SA'S LEADING GAMING, COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE / PC / PLAYSTATION / XBOX / NINTENDO / Vol 14 Issue 8

# NAG

## HARDWARE

**Nintendo 3DS:** We spend some time playing with Nintendo's little guy

## REVIEWS

Dead Island
Gears of War 3
F1 2011
Hard Reset
+ MORE

# UNCHARTED 3
## DRAKE'S DECEPTION

Nathan Drake is back for a third tug at the ponytail

## MACHINIMA

**Machine cinema:** Some words on game engine movies

Look now see here. It's getting tiresome catering to the few cerebrally challenged individuals that keep on buying this magazine without a DVD in the plastic bag with this message. There's nothing more we can do... You are on your own.

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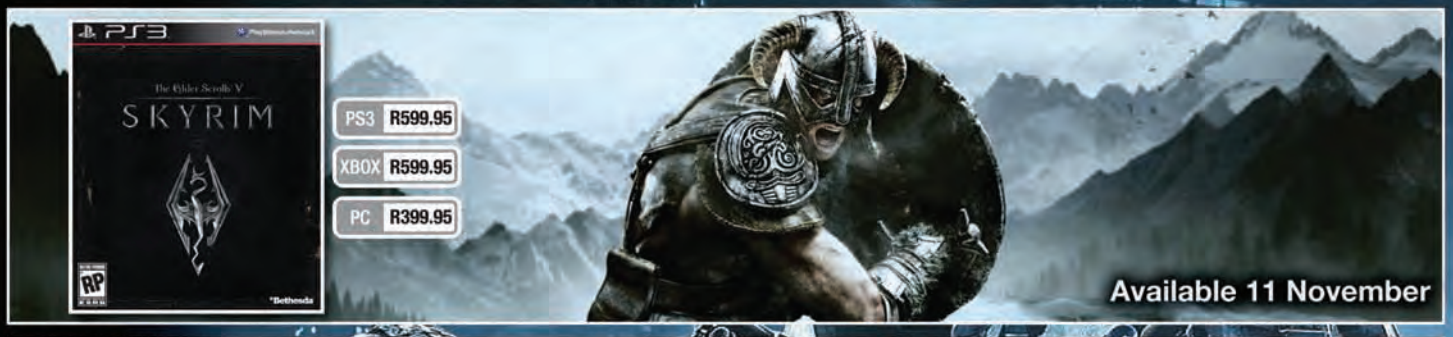
# NEW RELEASES



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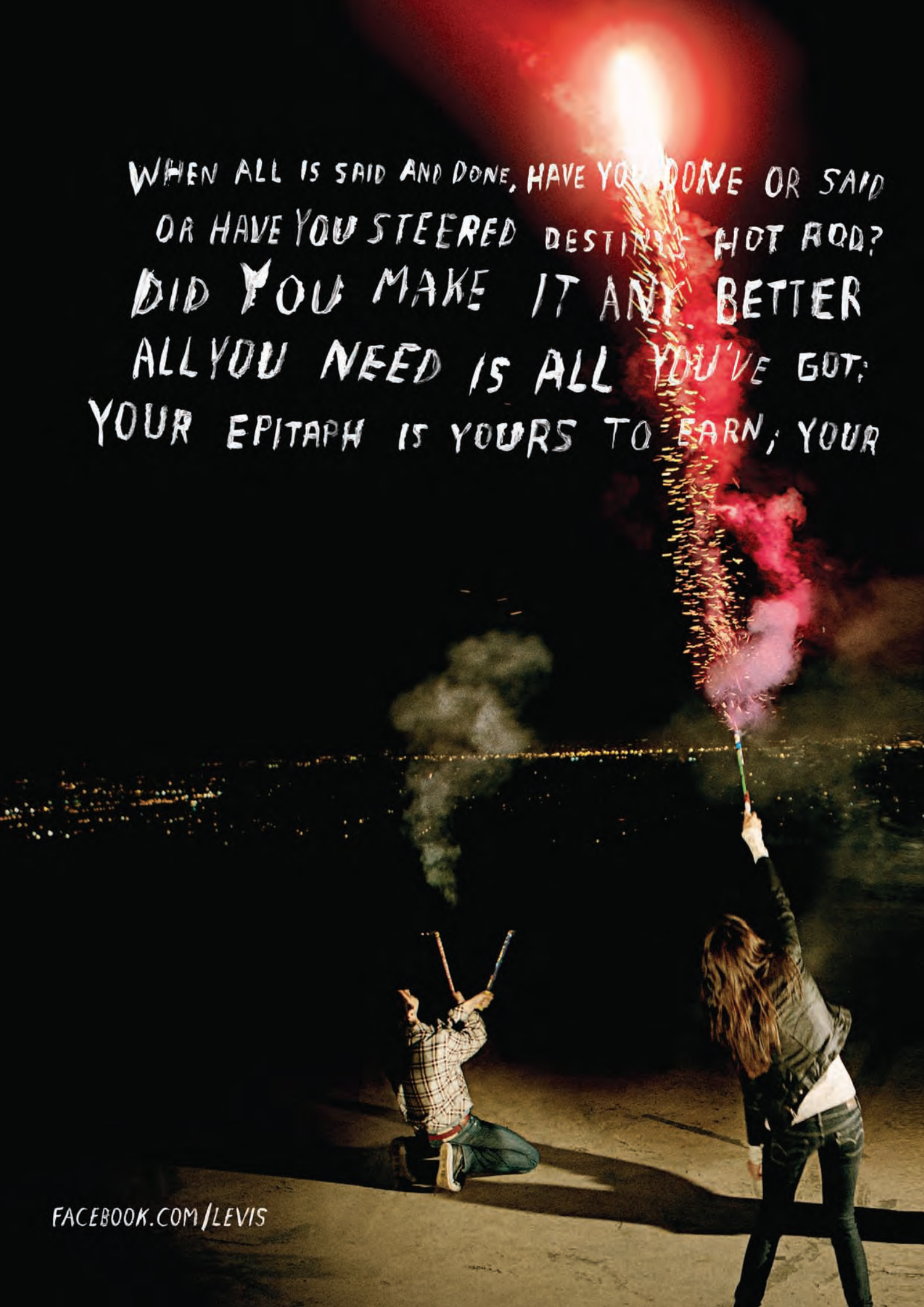
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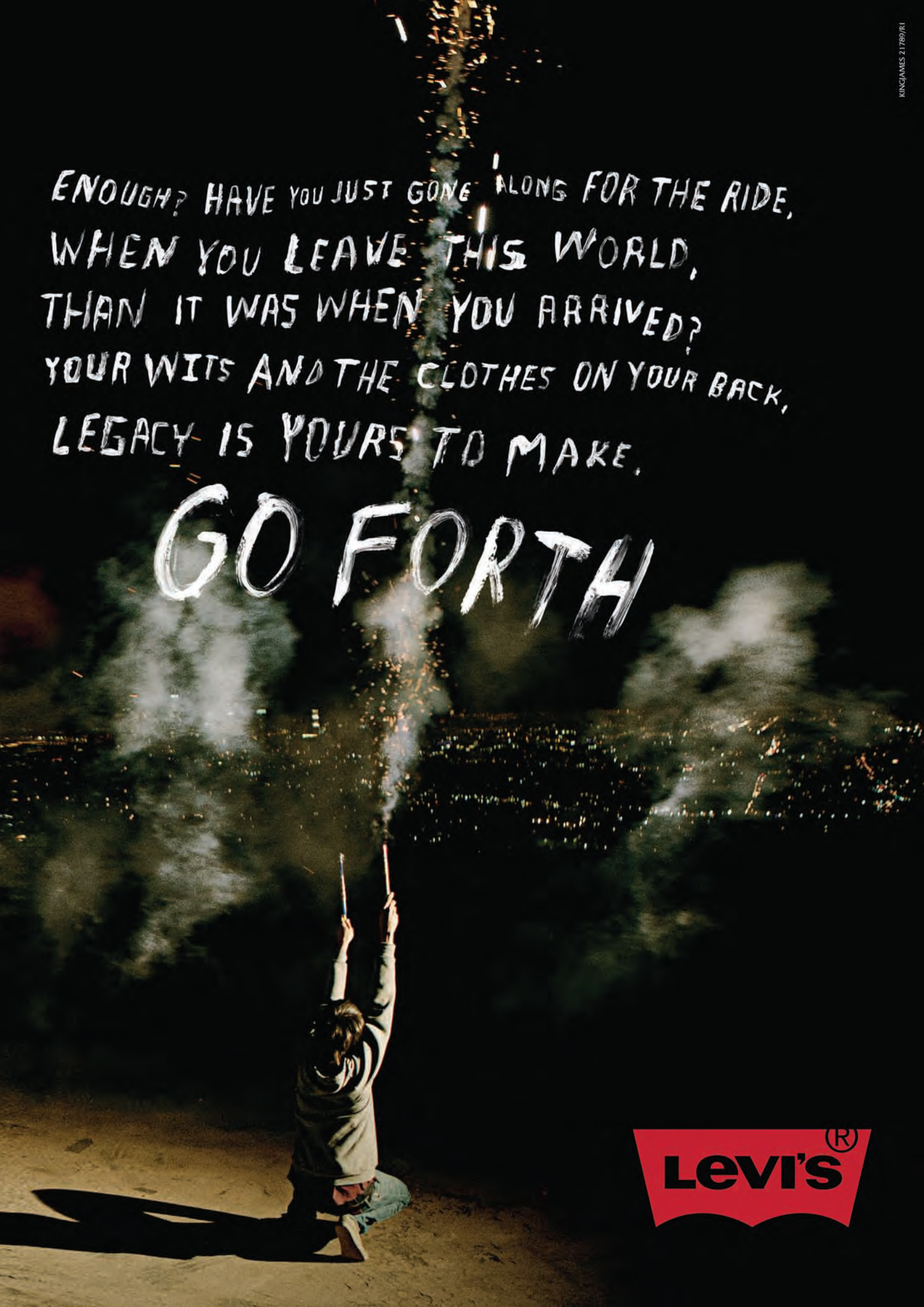
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Call of Duty Releases 08 November 2011

