined to survive. She grabs a torch and uses it to burn down some rubble that blocks her path. There's an explosive barrel to remind us that we're still watching an action game and not something out of the *Silent Hill* series; this is similarly helped by an activated ability called Survival Instinct that highlights nearby paths and interactive items. When Lara becomes submerged in water, her torch is extinguished and it becomes imperative for her to find a source of fire to re-ignite it.

While crawling through a small space, Lara's foot is grabbed by a savage human with a mean-looking bladed weapon and a penchant for wearing bones. A QuickTime event has Lara shake off her attacker and kick him in the face before she can escape. Soon after, Lara is in what the developers call The Den. Here is the first "puzzle" that the player is faced with. Lara must escape the Den by destroying the explosive barrels at the bottom of a water chute. Simple enough, but sliding down the chute extinguishes her torch. She needs to find another way to

ignite the barrels. This is solved with a combination of activating physics-based pulleys and containers, burning key objects and making use of the buoyancy of wooden crates that are floating along the underground river (presumably from the shipwreck).

Soon after, during Lara's escape of the cave, she's faced with a few more QuickTime events like dodging tumbling boulders and another friendly local that "just wants to help" by murdering her. When she does make it to the surface, she's greeted with a view of the coastline – littered with shipwrecks.

What we just witnessed was a survival game sequence, one of the types of gameplay experiences in which the player will partake. These sequences are fast-paced, scary and require the player to keep a cool head if they want Lara to survive. They're quite different from what we know *Tomb Raider* to be but they're exciting. They're also not mutually exclusive, as we see in the game segment called Day 4, which focuses more on "classic" *Tomb Raider* level traversal while mixing in plenty of new stuff.

The day begins with Lara finding her mentor Conrad Roth. Since we know nothing (so far) about Lara's parents in this version of *Tomb Raider*, he's immediately identifiable as the father figure, and, wielding dual pistols while he fights off a pack of wolves, reminds



Conrad Roth



“These sequences are **fast-paced, scary and require the player to keep a cool head if they want Lara to survive.** They’re quite different from what we know *Tomb Raider* to be but they’re exciting.”

This is the bit where Lara has to swing to set herself alight. This action is deliberately designed to be counter-intuitive, with the purpose of taking the player outside of their comfort zone within the first minutes of gameplay.

us strongly of the Lara from previous games. Roth doesn't fare too well, however, and as the wolves scamper off he collapses to the ground. He calls on Lara to find a radio transmitter and first-aid kit, which can be found in the wolves' nearby den. Lara is not keen to go in. She's still unarmed and unconfident, but a bit of urging by Roth convinces her that she needs to find the courage to help her friend or else he will die. The animations, voice-acting (temporary as it may be) and cinematics help convey the emotion and conflict that Lara undergoes. When she eventually sets off, one can't help but feel pride that she's decided to overcome her fears.

Using her Survival Instinct ability, Lara can see glowing wolf prints along the ground indicating that she needs to climb to the top of a cliff to get to the wolves' den. In this area, we're shown a number of ways for Lara to reach her goal, including manoeuvring through the small ruined Japanese village at the cliff's base, climbing directly up certain rocks or creeping across the unsteady remains of a long-abandoned World War 2-era aeroplane. The rain is pelting down on the area and particle effects all over give the impression of a strong storm. Lara moves awkwardly, as though she's unsure of her climbing and jumping abilities, but that doesn't stop her from leaping large gaps and surviving long falls to the ground. She can also scramble up ledges and even change her direction in mid-air. We're told that as Lara unlocks new skills and improves her abilities (through an as-yet undecided experience points system), as well as when she unlocks new equipment, her level traversal abilities will improve. With these improvements, she'll be able to reach new locations

that were previously blocked from her, by travelling back to base camps from previous parts of the game. At those base camps she'll also be able to upgrade and assemble equipment.

Once Lara reaches the top of the cliff, the game returns to another survival-type sequence, in which Lara is inside another cave, while wolves dart around her as distant, snarling shadows. She soon finds the required items and heads outside, but gets knocked down by a wolf and the player must beat another QuickTime event to have Lara shove off the wolf and eventually stab it to death. It's an oddly emotionally moment for Lara, considering the number of wolves the character has killed in previous games. This Lara is quite different, however, and apologises to the animal's corpse with mixed notes of regret and triumph. After all, if she hadn't killed the wolf, she'd be dead.

Our brief time watching the game (sadly, the developers weren't ready to give us direct control) was incredibly interesting. I went in there fairly certain that I knew what to expect, but left the studio with the impression of a game quite unlike any *Tomb Raider* I'd seen before. I couldn't shake the feeling that it felt like a combination of later *Resident Evil* games and the *Uncharted* series, but with very definite *Tomb Raider* aspects about it. It's still early days – the code we saw was a vertical slice from the early alpha stage of development – and regular combat wasn't even touched on in the slightest, but if things keep up, this next *Tomb Raider* will set a very high benchmark for competing titles and the rest of the series alike.

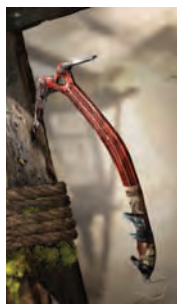
GeometriX



> Darrell Gallagher



> Karl Stewart



### > Redefining the past

In her younger years, Lara spent a good deal of time accompanying her parents on numerous archaeological expeditions. Her time spent in various exotic locales imbued her with an insatiable passion for the unknown and worldly experience far beyond her years. Lara is constantly driven to seek answers to ancient mysteries. Her father attended Cambridge, but Lara chose to avoid the traditional establishment by studying elsewhere – a place where she could forge her own path. Lara eventually exits university a practical, sensible young woman: but no amount of practicality could prepare her for the challenges she will face on her first expedition. Soon after graduating, Lara boards a ship called *The Endurance* to embark on her first great adventure. Captained by Conrad Roth, *The Endurance* sets off in search of lost treasures off Japan's coast. Lara believes this expedition will yield a discovery of massive significance and she will finally make her mark on the world. A vicious storm cuts her ambitious dreams short when it rips *The Endurance* in two and sends Lara overboard. This is where we step in and meet this vulnerable, believable new Lara.

# Interview

## with general manager Darrell Gallagher and brand manager Karl Stewart

**NAG:** Please tell us what you do at Crystal Dynamics.

**Darrell Gallagher:** I am studio head at Crystal.

**Karl Stewart:** I'm global brand director for *Tomb Raider* and the studio. Darrell is responsible for the entire management of the studio and this particular project. Between the two of us we manage the brand and how it's taken to the outside world.

**NAG:** What is it about the previous *Tomb Raiders* that you think needed to change?

**DG:** Mainly we talked about that we had felt that the character had become almost a superhero – that you knew exactly what to expect with the character because you'd seen her so many times before. You knew that if she got into a situation that she's very capable: she'd overcome some opponents or animals, then she'd make a sarcastic remark and move on, and she'd be in a beautiful location at the same time. Then she'd move from location to location. While that was good, it was also something that we felt we needed to move on from to make it interesting and from a character standpoint, she'd become too predictable. We wanted to build a character that was more relatable, more human, has flaws, is challenged by situations, where you're not sure that she's going to come out on top or not, and it would challenge the very expectations of the character that people had come to know and love.

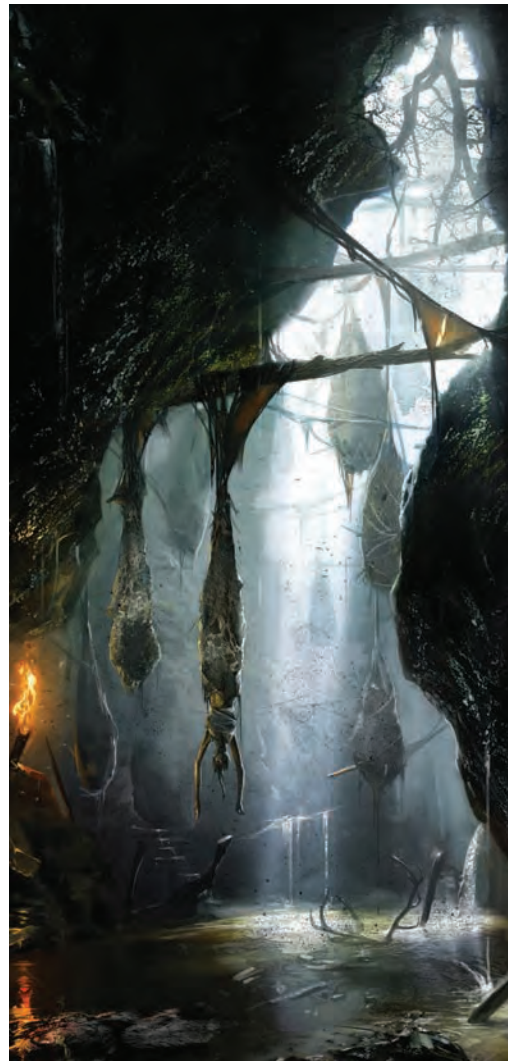
**KS:** Videogames haven't really had the same roundabout effect that movies

have had, whether it's James Bond or Batman or Superman. The characters go through a cycle where they have to be culturally relevant. Adam West was an awesome Batman for that time. Then Michael Keaton made a great Batman until George Clooney and Val Kilmer came along and all of a sudden Christopher Nolan's version of Batman with Christian Bale. We felt that Lara's been around for quite a long time; she's never had that revelation where she's become culturally relevant. Up until *Underworld*, we had the pillars of a character, the pillars of an experience, but it needs to be redefined so that people today play it. Our goal is that by the time you finish the game you will feel that this is a *Tomb Raider* for today, that this is a *Tomb Raider* for "me" and for previous *Tomb Raider* players.

**NAG:** You've mentioned that the current voice actor is a placeholder; why is it so difficult to find the right voice of Lara?