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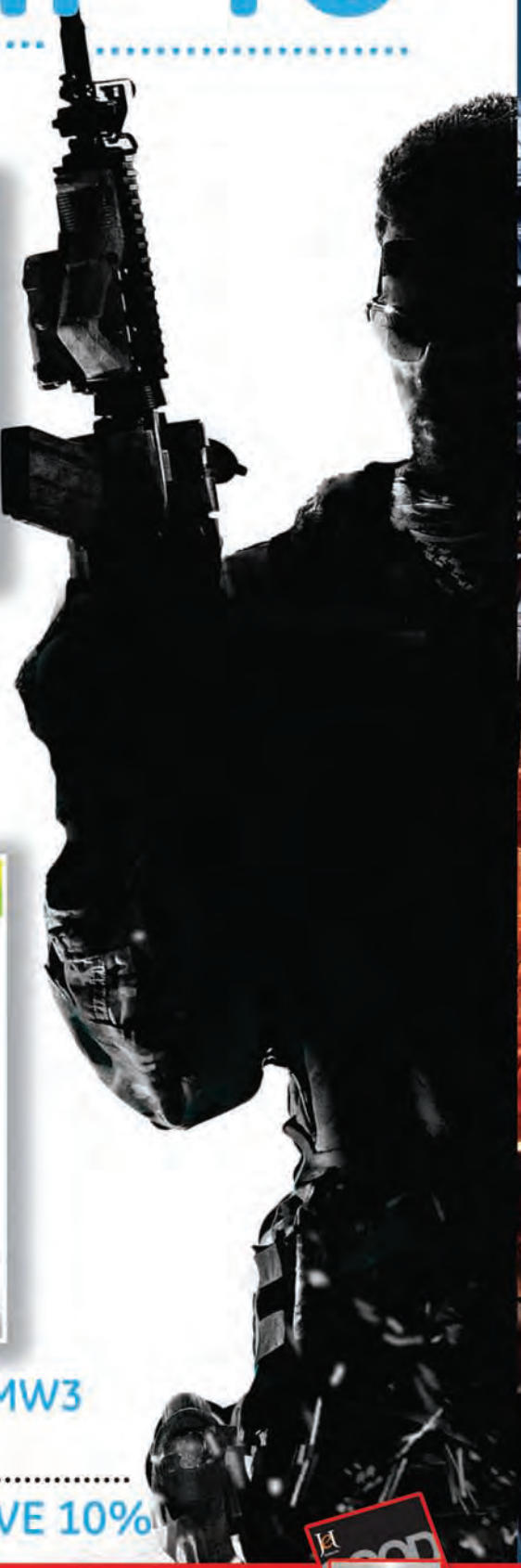

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36 **Machinima**
**"Why are we here?"**
We take a look at the history of the videogame-based cinema that eventually came to be known as machinima.

40 **Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception**
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A mysterious man in an ominously oversized trenchcoat handed us a map and sent us deep into the desert to find Nathan Drake, discover what makes the lovable adventurer's hair so damn magnificent and argue the idea that *Uncharted* is better at being a movie than some movies are.

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## NAG DVD

**Demos**
Battle Academy / Best in Show / Dungeons: The Dark Lord / FIFA Soccer 2012 / Hard Reset / OIO / Orczz / Wasteland Angel

**Drivers**
AMD Catalyst Drivers 11.9 Vista & Vista 64 / NVIDIA nForce 15.49 WHQL Vista & Vista 64

**Extras**
**[Free Games]:** Dune II: The Golden Patch / Super Smash Land / Team Fortress ArFcade
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# Somewhere over the Thunderdome

1 Dome, 3 days, 26,594 people, why do we keep using this overly dramatic kind of heading?

Well it's finally over and done for 2011... Phew! rAge is a beast of a monster of a thing that occupies at least 8.3+ months of our lives at the NAG office. Absolutely everyone is involved and no job is too small or too tough. People are often amazed that we can run an industry-leading magazine as well as put on the biggest technology show in South Africa each year. To cap it off, both are expanding and growing bigger and better and in some cases a little out of control every time I look. I'm not entirely sure what happened this year, perhaps it was *Battlefield 3*, perhaps it was our mighty sponsor's (Samsung) influence or perhaps it was all the international developers that came to South Africa for rAge, but the show grew in attendance by just over 29%. It was equally a record breaker in terms of exhibitors and from what I've heard, a record breaker from a retail point of view too. Many of the current exhibitors are already asking about bigger stands for 2012, which is our 10 year anniversary for the show BTW. Unprecedented is a great word to describe all aspects of this year's rAge.

But all of this success would not be possible if it wasn't for the crack team of people around me that make it happen each year. Thank you all for making the show look spectacular and run as close to perfect as possible and thank you for making me look good even though I do the least amount of the real work. Then, it goes without saying... thanks to all the exhibitors and sponsors this year. You're all so committed to supporting the show and I'm eternally grateful to the rain gods that I can return some of the favour by driving record numbers of crazy, insane and amazing people through the doors each year. Without your support there is no rAge. Finally, the biggest thanks must go to all the people that came to the show this year and in the past. We do it for you and nothing makes me happier than seeing all those excited gamers in the morning come rushing into the Dome – the zombie horde as we've come to know them. You make it all worthwhile so don't stop being crazy, insane and amazing.

The show is also becoming more important on the international gaming calendar as each year passes and this means it attracts more heavyweight developers. Of course it cannot compete with E3 or Gamescom but then it's not supposed to. The idea is to bring a small taste of those events to people who aren't lucky enough to be able to travel overseas and attend these gaming conventions. rAge is also just too big and expensive to host in another city. As much as I'd love to do it all in Cape Town and Durban it's just not logistically possible. So to you gamers living far from Johannesburg I am truly sorry that I can't share it all with everyone.

Now we get a month's break from all things rAge and in November we start the process for 2012 from scratch... Lucky we all love what we do so much. ;)

Enjoy the issue this month, it was done right after rAge so if we sound exhausted it's because we are.

Go on, make it a double.

**RedTide**
[Editor]

## COVER STORY

The cover story for this issue was passed around like a skank on New Year's Eve. First was the 'you guessed it' clichéd first person shooter that failed due to a minor misunderstanding (I'll take 48.39% the blame). Then it was a white robed Assassin that didn't want to come out and play with us. Things finally settled on the *Tomb Raider* slayer, *Uncharted*. The hype paragraph reads like this: Dane aims a number 3 at Drake and comes out ruffled with a few aching muscles after a hair-raising session that redefines the mile high club. It's something to do with hot pants and cargo planes.

This is a quick message to Dirk from Citrusdal; thanks for your letter (it came in the post). Your game idea is pretty cool but it's not something NAG will actually ever make. That whole feature was a joke – we were poking fun at the game industry. Unfortunately this is the only way I can get in touch with you because I failed the course in envelopes, stamps and the whole post office concept.

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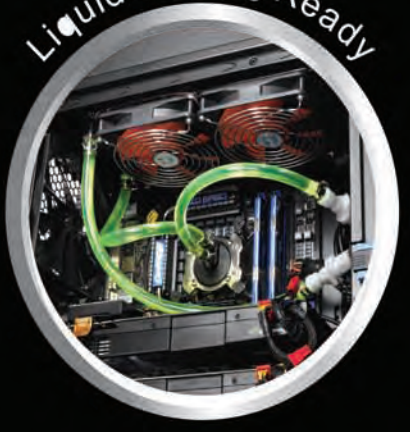

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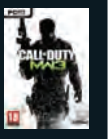
***Disclaimer:** All letters sent to NAG are printed more or less verbatim (that's as we get them for you kids at the back), so ignore any spelling or grammatical errors.)

## Letter of the month November 2011

**From: Anton**
**Subject: Trolling is not baws**
I would firstly like to say I love the magazine, every month it's packed with enough awesomeness to melt a lesser man/women's face (true story). Secondly I would like to respond to the column by Pippa in the October issue, you see I agree with what she says, but not all of it. Trolls are the reason online gaming can be so harsh a place. I've been gaming online for quite a few years and have found in my many travels that no one is immune to this virus that turns people into this ugly troll. As gamers, we're all guilty – it's part of our very make up. You see the point I'm trying to make is that trolls are not "the collective other" or "them", it's us. We all walk a very thin line. Now I understand that Pippa is specifically referring to trolls within forums and the message boards, but trolls can be found everywhere. I digress, the point is we all need to watch the way we treat others online. It becomes so easy to be a total idiot, "they don't know me", "they don't know where I live" and "I'll never see this person again". So be a baws, don't troll you give us as gamers a bad name, we all could use a friendly person to give us a hand.

***Spot on. I was playing a game of* Call of Duty: Black Ops *the other night and a younger guy was playing along with us, chatting on his microphone. He was underage (definitely too young to be playing an 18+ game, but you know how some parents are a little irresponsible and all that), but seemed to know his stuff and was having fun. At some point an older gamer started acting like a d!ck, making fun of him and telling him he sounded like a girl (like I said, he was pretty young). Now, I don't approve of that kind of behaviour (picking on kids), and said as much. Fortunately many others on the server shared my point of view and the rude idiot, now outnumbered and unpopular, left. This kind of thing happens all the time in varying degrees. It's sad that the only thing the younger guy learnt that night was how to be nasty to someone he doesn't even know. So, to all you 'adult' players online, if you see this kind of thing happening say something about it and make sure we get rid of this rubbish element in our gaming community. Ed.***




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

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**From: Benjamin**
**Subject: Inconsistent Love**
I love NAG. Every last Thursday of the month I anticipate ripping open that bag and consuming it, for NAG is packed with detail, quality, tasty titbits, an inappropriately liberal dose of funny, and best of all; real gamers, with real understanding of the medium. I know it all so well. You'll forgive me then for being annoyed when you make those rare slip-ups. Those rare, serious (well, sort of) slip-ups. Remember Wolfenstein? The pages of NAG told of a great game, brimming with exploration, collectibles, blood, Nazis, bloody Nazis, occult forces, sci-fi, widespread anti-realism and the fine ways of old-school everywhere, scoring it an 85. Based on this, I got it and loved it. Then, in 2011, I came across 'A Decade in Gaming'. Wolfenstein was mentioned, with a little note next to its familiar name: "How do you say 'mediocre' in German?" Sad face! Then there was your big Tomb Raider preview. In here, it was said that it was only shallow history that remembers the original Tomb Raider for its use of a female protagonist. It was a game to remember because it proved that a good, cohesive puzzle-exploration-platform game - as well as other things that were supposedly only good in 2D - could be achieved in 3D. Now, this is totally correct. NAG's got smarts! Then September rolled in, and I took a look through the top ten most revolutionary games ever. Number 10: Tomb Raider. Oh, I know this one's claim to fame... Hey, wait! "Female lead... a change from the burly armoured beard men that..." Not even a cocktail sausage about how it set the trend for the effective use of 3D in games! Cue confused disappointment and some comfort food. The lesson to be learnt here, I suppose, is that a magazine is supposed to be one whole unit except where space has been cut out for personal opinions from within the house, but sometimes you forget about maintaining the illusion that you guys actually agree with one another enough to work together.