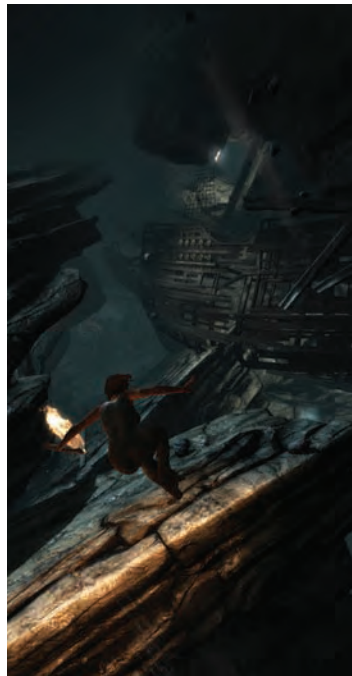
**DG:** The voice acting is very-much a connection to a digital character. It is the human part of a digital character. So, getting that voice acting to be absolutely perfect in terms of the casting, delivery, reliability and ensuring that the quality we want comes through, is very important for us, and that's why we're really taking our time with it.

**KS:** The voice has to be of that age as well. Lara says in one of the cinematics "that wolf's got nothing on a broken bottle" so we're positioning a whole different Lara – a Lara that worked in a pub. She's straight out of college so she has to have what goes with a woman straight out of college.



In their endless quest to blend believability with playability, Crystal works to ensure that the new Lara is still identifiable not just in looks, but in her movement as well. As a result, she's still quite capable when it comes to jumping and climbing.





“...we’re positioning a whole different Lara – a Lara that worked in a pub. She’s straight out of college so she has to have what goes with a woman straight out of college.”



It’s important because once you define that voice, that voice will be the voice for quite a while. The last thing you want to do is keep changing it with each game because you lose affinity with the character. So, trying to find the voice that, when you see that girl’s face in real life, you’ll be like “that’s the one; she’s of the age.” As you move to the next game she’ll progress. This is not just one game: it’s creating a franchise.

**NAG:** Beautiful and exciting locations have always been an important part of *Tomb Raider* games. What is significant about the location in this game?

**KS:** The location is an island, and the crucial thing about the location is that it’s a character in itself. This location allows us to strip the character of Lara right down to the bare bones of what survival means. Having a character that goes from Egypt to Barcelona to all these different places doesn’t allow you to truly define that character and get to that raw emotion. For us the setting of it being an island allows us to go through so many ups and downs without the distractions of going around the world.

**DG:** Having range within one setting is obviously very important. We really want to make sure that the island has personality – that it has different characteristics depending on what location you are in on the island. That range can exist in one space. In terms of the different flavours that you get from world-trotting, our aim is to present variation and infuse different flavours

into the island yet remain cohesive at the same time.

**KS:** And I think you’ll see over that we’ll lay in enough mystery that you won’t want to leave the island, although you have to.

**NAG:** Can you tell us about some of the story-telling mechanics you’re using in the game?

**DG:** It’s a mix of traditional story-telling mechanics in games in the form of cutscenes, but using very advanced techniques such as motion capture, a motion-captured camera and great voice acting, but also trying to tell the story in-game through her dialogue and her expressions. Not just relying on cutscenes to tell a story, but to also try and develop the character in-game through her dialogue and acting and through her physicality. Seeing that progress over the story arc is something you don’t see in games very often. In most games you start off as a bad-ass, big muscular guy or a Space Marine or something, and that’s what you end up as.

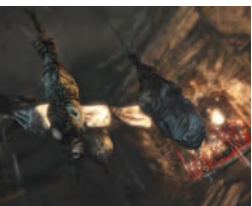
The thing that’s interesting to me in this game is that we’re actually starting with somebody who requires development, who has a character that is very human, who has to go through experiences that actually define her. Those are the sorts of things you don’t see in games very often – the arc from one sort of person to seeing how they become somebody else through the pressure they’re under and situations they’re in.



&gt; Brian Horton



&gt; Karl Stewart



# Interview

## with art director Brian Horton and brand manager Karl Stewart

**NAG:** I noticed during the demonstration that the level traversal points like ledges and bridges are well integrated into the environment. How do you go about creating environments like that?

**Brian Horton:** What we do is try to create a rule set that's clear enough: that people can start to intuitively figure it out. In the first level there really aren't many places that you can go – it gives you the illusion of some kind of freedom but the choices are limited. It lets us spend more time making the world feel more alive with a lot more set dressing. The goal always is to come up with a clear focal point where you want the player to go and that gets them in the direction until they see the next focal point. You're trying to always lead the eye with new focal points. In the case of the first space that you saw – The Den – you can see the altar and beyond into the distance. A lot of that just comes down to careful staging and lighting to help lead the player through the space.

**NAG:** Can you talk about the process of creating the new Lara?

**BH:** The goal was to start not with the surface qualities but who she was as a character and then go from there. We knew we wanted a younger Lara, but not just make her younger but make her more believable. Once we had those tenets in mind we said that believability is the goal, and then we want a younger face so we put in a lot of effort softening those features. Also, it allows her to have a different character, she's not just a hardened, experienced adventurer; she's more of an aspiring archaeologist, so having her start there was important.

In terms of her clothes, we wanted to make clothes that felt more pragmatic and natural to what you'd wear while on an expedition so it's not so much an outfit but a collection of practical clothing. They do have iconic aspects to them – things you can recognise – but in general they tend to be much more practical.

**NAG:** The art direction in this game is one of the biggest departures from previous games in the series. What was the inspiration for this approach?

**BH:** We started with the story – we knew it'd be darker in content and we knew it was going to have a lot more gravitas and the style that we went with was more of a contrast of light and dark. The team was very-much inspired by a group of painters called the Hudson River School. They had this very dramatic atmospheric light and areas of shadow and storms off in the distance. It's that play of light, darkness and sort-of stormy danger that inspired a lot of the aesthetics of the environments.



**"In terms of her clothes, we wanted to make clothes that felt more pragmatic and natural to what you'd wear while on an expedition ..."**

**NAG:** The animations look very believable; Lara moves a bit awkwardly and definitely not as heroically as before. Could you tell us about the animation process?

**BH:** The cinematics are motion-captured, but the performances that you see are mostly handled through Brandon Fernandez and his crew of animators. It's all built on a layered animation system; you're never seeing any one piece of motion at a time – it's a composite of many layers that deliver that performance. We think that, like when she brushes her hand against the wall as she gets close to it, all of those layers help make Lara feel connected to the space. She stumbles sometimes. All of these are little layers that we can add throughout the game. Even though the player has full control, it gives them that extra level of believability. That was an important aspect to us. It's not just the way Lara looks; it's the way she moves as well.

**KS:** The key thing to note here is that we're showing you a point in time in the story. As she progresses, obviously she'll become more competent and with that comes her ability.

**NAG:** Her animations will reflect her abilities?

**KS:** Exactly where she is in the story arc, yes. She won't always act the exact same as what you saw today.

**NAG:** Lara never falls into the uncanny valley; she looks alive but never creepy or weird. Can you talk about what it takes to create such a character?

**BH:** Thank you. One of the things we did was, early on we did work purely from concept about the amalgamations of characters. We knew we wanted versions of her, and we knew we wanted her to feel more believable. There was a lot of reference and gathering and in the process of creating the character we sort-of go "who'd I cast in the role of Lara Croft?" You go through those exercises and you come up with an amalgamation of different people that you think would embody the spirit. At the end of the day we have to come up with a version of her that feels unique to her. It's not that we're trying to avoid the uncanny valley, but that we're trying to breathe a certain amount of life into her always. **NAG**



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\* Brightness comparison based upon monitors with same brightness in 2D.

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# Know Your Technology

## SOCKET TYPES

### / FCPGA /

A type of pin grid array for integrated circuit packaging where the die faces downwards with the back facing upwards for more direct contact with the cooling mechanism (usually a heat sink of sorts). This type of FCPGA packaging was used by both Intel and AMD and continues to be used today on many integrated circuits. Examples of FCPGA packaged ICs are Intel Pentium III (S370) and AMD's AthlonXP

### / LGA /

Land Grid Array is a surface-mount packaging for ICs where the contact pins are on the PCB instead of the actual chip. LGA packages can either be soldered to the PCB or connected via the pins on the board to a matching padded package. LGA allows higher pin densities than other socket types therefore allowing more stable power to the chip. LGA chips can have thousands of contact pads which would be impractical for more traditional pin grid array sockets.

### / BGA /

Ball Grid Array is surface mount packaging that has traditional pins on the package replaced with balls of solder. Mounting BGA chips on a PCB usually involves a baking process that melts these solder balls so that they align with a circuit board that has corresponding copper pads that allow the two to align during this process. BGA packaging is used on GPU's, some memory, and other devices as well. These are several BGA variants used today usually denoted by the substrate which the BGA is attached to. E.G CBGA, PBGA (Ceramic Ball Grid Array, Plastic Ball Grid Array)

### / DIP /

Dual In Line Packaging is an electronics device packaging that is usually found in a rectangular housing with two parallel rows of pins that are through-hole mounted or soldered to the PCB. On modern PC's these are usually used as BIOS Chips on various boards including the main board.

# DID YOU KNOW?

In 2008 it was estimated that computers crunched 9,570,000,000,000,000,000,000 bytes of data per year. That's 9.57 zettabytes, or a million million gigabytes. If you had to take an average sized book of about 4.7 centimeters thick, 9.57 zettabytes would create a stack 5.6 billion miles high. Researchers have now estimated that this theoretical pile of books will be high enough to reach the next star, Alpha Centauri, 4.37 light years away, by 2024.



### Duracell Mini Charger

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R120 | [www.duracell.com](http://www.duracell.com)



### ASUS WL-330N3G

Smaller than a business card, this mobile wireless router has hotspot and 3G sharing modes built in. It can also function as an access point when combined with a broadband modem, or be used as a universal repeater in conjunction with other routers to extend the range of an existing connection.