***You do know that you're not supposed to actually read the whole magazine and pay attention to everything we say in such detail. Just look at the pictures and move along please... However, if you do read it all and pay attention, you'll also know that the writers at* NAG *are exactly the same as every other gamer out there – loudly opinionated about a great number of topics. I also don't censor opinions in the magazine and therefore if Miktar thought* Wolfenstein *was average but I thought it was amazing you are going to get a conflicting message here and there. I'd like to believe it offers you lot a balanced view of the gaming world instead of just my view of the gaming world. On the* Tomb Raider *topic, you are correct but then the fact that a female was the lead for the first time is also a very strong argument – probably stronger considering the Lara Croft legend it unleashed all those years ago, one that's still surviving 15 years later. Also, the Guinness Book of World Records recognised Lara Croft as the "Most Successful Human Virtual Game Heroine" in 2006. Ed.***

**From: Nathan**
**Subject: Need some info if you don't mind bro's...**
[*Unedited for effect, Ed*] What do you do there at NAG? I'm asking because if you are doing something i would like to do than you could tell me what and how to teach myself these things. I'm really good at creative writing such as doing reviews... .for gpu's and also finding glitches in games...

***Just when I was wondering how I'm ever going to find my replacement you come along. Thank you so much, you've taken a great weight off. Ed.***

**From: Sebastian**
**Subject: Happiness and games**
I do not know what you guys at NAG think but I think that videogames are not a source of happiness. They are addictive, scary, and sometimes feel satisfying but they do not make a person happy. I myself pour hours into gaming (and reading NAG), but all that has ever come out of my gaming sessions is frustration, confusion (with a complicated storyline and sometimes satisfaction (when I got a trophy or finished a game) but that feeling was rare compared to the bad ones. I admit that sometimes I felt good and happy when playing multiplayer because we joke around and complement each other's headshots, but it's not always like this. I am having an identity crisis NAG. Do you guys actually squeal with delight or feel truly happy when you play videogames?

***I can tell you that I do feel a little rush of adrenalin tempered with an excitement tingle in my spine when I sneak up behind a sniper in* Battlefield 3 *and take his dog tags – it's risky but rewarding. Then, on the other hand, I do feel the urge to swear and crush the life out of campers in other games. This also depends on my mood at the time. Like I said in another issue the other month, what you bring to gaming you take out of gaming. If you're irritated and frustrated while playing then that's what you'll take out of your session. It's just like real life. Approach things from a positive point of view and things will be positive. Your Zen guru speaks and you listen, Ed.***

**From: Marius**
**Subject: Pre-orders and collectors**
With gaming reaching new heights so has the marketing. Two marketing features stand out: The pre-order and the collector's edition. Let's look at the collectors first. You pay a bucket load of money for the same game but for the extra R500+ you spend you get up to two of the following: exclusive DLC, steel tin, figurine, extra mission, a sticker. Is this really worth it? The second and less expensive option is the pre-order. Buy the game before it is released. Do this and you get, maybe a DLC code but at least you know you reserved a copy.

So here is my proposal to developers. In the collector's edition add something worth collecting. Just think how great it will be to get the Max Payne collector's edition with the first two games included on the disk. We don't want junk! Sure figurines are cool but the Mortal Kombat collector's edition figures looked so cheap I hope the Skyrim dragon looks better. And here is my thought on pre-orders. If we pre-order a game give it to us a week or

Shorts [extracts of LOL n00b from NAG reader letters]

"Wham you're slapped silly us gamers need more game derived pickup lines."
- Z

"I recently got upgrades on my computer and can at least play games that is new with fair quality"
– Werner

"Hey what's up dudes at nag I wanted to talk to you about the fact that most Japanese games are filled to the top, with tits and latex, why it makes no sense take Soul Calibur?"
– Jordan

"Is it possible that you can make rugby themes for Windows 7 and send it with the next NAG like the Sharks and Blue Bulls and that teams?"
– Unknown

## 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.**

Grant Raynor, "I am an avid gamer and NAG Reader. I also do Urban Graphic Design. My main hobby outside of gaming is designing Papertoys for anyone to download & build. I have my own blog where I post the designs as I do them, http://sinner-playingwithart.blogspot.com."
***Please note. There is a Grant Raynor directory on the DVD with the .PDF inside – happy cutting, folding and gluing (no sniffing please).***

a couple of days at least before the rest. Why should I order and pay in advance to only receive it the same day (and sometimes later) than the rest. Yes I know shipping and other problems but let's work something out.

We are gamers we deserve the best. Hats off to Dark Souls, that pre-order gave us a boatload of extras at no extra cost. This is how this are supposed to be!

***This is a bit of a pointless issue – if you don't like the goodies offered then don't buy the collector's edition. Of course, if you're talking about the quality of the product you ordered then that's a different story. I guess trial and error is an expensive way to figure out which companies put effort into their collector's editions. Additionally, your particular level of standards also comes into play – for some, a plastic RC car is an amazing toy, but for others it's cheap and gimmicky. Pricing should also be a clue. If the Skyrim collector's edition is a hundred rand or so more than the standard edition then expect a plastic dragon and a pack of stickers – if it's a thousand or more then you can expect something decent. As for pre-orders, the idea is to ensure you get your game on release day and in most cases now, a few DLC items. Getting it earlier would be nice but isn't feasible. Ed.***

**From: Andreas**
**Subject: Right on the money!**
Anyway, while laying on my bed reading through the magazine on this lazy Sunday a thought hit me. I always hear people complaining about a lack new concepts, or monotonous 'innovations'... it's not much, but doesn't the Bible strike you as a viable 'concept'? It's the all-time best bookseller... can you imagine what an epic script it would make for a cutting-edge video game? Picture the immersion for a moment - the history, emotion, even understanding. Parents/churches/schools complain of a lack of religious exposure for the youths, so wouldn't it be, well, logical, to combine gaming and religion into at least one real nail-biter? The Da Vinci code caused its fair share of controversy in churches around SA for a while... but then, that was it, nothing ensued (there's a syllable-pun in there somewhere). The ark, the red sea, Mary, Moses, Jesus himself... just picture the versatility, the immense, humbling feeling of 'witnessing' it first-person! I'm not big on religion as a whole, though divine faith is very important in my eyes - and yes, there's a big difference - I believe in God, as an agnostic. Even so, the story of Christ as a playable game practically excites me enough to already make me anticipate it's (hypothetical) release: Following your respective "path", Christian, Islam, Judaism, etc. and witnessing how they converge and influenced one another - even choosing another religion and learning along the way, maybe a prequel to every Holy Book even, if possible... There's something in it, and I know I, for one, would pre-order the title without hesitation for many reasons, shared the world over, I'm sure. It's a broad market, but with the proper respect (exploitation, deviation and above all, unintended mockery), it could be the next tear-jerking Final Fantasy IX in terms of emotion, for many right reasons.

***Interesting idea – it would need to be handled carefully and the proceeds donated to needy children perhaps? One negative is most people already know how it ends and the more fanatical might have an issue with waggling a joystick to part the Red Sea for example. How will the achievements work? Will it be possible to fail at divine acts? Do you reload or resurrect a save game? How would the 'insane difficulty mode' work? Should the 'devil' be a playable character? With so many questions let's open the floor on this topic: letters@nag.co.za. I won't publish anything insensitive or stupid so please think before you type – this is another www.hellopeter.co.za minefield waiting to happen. ;) Ed.***

**From: Some dude**
**Subject: Ed-ma-main-man**
[Unedited for authenticity, Ed] Ed, ma main man, what's up? Dude you losing your touch. Three years ago when I first hit the country and found out about NAG, the only reason I bought another issue was your humour sensed on the inbox replies, plus all the cool pix and stuff– get em back- u losing it man... Some of the attributes that accompany growing up, though, seriously- get a little regression back on your inbox section replies – not on this message though. I am sleep deprived, so if I insulted you in any way I did not mean it, just offering a little enlightenment, oh plus this is a phony e-mail address. Don't bother tracking me, research shows certain PPL to go psycho at certain times (speaking out of experience), though, If I win send the winnings to 2... never mind, dude.

***Thanks for the mail... I'll try being more regressive. Ed.***

**From: Reuben**
**Subject: October 2011 cover and the Dead Kennedys**
I don't know if I'm the only one to pick this up, certainly hope not, but upon closer inspection of the October cover I discovered what seems to be homage to the Dead Kennedys. Yeah, that's right the Dead Kennedys, and I don't mean JFK or Robert; I mean the punk band from the 80's. On the right shoulder of Rambo's younger brother (the Borderlands guy) you'll see his wearing an extremely redundant bandolier with only two empty shells, just above this is a 'DK' badge. "DK" as in Dead Kennedys? Is Borderlands 2 going to have some weird connection the Dead Kennedys? Or maybe I just like the Dead Kennedys too much.

***I checked the logo (see left). It's very close but not the same. I'll pass this issue along to the art director at Gearbox and see what he says. Ed.***

## On the Forums

**Come join the best gaming community online. Almost everyone is welcome: http://www.nag.co.za/forums/**

**Question: rAge 2011: Your thoughts?**

**Cleric:** Positive: Great displays, great game selection. Negative: Poor layout, needs improvement.

**Spindleshanks:** Wish I was there!

**ShawniF:** Positive: A ton of awesome games and tech, great support from international game publishers and developers, Battlefield3!!!!!!!!! Negative: The line at the start of day 2 was poorly managed.

**willbeonekenobi:** negative - waiting about 4.5 hours in queue with heavy pc on the Friday for the LAN. Neutral - watching people drop their PC's and monitors on Friday. Positive - playing demo of Mass Effect 3

**Changsta 187:** It could've been better, but I still loved it!

**SKi_REm:** Battlefield 3 and MW3 was the cream of the crop!!

**Wah:** I'm your Venus, I'm your fire. At your desire.

**Jodez:** Should be held in Cape Town for once

**EndKreator:** 2Thumbs up for rAge 2011 - It was worth the pilgrimage to the Coca Cola Dome!

**Sir PaniCore:** The best one since 2006

**CaViE:** No Azi. :(

**chXn:** rAge 2011 was my first. So I had no exceptions except for it to be epic. Positive: Meeting all the guys I play with online. NGL tournament was awesome even though I was only an admin. Expo was very interesting. Negative: Steam was unstable on Friday. Lights being on Saturday night. Expensive cool drinks and food inside. rAge 2011 was awesome, can't wait for next year!

**Toxxyc:** I...I...I missed it... :(

**drunken_boy:** Negative: Never a rAge in Cape Town. Positive: Wouldn't know, there's never a rAge in Cape Town

**"How the hell do you think I can get away with half the stuff I do, play games all day and do hardly any work at all? Ed."**

/ I, Gamer /

# The gaming industry's Evil Empire

The gaming industry needs an Evil Empire; it's akin to how that galaxy far, far away has a Light and a Dark side to its Force. It's about equilibrium, and for each developer that steadfastly fulfils the role of "shining bastion of artistic integrity", there needs to be an entity (be it publisher or industry personality) to counteract all that unchecked optimism and glorious positivity.

For years the role of Evil Empire was played by Electronic Arts. During the mid-nineties, the publisher went on a developer buying rampage; I still recall the utter disgust I felt when Westwood Studios ceased to exist thanks to the gaping maw that was EA. Now that we're in a post *Dead Space* and *Mirror's Edge* world however, EA managed to wrench the label of "Gaming Industry's Evil Empire" from its tiring bosom and allowed it to be snaffled up by Activision. With Activision's acquisition of PC gaming's messiah (Blizzard), the now largest publisher in the world completed its transformation into today's

> **"It's almost like the game's icon exudes some sort of visually imbibed, digital crack cocaine"**

Evil Empire. With Overlord Kotick at the helm, Activision continued to flog *Call of Duty* and *Guitar Hero* franchises until their proverbial horses were only identifiable as such thanks to dental records.

Now the wheel appears to be turning yet again, and it is thanks to the clash of the military FPS franchises: *Battlefield 3* and *Modern Warfare 3*. Neither set of publisher and development team has been above a little smack talk. It seems, however, that EA and DICE are getting thoroughly into this verbal slinging match, so much so that I wouldn't be surprised if it's beginning to drum up some negative publicity for the so-called "*COD* killer".

Not that any of this matters, because the label of Evil Empire is now so far away from these two publishing powerhouses that it's not even worth mentioning them in the same sentence as that ominous title. With that in mind, you can completely ignore the bulk of this column; actually don't, because I like to think that it's an effective preamble to the point I'm about to make. Prepare for a mind-splosion: the gaming industry's next Evil Empire is not a developer, publisher or personality – it is a game.

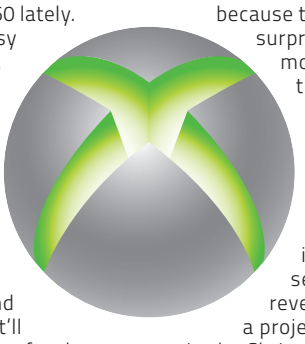
*Angry Birds* is taking over the world; I've been proclaiming this in a conspiracy theorist, crackpot kind of way for months now. I used to say that Google was taking over the world one small byte at a time. I was wrong, because while Google attempts to win the internet, *Angry Birds* is winning everything else, including Real Life. Starbucks stores around the world are about to get store-specific Angry Birds leaderboards; crowds at sporting events can play voice-controlled *Angry Birds* on massive screens. Rovio's productivity decimator is the highest downloaded App on the App Store and on Sony's PlayStation Store. The game is on nearly every platform known to man and can be found pretty much anywhere a screen can; while I type this column, my wife sits next to me playing *Angry Birds Seasons*.

I upgraded to an iPhone a few weeks ago and the first thing I downloaded was the original *Angry Birds*. It's almost like the game's icon exudes some sort of visually imbibed, digital crack cocaine. It was... impulsive; almost reflexive. New iOS device! After letting it kiss iTunes hello, the first thing to do is slap on a copy of *Angry Birds*. There is now no escaping our feathery overlords.

**Miklós Szecsei**

# Rumours! Get yer Xbox 720 rumours right here!

There's been a lot of talk about Microsoft's alleged (sort of, because we all know it's going to happen – what we don't know is when) successor to the Xbox 360 lately. The latest comes courtesy of *Xbox World* magazine, who claim to know some things about The Big M's next console that us plebeians do not. More specifically, they know of three Xbox-friendly developers who may or may not already be churning out code, art and other dev-type stuff that'll eventually make up games for the future console.



There's Rare, developers of some games you've probably heard of. Their collective hands are supposedly deep in this top-secret cookie jar. Next up is Lionhead, who you may know as that bunch who make those games with dogs and promises and stuff. Finally, there's Turn 10, who have a fetish for cars that go really, really fast and then crash. Mostly. So, our next-gen guess then: a new *Fable* from Lionhead, and next-gen *Forza* car porn from Turn 10. We refuse to even try to speculate on what Rare might be working on, because they've a knack for surprises and unexpected moves. Although what they're working on is supposedly a mature title. *Kameo: XXX*?