TBA | [www.asus.com](http://www.asus.com)

## / tech Q&A /

Send your hardware questions to [lauren@nag.co.za](mailto:lauren@nag.co.za).

### GRAPHICS CARD UPGRADE

From: David Malan

"I have upgraded my PC about a year ago. The only thing that I didn't upgrade was my graphics card, because of my budget constraints. With all the upcoming titles such as Elder Scrolls: Skyrim, Battlefield 3 and Diablo 3 (if it ever gets released) I want to be able to enjoy the games the way that they are meant to be played. This brings me to my queries. Should I go for the ATI HD6970 or NVIDIA GTX570 when I upgrade my card? Will

my PSU be able to supply sufficient power to whichever one is best?"

**Neo:** *For just a little over (and I mean about R80 more) you could get a GTX580, faster than both those cards. If not, stick with the Radeon HD6970 as it's faster than the GTX570 and has better power draw. Try and get a 600Watt PSU at the least - having your PSU work at its maximum capacity isn't good for power consumption as your efficiency drops dramatically.*

### DIRECTX 11

From: Janre Steyn

"First of all I would like to say that NAG is

simply the best mag out there. Right, now down to business. I have been browsing the internet and found an article saying that the GeForce GTX 285 doesn't support DirectX 11 at all. I own a GTX 285 and I am running Windows 7 64bit. My display driver clearly states that it is running DirectX 11. Would installing new drivers then enable a graphics card to run newer DirectX versions? Lastly, I read in a previous NAG that the GTX 260 and 275 runs out of memory buffer at high resolutions. Why is this not the case with the GTX 580?"

**Neo:** *Only GTX400 series and higher are DirectX11-enabled. The GTX260 and 275 run out*



### BlackBerry Bold 9780

The new Bold 9780 features the BlackBerry 6 operating system and is available in either black or white. Get it just so you can be on BBM.

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of memory at high resolutions because they just don't have the bandwidth or the memory that the GTX580 has (1.5GB).

### XBOX 360 4GB

From: NT Shapheka

"Because of PC prices of late I have no choice but to give-up on PCs and take the console route. I've been eyeing the new Xbox 360, but the sad thing is that at the moment I can only afford the 4GB version. I haven't played any new releases since October last year so I just cannot wait any longer. Since I don't know much about consoles I wish to know if you would recommend this purchase."

**Neo:** If that's all you can afford go for it, then buy a 16GB stick (or two) later, for a total storage capacity of 32GB (not counting the built in 4GB) for your DLC and a few game installs.

### WE AREN'T ALL SUPER RICH

From: Imraan Kajee

"I'm looking to upgrade my graphics card (currently have gt240), I'm looking for something with good gaming performance and that costs somewhere in the region of R1000-R1500. What can you suggest?"

**Neo:** Try the GTX550 Ti or the Radeon 6790 that should be out by the time you read this.

### RAM

From: Damian Ranger

"I am in need of some expert advice, as most of the people who have been kind enough to give me any have about as much tech knowledge as a loaf of banana bread, hence this letter. I have got very reasonable quotes on DDR-3 RAM but only if I buy 8GB, and it would still cost more than say 6GB. Will that amount of RAM make a difference on a system with Windows 7 64-bit or is it just an unnecessary indulgence that won't cut down on load-times and the like?"

**Neo:** There isn't much difference once you get past 4GB of RAM for now, at least for gaming. 6GB is only really an option for an X58 platform.

# Thermaltake Level 10 GT

## [ specs ]

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## [ technical ]

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Net Weight:  
**12.7kg**  
Motherboard Support:  
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Extended ATX**  
Liquid Cooling Capable:  
**Yes**

## [ summary ]

Pros:  
// **Unique design**  
// **Good cooling**  
// **Ease of installation**

Cons:  
// **Rattles**  
// **Price**  
// **No "wow" factor of  
the original**

Alternatives:  
**HAF-X**



DF-85



V2120



**B**ack in 2009, Thermaltake managed to extract a collective "wow" from gamers right the way round the world with its unique Level 10 Chassis. It focussed purely on style, which meant that while as a PC case it wasn't very good, it did manage to turn heads. Cue 2011 and we have the Level 10 GT aiming to improve on its predecessors flaws while still retaining jaw dropping styling. Has it succeeded?

**/1/** The carry handle allows easy transport to and from LANs, although the positioning does make the case feel slightly awkward.

**/2/** Two separate I/O panels give you a wide variety of connections, with two USB 3.0 connectors at the top.

**/3/** Ventilation is no longer an issue, with plenty of 200mm fans keeping your components cool. The ColorShift fans have 5 sets of illuminations – red blue

green mixed or rotate all 3 colours. Funky.

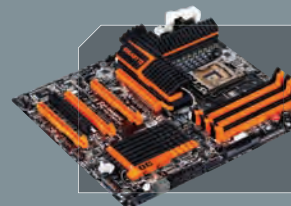
**/4/** Individual hard drive casings make swapping out drives simple and stylish – there are 5 of them. We love this feature, like seriously.

**/5/** Bigger is better, and lighter too! The Level 10 GT weights considerably less than the older Level 10, while providing more space. The mere fact that it can fit a graphics card up to 37cm long gets a thumbs up from us.

**/6/** A case door that opens at the touch of a button and can be locked? What a pleasure. They call it a Smart-lock Security System, for when you leave your case unattended.

**/7/** Cable management is a dream in the Level 10 GT, providing ample space and ports offering a neat solution.

**/8/** Headset holder – it's a small thing we know but its soo cool. We <3 this a lot.



## Dedicated Hardware

Not too long ago I received the X58-OC from GIGABYTE and this product got me thinking about just how much we (talking about competitive/ranked overclockers here) needed a manufacturer that was finally able to admit that this group of people isn't the same as the group that is about gaming and all other related activities.

Basically it's been a request from every enthusiast out there for many years. What we usually do when testing and preparing a motherboard is turn off the additional features of the motherboard like the on-board audio, LAN controller, USB3.0, unnecessary drive controllers and just about anything else that isn't necessary for the system to finish a chosen benchmark. However what usually happens is that the motherboard that we are disabling these things on isn't necessarily meant to be operated like that, in fact it's better to say we buy a motherboard so we can turn off many of the features we have paid for.

"overclocking, much like collecting stamps or tuning cars for quarter-mile sprints, is meaningless and costly but so much fun none the less."

So what that means is that more than any other group of users, we pay more for a motherboard than we should, and given the extremely high turnover rate of hardware we have, it's amazing that we still bother with the hobby. However, as chief HWBOT administrator "Massman" said, overclocking, much like collecting stamps or tuning cars for quarter-mile sprints, is meaningless and costly but so much fun none the less. So having said that I started to wonder why it is that manufacturers never bothered before to make a special line of products geared to this crowd.

The reason, I have heard from many, is that it's expensive to do a limited run of an enthusiast-grade product and their production lines would be disturbed. However I wondered how true this actually, as I have personally been to some of these factories, and many of these products if not all of them include some form of assembly line with rows of workers attaching various components to the PCB's. This could be easily done with specialist hardware and in most cases it actually involves not attaching parts that we end up stripping off anyway.

For instance, there are hundreds, closer to many thousands of overclockers (and in some cases gamers) who would buy graphics cards with no coolers at all, since they'll be fitting water blocks, 3rd party coolers or LN2 pots. Fugger of XtremeSystems once suggested in an open meeting with a big component manufacturer that doing this does not increase the risk of defective cards being sent back to the manufacturer because most enthusiasts void their warranties almost immediately upon purchasing a piece of hardware. As it is, the RMA procedure doesn't cover overclocking damage, so there's nothing lost and buying a card that inherently doesn't have a warranty or a very limited one costs everyone less.

This is especially true for VGA cards. If we could receive cards with no cooler on and pre-sealed with only the core exposed, it would go a long way into decreasing the cost for manufacturers and saving us the chore that it has become in removing some of these elaborate coolers. Understandably this isn't an easily marketable product but the truth is each of these companies now employs people who make it their daily work to overclock products and in essence void warranties as marketing exercises. Why then not just make products like that? If the X58A-OC a.k.a "HiCookie's first born" is commercially successful, I and many others hope it will inspire other manufacturers to join in and give us what we've asked for, for so long.

Nei Sibeko



### Display

Samsung P2770HD

R5,198 / [www.samsung.co.za](http://www.samsung.co.za)



### Power

Thermaltake

Toughpower 1.5KW

R3,760 / [www.thermaltake.com](http://www.thermaltake.com)



### Processor

Intel Core i7 980X

R8,999 / [www.intel.com](http://www.intel.com)



### Storage drive

Seagate Barracuda XT 2TB

R1,699 / [www.seagate.com](http://www.seagate.com)



### Motherboard

GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD9

R6,499 / [www.gigabyte.com](http://www.gigabyte.com)



### OS drive

OCZ Agility 2 60GB SSD

R1,699 / [www.ocz.com](http://www.ocz.com)



# Dream Machine

## We <3 our PC

This month we've added a CPU Cooler to the mix. We almost replaced our Case with the new Thermaltake Level 10 GT, and even though it has some really innovative new features, it just doesn't feel that iconic with its new plastic exterior. So we're sticking with the Coolermaster HAF X 942 for the time being.