According to *Eurogamer* and their multiple sources within the gaming industry, this super-sexy new console will be revealed at E3 2012, with a projected launch happening in the Christmas madness of 2013. That's assuming we get through this whole end of the world thing next year – which is also a pretty hefty rumour that you may have heard. We'll be holding an apocalypse party at NAG HQ, just in case anyone's interested. When we blow out the pre-apocalyptic candles, we plan to make a wish: that Microsoft refrains from calling their NextBox the Xbox 720. Because OMG lazy.

# Oh no you don't

The universe of space-faring MMO *EVE Online* is largely player-run. Players determine the economy; they make their own rules or attempt to break them, and it's largely understood that developer CCP's role is to fix things that are broken, maintain the system and add new content on a regular basis. That new content is always heavily scrutinised by the community but, most of the time, it goes down well enough and everyone enjoys spending time with the new quests, locations and spacecraft. Except this time, something went horribly wrong.

CCP decided to introduce new game items that cost real money. Fair enough, we suppose; the vast majority of online games make use of micro-transactions to keep up cashflow. *EVE*'s players hated this new feature, however, and took it upon themselves to destroy a key location in the game, effectively breaking the in-game economy. Only then did CCP make it clear that these new items are purely aesthetic in nature, and wouldn't change the careful balance of the game. But the players had made their point, and now CCP's CEO Hilmar Veigar Pétursson has issued an apology.

"Somewhere along the way, I began taking success for granted. As hubris set in, I became less inclined to listen to pleas for caution. Red flags raised by very smart people both at CCP and in the community went unheeded because of my stubborn refusal to allow adversity to gain purchase on our plans. Mistakes, even when they were acknowledged, often went unanalyzed, leaving the door open for them to be repeated."

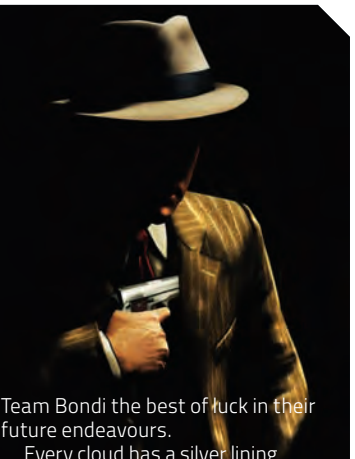
CCP has also declared that all future content will be focused on the core spaceship gameplay that made the game what it is, and will be wide open to discussion and criticism from the community.

# Gone zombie hunting. Back soon. Love, Techland.

Soon after zombie kill-a-thon *Dead Island*'s remarkably problematic launch, developer Techland announced the game's first bit of downloadable content. Dubbed Bloodbath Arena, it's basically one of those phenomenally popular Horde-style game modes where you're flooded by an endless supply of enemies and have to work together with your mates to keep your brain inside the protective shell that is your skull for as long as possible. It's set to offer four zones to play in, and adds a new weapon delightfully named the Brainwave Bomb. With this game's deliciously meaty melee combat system, fighting off an endless horde of zombies with friends sounds absolutely fantastic. It's free for pre-orderers (who should already have a code for the game), but there's no word on pricing for those who didn't reserve a copy of the game.

Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on what you think of the reason behind it), Bloodbath Arena has been delayed. For how long hasn't been specified, but the reason for the delay is so that Techland can focus on squashing the myriad bugs that plague the game at the time of writing this. We don't know about you, but we happen to think it's good that Techland are working on fixing the game people already own before dribbling superfluous bits of fluff all over it. We suspect that the game's rocky launch might lead to this DLC being made free for all those who've put up with the bugs and supported the game despite its issues. It's like make-up sex, but with zombies.

# Team Bondi shuts its doors



Sad news for beleaguered *L.A. Noire* developer Team Bondi, as *EDGE* recently reported that documents were filed with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission indicating that the studio was going to close following the complications that arose for the studio after the game's release – which we've written about extensively in recent months.

Said release was incredibly popular and should have cemented Bondi's reputation as a force to be reckoned with, but instead led to this sad series of events. It seems seven years of embattled development took too large a toll on everyone involved. We wish everyone affected by this at Team Bondi the best of luck in their future endeavours.

Every cloud has a silver lining and all that, and we're sure that the four million units of *L.A. Noire* that shipped will go a long way to ensuring that publisher Rockstar Games won't let a successful new IP like this disappear on account of all that's happened with Team Bondi.

/ The Game Stalker /

# Do not go gentle into that good night

Every year, gamers in the correct geographical location make their annual pilgrimage to the Almighty Dome, to make our offerings to the monster that is rAge in Johannesburg.

And every year I forget how exhausting the whole process is until I'm halfway through the first day. And then there's the relief that it's finally over at the end of the last.

It's not that I don't enjoy it, I wouldn't attend otherwise, but the energy that keeps you on that gaming high over the weekend, evaporates all too quickly when you realise you can't keep your eyes open as you finally get home. Or open them again when you have to get up for work on Monday morning.

Nonetheless, the rAge experience is something that is by definition both infinitely enjoyable, and considerably frustrating – especially as an exhibitor.

As a visitor, even media, we tend to be a bit more

**"...the rAge experience is something that is by definition both infinitely enjoyable, and considerably frustrating – especially as an exhibitor."**

critical, perhaps overly so, expecting things that we do not understand simply aren't possible for any number of reasons. Why didn't they show this game? Why weren't the demos there playable for the public?

And as an exhibitor we are perhaps a little too forgiving. Yes, maybe the one console didn't work properly, but they were there all night trying to fix it and simply had to just live with the result. Perhaps the one stand didn't come up as expected, but there was a problem when building it that simply couldn't be resolved in time.

They might sound like excuses but only once you've spent all night in the Dome on a stand build where any number of things can go wrong, you begin to sympathise with all the people, from the organisers to the exhibitors, who work so hard to bring you this overwhelming three day experience.

So where is the balance between the two? Yes, an expo that showcases products FOR THE PUBLIC should try to the best of its ability to cater to its market, but at the same time exhibitors do their utmost to show people what the latest product on the market is, all within reason and the limits of their trade embargoes.

Hearing people complain about how this stand should have done this, and that stand should have done that, *Skyrim* should have been on show whilst another game was lame and shouldn't have been there, the width of the aisles, the layout, the exhibitors... is all balanced out by the wealth and variety of content on show.

And believe it or not we do appreciate your (nicely worded) suggestions. Telling someone they suck, in any forum just motivates them to ignore you all the more. Giving polite suggestions as to how they might improve motivates the person/company to pay attention to your advice if they feel it's something they can implement *successfully*.

From what I gathered on Twitter and Facebook both during and after the event, rAge was mostly a success in the eyes of the 2011 crowd. And judging from the number of people and the activity on the stands of all the exhibitors I spoke to, I feel much the same way.

Perhaps rAge is not perfect, sure, but what is? That doesn't stop any of us trying to improve your experience every year, and as someone who has been on both sides of the exhibitor/visitor rAge fence, all I can say is #rAge2011 WIN!

**Pippa Tshabalala**

# Has XBLA peaked?

Xbox LIVE Arcade has been feeling some heat lately from a few of the developers who've previously dedicated themselves to releasing games for the platform. For a long time, XBLA has been the perfect place for independent developers to get themselves noticed – but it hasn't all been roses and rainbows. We've already seen complaints of poor treatment and dodgy exclusivity requirements from XBLA developers. Now, *World of Goo* developer 2D Boy believes that the market leader's dominance has finally come to an end.