**TOTAL: ±R50,802**

### Memory

Corsair Dominator GT 2000C8

R2,299 / [www.corsair.com](http://www.corsair.com)



### Keyboard

Logitech G19

R1,599 / [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)



### Mouse

Roccat Kone[+]

R599 / [www.roccat.org](http://www.roccat.org)







**Graphics**  
**ASUS GTX580 DirectCU II**  
 R5,999 / za.asus.com

## Sound

**ASUS Xonar Xense**  
 R2,799 / za.asus.com



## Speakers 2.1

**Logitech Z623**

R1,799 / www.logitech.com



## Speakers 5.1

**Logitech Z-5500 Digital**  
 R4,999 / www.logitech.com



## Case

**Coolermaster HAF X 942**

R1,899 / www.sonicinformed.co.za



## Mousemat

**Roccat Alumic**

R399 / www.roccat.org



**NEW**

**CPU COOLER**  
**Cooler Master V6GT**

R557 / www.coolermaster.com

## Where did the basics go?



In the past, one of the major draw points for consoles was the fact that they were simple and easy to use. You'd pop a disc in and start playing, that was the end of it. There were no long installs, no CD-key's required, no DirectX setup or graphics driver updates. There was just you, the console and the game.

Now however, things are changing. Take the PS3 for example. I can store photos and videos, download games from PSN, link it to my wireless network, watch Blu-ray discs, plug in external storage and use it as an HTPC in the lounge, play Gran Turismo 5 against my mates half way round the country, and even surf the web. And let's be honest for a second, this is all just the tip of the iceberg. Sure all of this is great, but along with all these features, there is far too much "faf" that gets in the way, like needing to register for an account once I get my PS3. I have to setup the date, time, graphics settings,

"Nope, English, that looks like English to me. Right, time to load up the game. "En una tierra lejana ..." Hang on! But I DON'T speak Spanish you stupid machine!"

audio settings, link it to my wireless, and only then can I play a game! Well, normally I could play a game, but I experienced a few issues along the way ...

I need to connect my PS3 to the internet and download a massive update just so that I can play a game that came bundled with my PS3! Update done after 5 hours? Great, I have a beard now from waiting so long, but it's ok, time to play. What's this, subtitles? But I DON'T speak Spanish you stupid machine! Hang on, the audio and the subtitles are both in Spanish? Isn't that kind of pointless for everyone except a deaf Spanish gamer while the rest of his family watches him play? Ok hang on, let me reset the console and try again. No dice. Ok, let's take a look in the console settings, maybe I was a bit dim and set my console language to Spanish. Nope, English, that looks like English to me. Right, time to load up the game. "En una tierra lejana ..." Hang on! Let me factory reset the console and start from the beginning, that'll work I'm sure of it. Five hours later after redownloading the updates and reregistering the console, it's finally time to play the game. "En una tierra lejana ..." WHAT?!

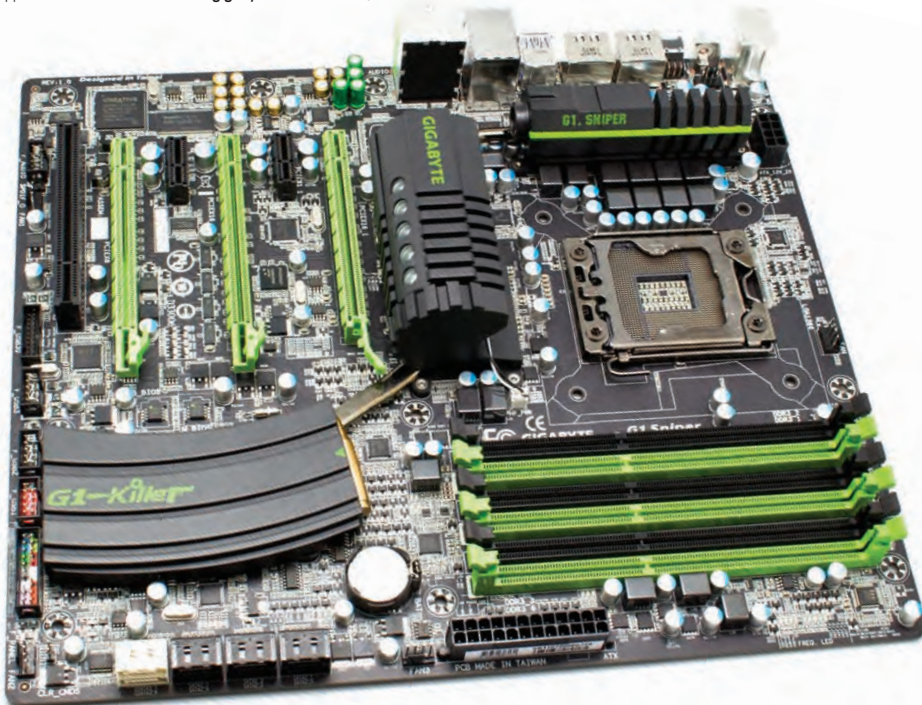
Needless to say, at that point I carefully packed away my PS3, and decided I should spend some time calming down by finding something to play on my PC. Oh look, Half Life 2 is on special on Steam, I'd love to play that again. Ok, next, next, next, next, next. Great, its busy downloading, I'll come back in an hour. Now where's that play button, ah, here we go! Hang on; this is working perfectly with minimal fuss, isn't this what I expected from the PS3...?

The above to me, is a problem. Consoles and PC's were always two different arenas, because they performed different functions. The console was for the "plug in and go" single player types, split screen was a bonus when you had a mate or two over. It was simple, basic, easy. The PC on the other hand was complicated, long and tedious, but rewarded us with multiplayer, better graphics, and more in-depth games. And once we were finished with the games, we could sit back and surf the net, or browse through our photo collection. Now however, the lines between the two have been crossed. Consoles are now losing their identity and starting to become more PC-like, and in reply PC's are taking a simpler approach to gaming.

Derrick Cramer

# GIGABYTE G1.Sniper

Supplier: **Rectron** / Website: [www.gigabyte.com](http://www.gigabyte.com) / RRP: **R5,299**



Benchmarks	
Super Pi 8M	/ 2min 5.517s / / 2min 5.175 /
CineBench 11.5	/ 5.93 / / 9.34 /
3DMark Vantage CPU	/ 33,998 / / 33,737 /
Everest Read	/ 16,834 / / 17,111 /
Everest Write	/ 16,592 / / 16,627 /
Everest Copy	/ 16,037 / / 16,441 /
Latency	/ 49.4 / / 49.1 /

Baseline: ASUS RAMPAGE III GENE

In a somewhat peculiar announcement earlier this year, GIGABYTE made it known that they would introduce a new line of motherboards to the market. It turns out that GIGABYTE decided to make a dedicated gaming line of products that will be with us from here on in. Much like ASUS, we suspect GIGABYTE wants a definable identity and that "coolness" factor gamers and power users associate with ASUS ROG products.

Granted that the ROG line caters for both extreme overclockers and gamers alike, GIGABYTE has seemingly found it more fitting to differentiate between these two groups of people (and rightfully so I might add). Thus we have ended up with the G1-Killer line of motherboards. The particular motherboard we tested is the G1.Sniper which like all the others is based on 2008's X58 chipset. A rather odd choice of chipset considering that P67 is out, Z68 should be available by the time you read this and X79 is due Q4 this year. So given the upcoming chipsets this year (including AMD's 990X) it was strange to see a mass market product based on X58.

Alas, this still remains Intel's premier performance/enthusiast chipset (even though performance is in favour of the P67 platform) and with a motherboard commanding such a price point, it would seem to be unreasonable to base it on another chipset.

So what does GIGABYTE offer in their new gaming line? Well the real highlights are the Creative 20K2 (EMU20K2 for those who recognize it) Audio Processor as found in the X-Fi Titanium HD sound card. This Chip amongst other things has Dolby Digital Live support, a multi-channel SNR of 109dB (115dB for stereo audio) output, a 150 ohm headphone amplifier and Nichicon capacitors to clean it all up. Those are just some of

**"The South Bridge is cooled by an ammunition clip-shaped heatsink and it shows there's some real effort being put into this motherboard to make it stand out."**

R2-D2

the features, but GIGABYTE has added to that the BIG FOOT NETWORKS KILLER-2100 network controller chip for low latency, zero CPU cycle network gaming. What they don't promote but is as big a feature (at least cost) is the NVIDIA NF200 PCI-E multiplexor chip which is what allows 3-Way SLI on this motherboard as well.

In essence this is what GIGABYTE is offering in this motherboard over and above the features that their "regular" UDX series have. The entire board is gaming-themed with camouflage packaging. The South Bridge is cooled by an ammunition clip-shaped heatsink and it shows there's some real effort being put into this motherboard to make it stand out. *[Good luck with customs, Ed.]*

How it all comes together is another thing however. Just breaking down the costs, this is an expensive motherboard to make, the addition of all these 3rd party controllers raises the BOP and one has to wonder if it really does enrich the product over and above their other motherboards. From where we are, we're not convinced yet. While performance isn't a major issue and in fact this board recorded our highest 3DMark Vantage

CPU test score ever, the memory results and Cinebench numbers are lower than we'd expected. This could be a "BIOS" tuning issue or something else, but suffice to say it gives just satisfactory performance. Is this a better gaming motherboard than what ASUS offers with their ROG line? No, understandably so because ASUS have been making these "gaming" boards for many years, while this is GIGABYTE's first attempt. Will GIGABYTE get there soon? Yes indeed, there's no question about it, all these boards need is a clearer identity, a more provocative name (Let's face it, G1-Killer is nowhere near as cool as Republic Of Gamers) and maybe just a few cheaper products to get gamers to warm up to this new line. Overall this is still a good motherboard; we're just not sure if it's convincing enough to warrant such a price tag though.

Neo Sibeko

## [ specs ]

Chipset:  
Intel X58+ICH10R  
Memory:  
6x240-pin DDR3  
CPU Support:  
Intel Core i7 1366  
Slots:  
3x-PCI-E 16x, 1xPCI  
2.2x 2x PCI-E 1x

/ PLUS / Dedicated gaming NIC / Superior Sound quality  
/ MINUS / Pricey

GIGABYTE'S FORAY INTO A DEDICATED GAMING PRODUCT LINE IS OFF TO A GOOD START, JUST NEEDS A LITTLE MORE TUNING.

7  
OUT OF 10

# Have you got what it takes to become South Africa's first App Master?



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- Submit your wireframe at [www.blackberryappmaster.co.za](http://www.blackberryappmaster.co.za) to be judged.
- Winner will attend BlackBerry® Devcon 2011, the BlackBerry® Developers Conference everyone's talking about.
- For further information on BlackBerry® Devcon 2011, go to [www.blackberrydevcon.com](http://www.blackberrydevcon.com)

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[blackberry.co.za](http://blackberry.co.za)

# HTC 7 Mozart

Supplier: Lab88 / Website: www.lab88.co.za / RRP: R5,988

As it was my first time with this new operating system, I was a little concerned that I'd find the phone to be difficult to operate, but it wasn't. The main interface is divided into two segments: a customisable home menu and, with a gentle slide across the touchscreen, the full menu similar to what you'd find with Symbian's list view. Operating the interface is incredibly smooth and responsive, and finding your way through the various applications is easy thanks to a unified interaction system across the entire system. While multi-tasking isn't supported as such, the device uses a system where it suspends inactive applications and resumes them when returning. It might not be multi-tasking as we understand the term, but it works very well.

The individual applications, which include Internet Explorer Mobile, Bing Maps, Office Mobile (Excel, Word and Powerpoint) and the Zune multimedia player, are all a pleasure to use. The only

application which I found to be lacking was Xbox LIVE. Although it does most of what it promises by allowing users to connect to their GFW and Xbox profiles, send messages to friends and even interact with their 3D Avatars, the gaming itself was a let-down. A few different games were tested: *Need for Speed Undercover*, a side-scrolling version of *Assassin's Creed* and a boardgame-like strategy title called *Zombies!!!*. Despite Microsoft's pitch that these are "console-quality" games, they certainly aren't. The Adreno 200 GPU limits graphical fidelity to what I'd say is only a bit better than top-of-the-range N-Gage titles, and despite the device boasting plenty of RAM, games took ages to load.

Everything else about the 7 Mozart is quite good, and I'd certainly recommend it for anyone looking to get a Windows Phone 7-based device, so long as you don't intend on spending too much time with the gaming side of things.

**NAG**

**Geoff Burrows**



## [ specs ]

Dimensions: 119x60.2x11.9mm  
Weight: 130g  
Chipset: Qualcomm QSD8250  
1GHz (Snapdragon)  
Memory: 8GB internal; 512MB ROM; 576MB RAM  
Battery: 1300mAh Li-ion  
Display: 3.7" LCD with capacitive touchscreen.  
480x800 resolution  
Camera: 8MP stills camera with 720p video recording

/ PLUS / Great OS / Plenty of applications / Good camera  
/ MINUS / Poor gaming performance

A PHONE WITH A GREAT OPERATING SYSTEM THAT DELIVERS OVERALL GOOD PERFORMANCE.

**8**

OUT OF 10

# Kingston HyperX T1 Black 12GB

Supplier: Kingston / Website: www.kingston.com / RRP: R1,695

RAM prices have fallen and risen over the last 12 months and knowing the right time to buy has proved to be very tricky. This is especially true now that the DRAM manufacturers are no longer making high-speed low-latency chips. That means that what you end up with these days is high-speed, high-latency RAM. The days of CL7 2000MHz RAM are effectively gone and it's up to companies like Kingston to bin their own RAM if they seek to provide these specialist sets.

Fortunately though, low latency RAM isn't the only worthwhile RAM there is. In fact for most people, latency is meaningless, but capacity and speed to some degree mean everything. This is especially true if you're on the X58 platform which still remains the premium platform from Intel and offers the most amount of installable RAM. This is great because a set like the Kingston HyperX T1 is what you just may want if you're a power user on this platform. 6GB may have seemed like plenty before, but 12GB is where you can really start true mega-tasking.

As much as 12GB of CL10 1333MHz RAM isn't impressive,

1600MHz C9 RAM is an entirely different story. Not only can all Core i7 1366 CPUs run a 3,200MHz NB frequency to match the 1600MHz RAM speed, it means that by running such a configuration you effectively get better performance than you would running 2000MHz CL10 with the reference 2.6GHz NB speed.

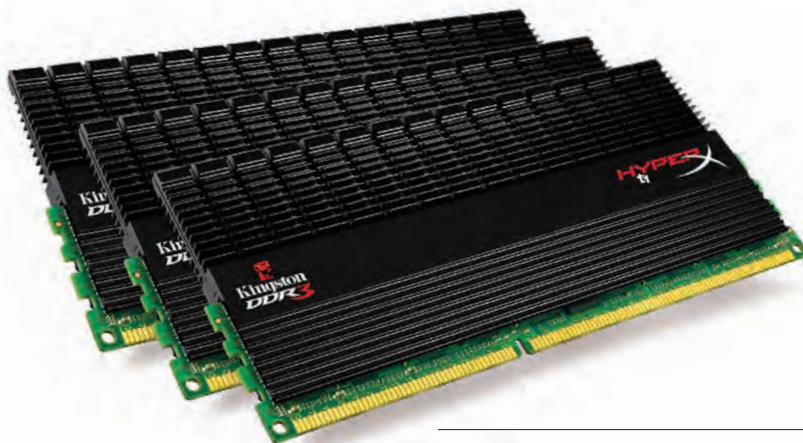
The T1 set is available in 6GB, 12GB and a massive 24GB Kit. As far as we can tell 12GB seems to strike the right balance between capacity, speed and pricing. There's not much more you'll be able to do with 24GB of RAM that you can't with 12GB. Added to which not all motherboards will support that kind of memory density at

the chosen 1600MHz.

If we had to find any fault with this set, it would have to be the far too tall heat sinks that don't really help at all but make sure that the RAM is incompatible with some large coolers. Other than that, this is about as good as you'll get with a triple channel 12GB set.

**NAG**

**Neo Sibeko**



## [ specs ]

Size: 12GB (3x4GB)  
Memory Type: DDR3  
Frequency: 1600MHz C9

/ PLUS / 1600MHz / 12GB of RAM  
/ MINUS / Nothing

12GB OF RAM AT A REASONABLY HIGH SPEED, ALL PACKAGED AT A VERY LOW PRICE.

**9**

OUT OF 10

# HAWK SERIES

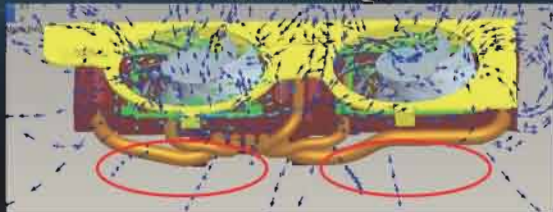
*Essentials For Overclockers*

**Propeller Blade**  
*20% more airflow*

## Propeller Blade On Twin Frozr III

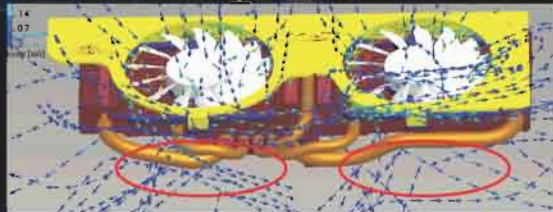
### Airflow of Analysis

Traditional Design



The direction of Airflow is limited covering certain area.

Propeller Blade



The direction of Airflow is **wide** covering **more** area

**Airflow Volume** **20% More Airflow**



The test is based on the same thermal mode with the same RPM.

**Thermal Result** **17°C Cooler!**

Performance Mode	
GPU Temp. (Full Load)	N560GT-Ti-Hawk 68
	Ref. GTX 560 Ti 85
Silent Mode	
Noise Level (Idle)	N560GT-Ti-Hawk 18.46
	Ref. GTX 560 Ti 19.52

The actual result may differ from the above.



### N560GTX-TI HAWK



- NVIDIA GeForce GTX 560 Ti GPU
- 1GB 256bits GDDR5 Memory
- Triple Overvoltage by Afterburner
- 8+1 Phase PWM Design
- Twin Frozr III Thermal Design
- Military Class II Components



### R6870 HAWK



- AMD Radeon HD 6870
- 1GB 256bits GDDR5 Memory
- Triple Overvoltage by Afterburner
- 8+2 Phase PWM Design
- Twin Frozr III Thermal Design
- Military Class II Components



# Intel Core i7 990X

Supplier: Intel / Website: [www.intel.com](http://www.intel.com) / RRP: R9,999

By now you should all be aware of the SNB-E (Sandy Bridge – Enthusiast) and X79 platform that Intel will be unveiling later this year. While we all suspected that this CPU would be Sandy Bridge with quad channel memory and an external clock generator, we have it on good authority that it's far more than that and it provides even better IPC than what we have right now with SNB.

However that's a number of months away, and despite the rave reviews that the P67 platform and in particular the K series CPUs receive, the enthusiast and premier platform for Intel is still 2008's X58. Hard to imagine that this chipset has been around that long, but it has and right now just before its demise it receives its finest CPU to date, and it's actually the entire platform's finest hour.

The 990X is no different from the 980X it replaces. It just has a higher multiplier for just 133MHz more. Not much at all considering you could achieve that speed with ease on the 980X by changing the multiplier from 25 to 26X. However if you do that on a 980X you'll end up with a CPU that has a higher TDP than what we have here today.

All this seems meaningless in a gaming context, but this is very telling about a CPU because these are not targeted at gamers as such, but mostly power users and true performance



## [ specs ]

Core:  
**32nm Gulftown (x6)**  
Frequency:  
**3460MHz**  
Cache:  
**9MB Total (6MB L3)**  
Platform:  
**AM2+/AM3**



**"The 990X is no different from the 980X it replaces. It just has a higher multiplier for just 133MHz more."**

*Lord Vader*

enthusiasts (read competitive 'overclockers'), and that Intel can add 133MHz to their Gulftown die at the same 130W TDP means that they have improved the manufacturing process significantly even for the same 32nm node. This is unsurprising given just how incredible the Sandy Bridge 32nm CPUs are at overclocking, with some reaching frequencies as high as 5,700MHz on air cooling. Staggering by any measure and speaking volumes for just how much development Intel has made on their 32nm node.