Polling over 200 indie developers, 2D Boy says that the response they've gotten paints a pretty clear picture: that developers just don't see XBLA in the same light that they used to. Only around half of the studios polled actually responded, but the studios that did allegedly hold higher Metacritic averages (as well as higher sales numbers) than your average indie dev. What that means is that XBLA's star players weighed in, and results seem to show that most devs are shying away from XBLA in favour of PSN and PC.

"XBLA played a pivotal role in the popularisation of independent games," said 2D Boy's Ron Carmel. "Microsoft proved that indie games can be million-sellers on consoles, and then sat on its laurels for half a decade as more nimble and innovative companies like Valve and Apple took the lead ... XBLA is no longer the king it used to be. Microsoft is no longer in a position to demand exclusivity now that PSN has more developers and is growing, while XBLA is losing developers."

Almost immediately after 2D Boy said their piece, analysts crawled out of the woodwork to defend Microsoft's indie marketplace. "In terms of digital games delivered through a home console, Microsoft will continue to be the market leaders," said Jesse Divnich of EEDAR. "I am not disagreeing with Mr Carmel, I believe some of his points are valid and any digital service provider has its own restrictions and hurdles. Not every game is the right fit for every service."

Industry analyst Michael Pachter also commented: "That doesn't sound right to me. If anything, there are more titles than ever, but we haven't had a *Braid* or *Limbo* so far this year. As the 360 price comes down and the installed base continues to grow, there should be a significantly larger addressable market for XBLA games, so I think it continues to grow."

Billy Pidgeon of M2 Research agreed with the other analysts, but said that 2D Boy's poll is worth paying attention to, because it indicates that a "specific group of independent developers" have moved on, as Sony continues to deliver more unique, interesting downloadables like the upcoming *Journey*.

# GT5 gets major update

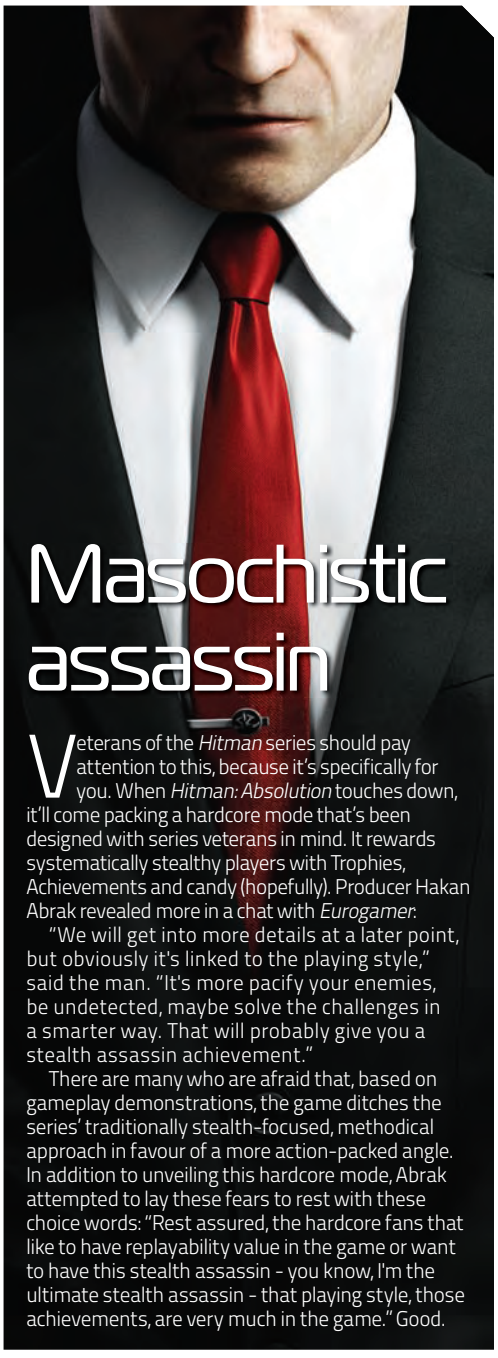
Despite regular patches and updates to *Gran Turismo 5* since its release, developer Polyphony Digital is adamant that what we've seen so far is just the start of many more, larger updates that are in the works. The first major patch, dubbed Spec 2.0, has now been released and includes a ton of new content, fixes and tweaks.

The new content includes twelve new cars – eleven 2011-series NASCAR vehicles and the ultra fast Nissan GT-R N24 Schulze Motor Sport. Series creator Kazunori Yamauchi shared on Twitter that there will also be a number of improvements to the core game, including a standard cockpit view for those cars that lack their own, as well as the ability to change the weather in the game.

A few technical improvements have also been made, such as "improved physics and AI" which could mean almost anything, as well as "improved UI response and usability," which is also pretty open-ended. One solid piece of info is the inclusion of support for Logitech's G25 and G27 steering wheels.

Spec 2.0 will be free to download, but from there on out, any major content packs will cost you. Currently, the studio plans to release three content packs – a car pack, a course pack and one with a selection of racing gear – one week after Spec 2.0 lands.

In related news, the price for *Gran Turismo 5* has been dropped to $39.99 (R320) on the PSN store. Those not able to download the game should look forward to a similar (although likely unequal) price drop on the retail package.



# Masochistic assassin

Veterans of the *Hitman* series should pay attention to this, because it's specifically for you. When *Hitman: Absolution* touches down, it'll come packing a hardcore mode that's been designed with series veterans in mind. It rewards systematically stealthy players with Trophies, Achievements and candy (hopefully). Producer Hakan Abrak revealed more in a chat with *Eurogamer*:

"We will get into more details at a later point, but obviously it's linked to the playing style," said the man. "It's more pacify your enemies, be undetected, maybe solve the challenges in a smarter way. That will probably give you a stealth assassin achievement."

There are many who are afraid that, based on gameplay demonstrations, the game ditches the series' traditionally stealth-focused, methodical approach in favour of a more action-packed angle. In addition to unveiling this hardcore mode, Abrak attempted to lay these fears to rest with these choice words: "Rest assured, the hardcore fans that like to have replayability value in the game or want to have this stealth assassin - you know, I'm the ultimate stealth assassin - that playing style, those achievements, are very much in the game." Good.

## Ghost Recon: Future Soldier ready for duty March 2012

The next entry in the *Ghost Recon* series finally has a release date after what seems like a million years in development. *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* will bring its near-futuristic warfare to a 360, PS3 and PC near you come March of next year.

It's odd that we still don't know very much about this title, but we imagine info will start to come pouring out as we near that release date. So far, all we know that it's got a focus on futuristic shenanigans, but will still take a highly realistic approach to digital gunnery and stealthy tactics. That, and the 360 version boasts minor Kinect support via its Gunsmith feature.

## XBLA capsizes this December

// Sensationalist headlines for the win. What we really mean is that Alientrap Games' lovely 2D action platformer *Capsized* is coming to an Xbox near you this December. Originally released on PC via Steam (as well as Alientrap's website) back in April, the beautiful, action-packed title is being ported to XBLA by Koolhaus Games. In it, you take control of a stranded astronaut trapped on a dangerous, exotic world. You'll shoot, you'll fly and you'll grapple your way through all manner of challenging situations. It's not a straight port either. Expect enhanced graphics, exclusive levels and extra DLC. When the game finally lands later this year, you'll be able to snag it for 800 Microsoft monies ($10).