The 990X will not overclock like the Sandy Bridge CPUs on air and as well-known by now the IPC is lower, however there are more threads here and the core is significantly bigger with more transistors which all make for a much hotter CPU. Amazingly though this tuning of the process node has

allowed the 990X to be the most prolific overclocker of all modern-day CPUs to date. As hard as it is to believe, the 990X in general overlocks better than the Intel Core 2 Duo E8600, which was "Godlike" in its overclocking capabilities. Just to illustrate how incredible these CPUs are, Former Number 1 overclocker in the world HiCookie managed to clock one 990X to 7.1Ghz, which is just ridiculous for any CPU let alone one that's this dense.

The North Bridge speed on the 990X also seems to have improved somewhat even though the memory controller is slightly weaker. These are some of the things that make this a very interesting CPU for enthusiasts and competitive overclockers all over the world. As it is though, it's a bitter-sweet experience working with this CPU. On the one hand we have missed being able to

Benchmarks	
3DMark Vantage CPU	/ 31,932 / / 23,940 /
CineBench 11.5	/ 8.86 / / 6.92 /
Wprime 1.55 1024M	/ 148.14s / / 221.347 /
Wprime 1.55 32M	/ 5s / / 7.379 /

Baseline: Intel Core i7 2600K

run memory at stratospheric speeds (2400MHz and such) and triple channel memory is always great to use, however Sandy Bridge offers tremendously better memory performance in dual channel mode than what this CPU can at any frequency it can muster, regardless of memory speed and timings. So the Everest\AIDA64 numbers look disappointing when doing memory tests with this CPU. Don't let that put you off though, this is a fantastic CPU and one that deserves the title of the last and greatest Extreme Edition CPU's for the X58 platform. **NAG**

**Neo Sibeko**

/ PLUS / 12 threads / Overclocks very well  
/ MINUS / A lot to invest in a platform on its last legs

THE LAST HURRAH FOR THE X58 PLATFORM IS UNDOUBTEDLY ITS BEST. THE 990X IS FANTASTIC.

**9**  
OUT OF 10

# rage expo

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**SAMSUNG**

# BIOSTAR TP67B+

Supplier: Comstar / Website: [www.biostar.com.tw](http://www.biostar.com.tw) / RRP: R1,079

**B**IOSTAR seemed to be coming along rather well in the P35 era, but after that appeared to have fallen off the radar, not having released a notable product in ages. What we have here is BIOSTAR's TP67B+, unfortunately representing where the company has come from rather than where we would have liked to have seen them go.

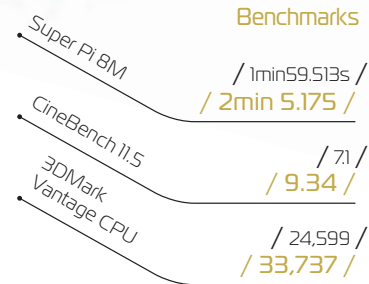
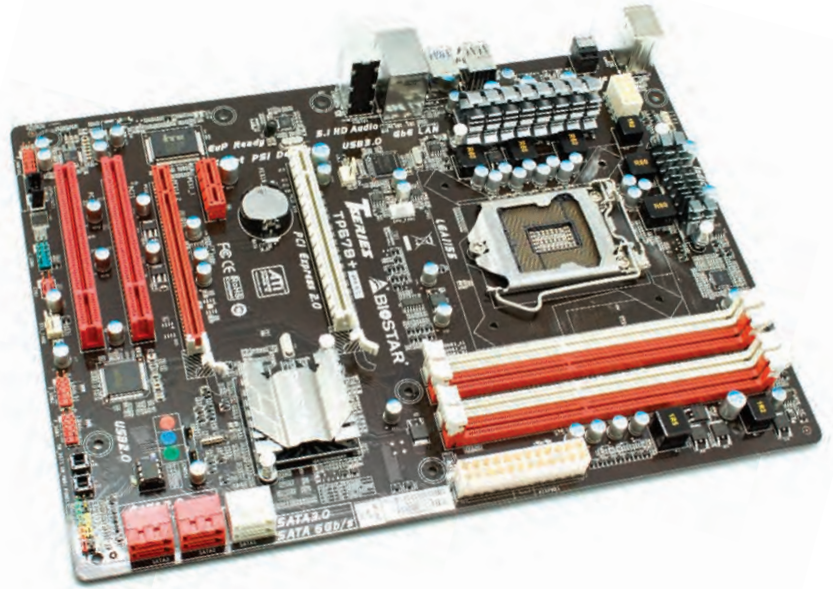
For one, this is amongst the most uninspired motherboard designs we've ever seen. It's a throwback to the days when EPOX and Super-Micro were making consumer motherboards. Things like jumpers used for clearing the BIOS are virtually unheard of today, yet they make an appearance on this poorly-named motherboard which reads more like a serial number than anything else. The South Bridge runs rather hot thanks to the small heat sink and the PWM is cooled equally with an unconvincing heat sink.

What comes across with this board is the lack of effort on BIOSTAR's part. However it's not all inadequate, the performance of the board is nothing special and decisively average which isn't bad considering the pricing of this product. It features two USB3.0 ports as well which helps sweeten the deal. Where overclocking goes it will match most boards costing a lot more with

enough effort and patience invested.

If you want a P67 based machine and don't want to spend too much then you could consider the TP67B+, as it'll do most things (and maybe even more) than motherboards of this price will, including having a less than optimal BIOS configuration screen. However once you get used to it won't be an issue. This is closer to an OEM product than a channel product let alone a gaming-orientated one. If you're a BIOSTAR fan, rather try their flagship TP67XE which is closer to the BIOSTAR we like than this one.

**NAG**  
Neo Sibeko



Baseline: ASUS RAMPAGE III GENE

- / PLUS / Cheap / USB3.0
- / MINUS / Boring and uninspired design / Seems very dated

**THIS MOTHERBOARD IS ONE OF THE CHEAPEST WAYS TO GET ONTO THE P67 PLATFORM AND WELL WORTH CONSIDERING.**

[ specs ]

Chipset:  
**Intel P67**  
Memory:  
**4x240-pin DDR3**  
CPU Support:  
**Intel Corei3/i5/  
i7 1155**  
Slots:  
**2x-PCI-E 16x, 2xPCI  
2.2x 1x PCI-E 1x**

**7**  
OUT OF 10

# Palit GTX 550 Ti Sonic

Supplier: TVR / Website: [www.tvr.co.za](http://www.tvr.co.za) / RRP: R1,776

**N**VIDIA's GTS450 can't be said to have taken the mid low-end segment by storm and in fact it was a rather sad little VGA card. Not only was it slower than the Radeon 5770 released more than a year prior to the GTS450, it wasn't particularly affordable.

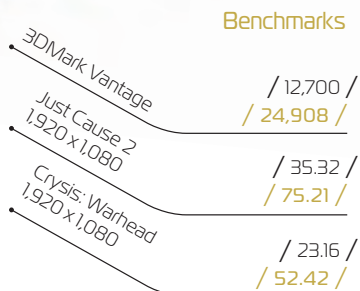
Fortunately NVIDIA has fixed that with the GTX550. Granted it's not as fast as we would have liked it to be especially considering it claims the Titanium (Ti) name; however it is a much better effort than the GTS450. The biggest difference between this product and the GTS 450 is down to the Render outputs and the memory bit-width. Instead of a 128-bit GDDR5 controller, NVIDIA has enabled another 64-bit channel to this card helping the memory bandwidth drastically and, on this particular card, allowing this sample to receive over 100GB/sec of bandwidth.

As a result of the memory channels having such a close relationship with the render front end of the GPU, the ROPs have increased to 24 instead of 16. This does help AA performance and higher resolutions in general, but we would suggest you avoid these post processing effects on such a graphics card. It is after all at the lowest end of the mid-range segment so you one should avoid full HD gaming (1080) on this card. Having said that it did perform well enough at 1680x1050 to make it a

worthwhile investment for those using Radeon HD5570 cards and previous generation products who don't have the funds to upgrade to the 460 and higher.

To put the performance in context, this graphics card is sometimes faster than the GeForce GTX275, which is quiet substantial considering that this graphics card can play virtually any game out on the market today. The PALIT card isn't anything fancy, it's got a sizeable overclock and a typically quiet cooler, making for a good graphics card that you should consider if you're in the market.

**NAG**  
Neo Sibeko



Baseline: NVIDIA GeForce GTX580

- / PLUS / Very quiet / Relatively affordable
- / MINUS / Too expensive in relation to the performance

**NVIDIA'S SECOND TRY AT THIS SEEMS TO HAVE GONE A LITTLE BETTER THAN LAST TIME. NOT PERFECT BUT DEFINITELY WORTH A LOOK.**

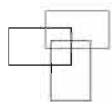
[ specs ]

Core:  
**1GHz GF116 (40nm)**  
Processors:  
**192**  
Render Outputs:  
**24**  
Memory:  
**1024MB GDDR3  
(4.2GHz) 100.8GB/sec**  
API:  
**DirectX11/  
OpenGL3.x, OpenCL  
1.0/ CUDA/ PhysX**

**6**  
OUT OF 10



Memories never fade...



## PF705

### 7" Digital Photo Frame

Transcend's PF705 Digital Photo Frame is simple and stylish, featuring a bright, sharp 16:9 widescreen. Aside from offering slideshow, thumbnail, rotate, and zoom-in viewing options, the PF705 works with most mainstream memory cards and USB Flash Drives, making it a simple and versatile way to keep those precious moments alive.

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# Thrustmaster Universal Challenge Racing Wheel

Supplier: **Bowline** / Website: [www.bowline.co.za](http://www.bowline.co.za) / RRP: R629

The bane of any specialist gamer is that peripherals for their game of choice are often very expensive. Take racing games and flight simulators for example. A good quality Joystick or racing wheel is often many times the cost of the actual racing game, putting these peripherals out of reach for most gamers. The Thrustmaster Universal Challenge Wheel aims to address this by offering itself as a low cost solution that works for all modern gaming platforms. While this sounds great, can a budget wheel really deliver?

The Universal challenge is poorly constructed, feeling quite flimsy during game play. Perhaps I am just an aggressive player, but I often worried about breaking the wheel during extended gaming sessions as it creaked under my hands. The responsiveness also leaves much to be desired, and even after some calibration in Gran Turismo 5 on the PS3, the wheel was still noticeably less responsive than the bundled controller. The wheel is also rather small for most gamers to grip properly, making it slightly uncomfortable after the first few races. Perhaps this wheel would be better suited for younger gamers who have smaller hands.



The plus to all of this however is the universal compatibility at a good price. We wouldn't suggest this as a solution for hardcore racing fans though, but do think it's a worthwhile purchase for a younger gamer. If you're in the market for a very affordable wheel to use on a variety of platforms, and have smaller than average hands, the Thrustmaster Universal Challenge will appeal to you.

**NAG**  
Derrick Cramer

## [ specs ]

- Ferrari style shift leavers
- PlayStation 2/3, Xbox 360, Wii and PC compatible
- Accelerator and brake pedals
- Fully programmable wheel.

**/ PLUS /** It's cheap / Official Ferrari-endorsed license  
**/ MINUS /** Small grip size / Responsiveness

**IF YOU'RE A CASUAL GAMER LOOKING FOR A BUDGET MULTI-PLATFORM RACING WHEEL THEN THIS WILL WORK WELL FOR YOU.**

**5**  
OUT OF 10

# Evetech i7 Gaming system

Supplier: **Evetech Solutions** / Website: [www.evetech.co.za](http://www.evetech.co.za) / RRP: R16,999

Every time I get a pre-built system in from Evetech to review, I can't help but have mixed feelings of excitement and anxiety. Excitement, because Evetech have historically produced some of the best pre-built systems I have ever seen. Anxiety, because after setting such a high standard of work, I wonder if Evetech can continue building quality systems at this level. Well, I'm glad to say that once again the guys over at Evetech have impressed me beyond expectation.

The system, based around Intel's new Sandy Bridge platform is what you would expect of a R17,000+ high-end system. There is a powerful graphics cards, mated to an Intel 2600k pre overclocked at 4.5GHZ. The CPU at that speed will eclipse any other currently available pre-built gaming system by a large margin, and will ensure that for years to come you will have a system with enough power on tap for modern games. The 8GB's of DDR3 1600MHZ ram is what one would expect in a high-end system these days, however Evetech has done this through the use of 2 x 4GB ram sticks, leaving the system open for an extra 8GB's of ram if the need arises, a good decision. The rest of the system is what you would expect, a superfast SSD for OS storage, a superfast Sata 6gb/s HDD for game storage, a large gaming case and rock solid PSU. With that, let's



move onto some benchmark numbers.

First up, we have 3D Mark Vantage. Not the latest iteration of the 3Dmark franchise, but a far more established and comparable benchmarking tool (for the time being). This system running purely on air at stock clocks (apart from the CPU which Evetech Pre overclocks to 4.5GHZ) netted an overall score of P31234. The other benchmark we used was Unigine's Heaven, a DirectX 11 based benchmark which was used to stress the DirectX11 capable GTX580 in this system to its limit. Using the DirectX11 pre set as set out by Hwbot.org, this system managed an enormous

X1380.68, making it one of the fastest (if not the fastest) single card pre-built gaming systems we have reviewed.

A balanced system, world-class cable management, pre overclocked and competitively priced, this pre-built system from Evetech is once again class-leading.

**NAG**  
Derrick Cramer



## [ specs ]

- i7 2600k
- Gigabyte P67-UD4
- 8GB Gskill 1600MHZ
- 60GB Gskill Phoenix Pro SSD
- Gainward GTX580
- 850w Antec Quattro
- 1TB Western Digital Black Sata 6GB/s drive
- Antec 1200 case
- Noctua D14 CPU Cooler

**/ PLUS /** Balanced system / Price / Cable management  
**/ MINUS /** None

**IF YOU'RE IN THE MARKET FOR A PRE-BUILT SYSTEM, THIS RIG SHOULD BE RIGHT AT THE TOP OF YOUR LIST.**

**9**  
OUT OF 10

# The **ZyXEL** digital home



- 

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**5 PLA-450**  
**Powerline Access Point**  
Secured by 128-bit AES Encryption
- 

**6 PLA-491**  
**Powerline Ethernet Multiplug Center**  
Secured by 128-bit AES Encryption
- 

**7 DMA-1100P**  
**Digital Media Adapter**
- 

**8 STB-1001**  
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- 

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# CPU COOLERS

## 4-Way Sub-zero

# Shootout

CPU cooling, much like all the other components in a PC, has changed over the years, improving at every turn to better cope with the increasingly more powerful CPUs. Thermal Dissipation (TDP) (measured differently by AMD, Intel and others) however has largely stayed the same, and in some cases dropped, while CPU coolers have gotten bigger. These days it's not unusual to find CPU coolers weighing in at close to 1kg all in an attempt to make your CPU run even cooler and hence last longer. (We aren't sure how many people still buy aftermarket coolers for this reason) These coolers are mostly used for pushing the CPU a little bit further, while keeping the temperatures manageable. The better a cooler can withstand TDP's exceeding 180 to 200Watt's, the more desirable it is naturally. Nobody is concerned with idle temperatures but the load temperatures are where the true test is.

Not only do these serve a practical purpose, but aesthetics as well seem to play a large role. Less so than five to ten years back where everybody was fascinated by lights, but it's still an important factor for both manufacturers and end users. From the days of the Cooler Master X-Dream to

what we have here today we've come a long way in both performance and price. Where coolers used to cost less than R200 on average, you can now buy them for anything up to R1,000 if you go for the really extravagant units. They are however machined better, have copious amounts of heat pipes, feature bigger fans and some even ship with two fans. Even OEM units have improved, copying some of the innovations made by these 3rd party manufacturers. As it is today, it's hard to find a really sub-standard heat sink for the high-end CPUs from both AMD and Intel. They are still not a match for what specialist units can provide, but it's a vast improvement from where we came from in the days of the Pentium CPUs.

With that said we gathered four high-end coolers and compared them to each other, as well as measuring them up against the reference cooler that Intel packages with the Intel Core i7 2600K CPU. Given that this is possibly the easiest and best overclocking CPU on the market today where air cooling is concerned, we decided to use this platform and push it quite hard to truly test what kind of performance you get for your money. Is it really worth spending a sizable percentage of the

total cost of the CPU on a cooler, and if so, which is the better one out of these? This is what we found.

### TESTING METHODOLOGY

Testing was pretty straight forward as you can imagine. We didn't test the Coolers with the CPU at its reference speed as that's pointless and any cooler you'd buy would be able to handle this load well. No, instead we opted for a harder test. We set the CPU frequency in two stages. First we set 4,000MHz at 1.25V and tested idle and load temperatures. We then set the CPU speed to 5,000MHz at 1.45V for some seriously toasty temperatures. Keep in mind that we enabled HT for the maximum thermal output where possible. These are unrealistic loads for most users, but they serve well to represent something close to the worst case scenario. There was also very little if any thermal compound paste settling time which would help drop the temperatures by a couple of degrees.

Fan speeds were set to auto and where we could we set the fan speed the maximum possible rotation speed as most users will have to strike a balance between noise and performance.

Neo Sibeko

Cooler	CPU	Settings	Idle Temperatures (Auto)	Load Temperatures (Auto)	Idle Temperatures (High RPM)	Load Temperatures (High RPM)
Thermaltake FrioOCC	Core i7 2600K	4GHz 1.25V 8 Threads 5GHz 1.45V 8 Threads	31 38	51 88	29 34	50 70
XIGMATEK Aegir	Core i7 2600K	4GHz 1.25V 8 Threads 5GHz 1.45V 8 Threads	29 33	51 70	29 33	51 70
Zalman CNPS10X Extreme	Core i7 2600K	4GHz 1.25V 8 Threads 5GHz 1.45V 8 Threads	30 35	51.5 73	30 37	50 72
Cooler Master V6GT	Core i7 2600K	4GHz 1.25V 8 Threads 5GHz 1.45V 8 Threads	29 36	50 71	29 33.5	49 70
Intel Stock Cooler	Core i7 2600K	4GHz 1.25V 4 Threads 5GHz 1.45V 4 Threads	33 48	62 98	33 45	57 87

# Cooler Master V6GT

Website: [www.coolermaster.com](http://www.coolermaster.com) / RRP: R557

Cooler Master isn't new to CPU coolers and has been around in this business for as long as most people care to remember. Their entry into this shootout performed well enough as you can see in the results. The cooler is compatible with all modern platforms and is relatively easy to install compared to some. The downside here is that it's just too big for some motherboards, and causes problems with the RAM. In fact on any P67 board you'll not be able to populate all four RAM slots unless you use really low profile RAM. This is unlikely given that the person who buys this cooler is likely going to have equally matching "gaming" RAM with these large heat sinks that are rendered useless by this cooler.

The dual fan configuration doesn't seem to aid cooling ability at all and we'd rather have a single FAN which would help make for a much lighter and less cumbersome unit. Having said that it's really a good product provided you don't have clearance issues. At worst you can remove a single fan and not suffer any real performance degradation.



Dimensions: 131 x 120 x 165mm  
Heat Pipes: 6  
Weight: 939g  
Fan Speed: 800 - 2200 rpm  
Base: Copper

# Thermaltake Frio OCK

Website: [www.corex.co.za](http://www.corex.co.za) / RRP: R1,020

This was one interesting cooler, definitely the easiest to install out of the four. In fact as the largest one in dimensions, the other manufacturers should be ashamed at just how much more complicated their coolers are. It is a relatively simple process especially if you remove the fan housing which has the fans come off as well. We really do wish others would adopt a similarly simple system for their products.

The problem with this system however is that it makes for one very large cooler which poses even more of a problem than the Cooler Master V6GT where clearing components is concerned. This is a "massive" oversight on Thermaltake's part and they would do well to address this in their next range iterations. As with the V6GT, the people who buy these coolers use performance RAM which is almost always taller than the standard JDEC spec RAM, so this will pose a huge problem for most. However if you don't have such RAM, then this is probably the easiest cooler to live with. While it is seemingly flimsy, it does perform well and is actually tough. Certainly a worthwhile CPU cooler if you're in the market.



Dimensions: 143 x 136.8 x 154.4mm  
Heat Pipes: 6  
Weight: 1093g  
Fan Speed: 1200 - 2100rpm  
Base: Copper

# XIGMATEK Aegir

Website: [www.xigmatek.com](http://www.xigmatek.com) / RRP: \$60

This was the dark horse of the race as it's the least known brand in the shootout. In fact XIGMATEK is the youngest company out of them all. Oddly enough, the cooler has arguably the best performance and it's certainly the quietest as well even though it does not have a PWM controlled fan which is unfortunate.

This would have been the perfect cooler and the one to beat all of them if it wasn't for the architectural science degree you'll need to assemble it. There are just too many parts to it, and it does make it a tedious cooler to install and remove at the best of times. It has no less than 18 parts just for the mounting alone excluding the tower which is far too much. There's nothing wrong with four bolts, a hold down and a back plate and such a system means there are fewer parts that can get lost. Still, if you'll not be installing and removing this cooler frequently, it's probably the one you'll want to buy if you can find it locally. It's the lightest and quietest out of the lot but the performance is probably the best.

Dimensions:  
130 x 66.4 x 159 mm  
Heat Pipes:  
6 (2+4)  
Weight:  
670g  
Fan Speed:  
1000 – 2200rpm  
Base:  
Copper



# Zalman CNPS10X Extreme

Website: [www.zalman.com](http://www.zalman.com) / RRP: R570

This was the one cooler we had great hopes for. It was the cooler that was supposed to set the example for all the others. In a way it achieved this because the CNPS10X Extreme is a great example of how to not make a CPU Cooler. It has by far the worst mounting and installation mechanism we have ever come across. What makes this even sadder is that Zalman used to have a much simpler system that used two screws that attached to a mounting bracket. This system is missed because in its absence we are presented with a mechanism that requires that you tilt and angle a screw driver to fasten it down. There's no valid reason why the fan should be such a pain to remove, yet it is for no apparent reason other than to annoy the end-user.

Performance wise it's as expected as these coolers really did perform similarly save for the Intel cooler which was less than up to the task. Zalman does have a new model, the CNPS11X, but we're not sure it will deliver better performance at all. If anything we just hope they've improved the installation mechanism, as this is the greatest deterrent when it comes to the CNPS10X Extreme. **NAG**

Dimensions:  
135 x 100x 160 mm  
Heat Pipes:  
5  
Weight:  
920g  
Fan Speed:  
1000 – 2150rpm  
Base:  
Aluminium and  
Copper



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## Modding 101

## The Ghetto USB Cable Flash Drive

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- / One of those tiny, low profile flash drives. I went with a 4GB Verbatim "Clip-It"
- / A USB cable. You can pick these up at any computer store for no more than R40
- / An adhesive. I used Pratley Steel. You've probably got something similar in the garage



A friend of mine told me about a flash drive he'd seen that looked like it was a busted up USB cable, and asked me if I could make one for him. After finding some photos of such a drive, I did the mod for him, and since then, I've had a few people ask me for the same mod. It's a really cheap little project (about R120), and will definitely have people looking twice, that's for sure. So I figured I'd write a tutorial, so that you can make your own!

## / STEP 1 /

The first thing you need to do is find an appropriate flash drive. It can't be a regular size one; it's got to be a low profile drive. The one I opted for was by Verbatim (**image 1**).

You need to get the actual data storage part of the device out of the cosmetic housing that's protecting it. I can't guide you on all drives, but on the Verbatim, I had to stick the point of an X-Acto knife in between the drive and its plastic housing (**image 2**). Any sharp knife will do. Remember to be gentle, these things are fairly fragile. You should be left with a much smaller device in the end, the rest you can throw away (**image 3**).

## / STEP 2 /

Find or buy a USB cable. If you're anything like me, you'll have a hundred of these cables lying around the house (**image 4**). What you need to do here is cut along the seam on the side of the connector. You'll want to cut pretty far

back. You need to do this in order to expose the innards of the connector. Be careful, though, you need to still use this rubber, so don't ruin it (**image 5**). Once you're inside the connector, you should see little tabs on the sides. These hold a little metal flap in place. Pry those open and get that flap out of the connector, you don't need that anymore. Once that flap is out of the way, you'll need to start hacking away and cutting the plastic or rubber that's inside the connector to remove it. You can go wild here; this junk doesn't need to be saved.

## / STEP 3 /

You'll want to remove everything, even the part of the connector that actually plugs into the machine. That metal housing is important, though, so be careful with it. Once you're done, you should have something like this (**image 6**).

## / STEP 4 /

This is where you need your adhesive (in my case, Pratley Steel). Be absolutely sure that you're not using an adhesive that will eat plastic, otherwise you'll be in for a nasty surprise when you plug this bad boy in.

You need to glue the flash drive into the connector, exactly where that white plastic used to sit. Make sure that you get it nice and flat against the inside of the connector (**image 7**). At this point, I suggest you plug the drive into your PC to make sure you haven't damaged it somewhere along the line





and that it's still working. You should be fine, though. I haven't killed one of these drives yet.

### / STEP 5 /

Now you need to get the connector glued back into the rubber housing it was in. I used my Pratley here again. Cover the part of the connector that will sit inside the housing in your adhesive, place it carefully inside, and then close it up. Once you have it all lined up, you'll want to clamp it closed to ensure that the connector is held together properly while it dries. Leave it to dry for the appropriate amount of time (**image 8**).

### / STEP 6 /

The last things to be done are cosmetic. Clean up the connector if necessary. If any adhesive came out while it was drying, you'll want to clean that up. Lastly, cut the cable, close to the connector, but cut it BADLY. Mess it up, strip the wires, cut them to messy lengths, etc. Make it look as ghetto as you can. I didn't go too crazy, so here's what I was left with (**image 9**).

That's it. Now you just need to sit back and enjoy the reactions of people as you plug this "broken USB cable" into your USB port. I've made up some ridiculous stories to tell people as jokes, and you'd be surprised what people would believe. "Wow, you found a way to store data in the CABLE?! Genius!".

If you get stuck, need some help, or want to show us your flash drive mod, drop me an email at [ett@nag.co.za](mailto:ett@nag.co.za). **NAG**

**Ettienne Venter**

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# Jolly well rogered



A few weeks back, *Minecraft* creator Markus "Notch" Persson dropped an instantly quotable quote about game piracy, smugly declaring that it's "not theft", that there's "no such thing as a lost sale", and suggesting that developers and publishers see pirates as "potential customers". I guess that's probably easy to say when you've pretty much become an Nxillionaire overnight with a game prototype that cost you nothing to develop.

Predictably, of course, this toadying platitude was copy-pasted all over the planet by the sorts of people who like to steal games and make excuses about it. And predictably, of course, nobody stopped to consider just what a vapid, meaningless logical fallacy it was too.

Conceptually, it's impossible for "lost sales" and "potential customers" to exist with mutual exclusivity – they're inseparably co-dependent market hypotheses. Or, simply, how is a "potential customer" choosing to pirate a game instead not a "lost sale"? Oh.

POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS AREN'T LOST SALES MYTH: BUSTED. Honestly, it's already bad enough that pirates "rationalise" their behaviour with petty, feeble, demonstrably false professions of this, that, and the other thing. It's even worse when *nouveau riche* hotshots like Persson weigh in with such insipid, transparent politicking when it's really nothing more than intimidated sycophancy and intellectual compromise dressed up as honourable indulgence. Flying high five, I'm sure.

Why should anybody in the gaming industry tolerate escalating piracy with such deference? It's almost certainly true that there's nothing much that can be done to control or even reduce software piracy. FACT! All attempts to do so can and will be circumvented, one way or the other, sooner or later. The reality is that those guys are just going to take stuff without giving anything back, anyway – so let's call them a bunch of cheap, greedy, bullying, parasitic, outrageously self-entitled ball bags, because that's what they are.

The industry needs to make a fundamental change in

**The industry needs to make a fundamental change in its attitude – stop pretending to make a difference, and just give up entirely. Drop DRM and online authentication schemes, encrypted registry protocols, serial keys, and limited activations.**

its attitude – stop pretending to make a difference, and just give up entirely. Drop DRM and online authentication schemes, encrypted registry protocols, serial keys, and limited activations. BREAKING: Those "solutions" are only inconveniencing legitimate buyers.

Rather, instead of all this pandering, prevaricating pseudo-rhetoric, call piracy out for what it is. Even calling pirated copy a "lost sale" is excessively euphemistic – it's a *denied* sale. It's somebody telling hundreds of people and hundreds of thousands of investment cash, "LOL, whatever. I totally can, so I totally will, LOL" with all the sneering disregard of a terminal freeloader. It's theft. So go on, help yourselves, and f\*\*k you too.

It's not like anybody's losing money that was never being handed over, anyway, and not at the extra cost of self-respect either. **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl

\* [Umm, Tarryn didn't include any footnotes this issue. It felt a little bare down here so I added this, Ed].

## Extra Life

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