// Last year's *Transformers: War for Cybertron* turned out to be surprisingly good. So good, in fact, that Activision had High Moon Studios jump straight into production of ***a sequel, Transformers: Fall of Cybertron***, which kind of makes us sad considering all the apparent saving of Cybertron we did in the first game. Expect the sequel, which will include the awesome Dinobots, to be available sometime next year.

# Tummyflies

At rAge this year, I gave a small Game Dev Sessions talk which – aside from sobbing quietly into my mic, hugging my knees and rocking back and forth in the corner for half an hour – generally got philosophical about challenges facing game creators of all kinds.

I wasn't talking about deadlines, programming woes or even marketing – I went straight for the developer's own state of mind. What happens, for example, when you put a depressed or unmotivated game creator into a position that requires self-discipline and community outreach? Do game designers ever qualify for that "tormented artist" category of people? How much does a game say about its creator, and who does the final product belong to? The designer or the audience?

The final point – that of the game's ownership – is an interesting one, because it probably evokes anxiety in almost every game developer. If you're designing games

> **"If you're designing games independently or as a hobby, the product tends to be very personal. "**

independently or as a hobby, the product tends to be very personal. And yet, for that product to serve its purpose and be of any effect whatsoever, it needs to be "given away" and made public. Which means that (gasp!) other people actually have to *like* your personal, passion-filled designs.

It's for this reason that most people tend to hit an Adamantium-coated brick wall when promoting their games. A lot of veterans will tell you that marketing and networking is a lot of work, which is true. But they don't usually discuss the internal obstacles that need to be overcome – those twisty, nervous, butterflies-in-the-stomach feelings evoked whenever approaching a community or website for an opinion.

A single forum user's statement can bring about inspiration or despair. A game journalist's review can make the difference between a day filled with elation and a week of feeling terrible about life, the universe and everything. If you're feeling this sort of stuff, know that it's not unusual. The sensation is common to any creative and extroverted field, and the biggest secret is that it never goes away – no matter how close you get to the top. Ask high-profile indies like Edmund McMillen (*Super Meat Boy*), Derek Yu (*Spelunky*) and Andy Schatz (*Monaco*) and you're bound to hear some interesting stories about the matter.

The biggest and most successful devs aren't the ones who don't feel this trepidation: they're simply the ones among us who are able to swallow those nerves time and again to bring their games to a broader audience, listen to criticism and ultimately improve by constantly placing their trust (and sanity) in the care of their fans.

If you find that hard to do, don't feel alone. It's difficult for everyone else, too. Few developers are truly arrogant enough to deem themselves entirely above the common criticism of their audience, and more often than not it's precisely those sort of devs who never really get anywhere in the first place.

Learning how to become a great game developer is not so much a matter of being able to snuff out these stress reactions entirely, but learning how to exist alongside them without letting them crush you and your creativity. It comes with quite a few hard knocks here and there, but isn't this worth it in a field where passion is your driving force above all else?

**Rodain Joubert**

# Rebirthing X with X Rebirth

You may recall an announcement back in April revealing the next in Egosoft's space-faring simulator series, *X*. Titled *X Rebirth*, it seems that name is appropriate considering the changes they've made to the formula. There'll still be a whole bunch of piloting, trading and shooting in space, but it'll all be done from the comfort of a single ship, rather than giving you a selection of many. *The Pride of Albion* is the name of your in-game baby, and it'll be customisable and upgradeable.

This lack of freedom in your choice of vessel will be somewhat circumvented via Drones. You'll be able to outfit *The Albion* with all manner of Drones, which you'll then be able to pilot yourself, exactly like you would a traditional ship. It also means that the death of a drone doesn't mean the death of your player character, so you'll be able to use them in more diverse situations. The story will supposedly reveal more about *The Albion*'s past, making the ship as much a character in the game as anyone else you'll encounter. The crew of *The Albion* can also be interacted with, which should give everything a cool *Mass Effect* vibe.

More news comes with regard to the game's capital ships, which look absolutely enormous and are customisable, but can't be piloted directly. You'll be able to muck about on their insides, interacting with their crews as you do so. *The Albion* can even fly along their surfaces, taking out individual turrets and the like if the capital ship in question is hostile. Some of these ships are so big that *The Albion* can be piloted within their innards – and if that doesn't immediately make you think of the Death Star, you should reconfigure your life.

# Lawsuit up

There's been a legal struggle going on for months between *Minecraft* creators Mojang Specifications and Zenimax Media Inc., owners of the *Elder Scrolls* franchise. Mojang is currently developing a virtual trading card / strategy game called *Scrolls*, and Zenimax is not happy about it. The legal back-and-forth is pretty lengthy, so we won't bore you with the details, but here's what you need to know:

A few months ago, Mojang applied to trademark the names "Minecraft" and "Scrolls", to protect their assets. Following that, Zenimax's lawyers sent Mojang a letter of demand, insisting that they lose the name "Scrolls" in their upcoming game. Mojang, fearing massive legal action, offered a solution: they'd give *Scrolls* a subtitle and give up the trademark application within the United States. Zenimax wasn't happy with the offer.

On September 27, unable to reach a resolution outside of court, Zenimax filed a suit for trademark infringement against Mojang. They feel that, despite massive gameplay differences, Mojang's *Scrolls* is too similar in name to Zenimax's *The Elder Scrolls*. Mojang obviously disagrees with this accusation, but they haven't backed down yet.

"Trademark owners have a duty to protect their marks and should enforce their rights," said Angela Bozzuti, an associate specializing in trademark law at Davis & Gilbert LLP in New York City. "Trademarks are source identifiers and are often among a company's most valuable assets. If they allow third parties to infringe their trademark rights without taking action, they can eventually lose their marks."

As it stands now, the two companies are preparing to go to court in Sweden (where Mojang is based, and where the company filed the trademark application). We'll let you know what happens with this unfortunately necessary case.

# Gesticulated simplicity

Ubisoft claims to know what it is that people want from Kinect titles. With their big line-up of Kinect-enabled titles due for release this holiday season, Ubisoft's SVP of sales and marketing Tony Key thought it a good idea to sit down and have a chat with *Gamasutra* to discuss some of Kinect's limitations and what they think people want from the device.

"The fact is that the simple gestures are what people want out of a Kinect right now," said Key when asked why their titles feature conservative movements. "We're not all ballet dancers, we don't have perfect control over our bodies and stuff. So I think simplicity is what makes the game more appealing in most cases."

Key says that one of the reasons Ubisoft doesn't have any core games for the device "is because of the time and intensity it would take to try and match exactly what a controller does." Still, they're doing a motion-tech test run with one of their hardcore titles, *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier*, which incorporates Kinect in limited ways.

"The gunsmith is an added benefit [to *Ghost Recon*] that Kinect can bring. Building Kinect functionality into a core game is still something we're all toying with, because we still have to decide how does it really improve the experience? If it doesn't improve the experience, then what's the point? The gamers won't support it anyway."

## Skyward Sword the "biggest project" Nintendo has ever done

Fans have waited ages for a Wii-centric *Legend of Zelda* title, which we're finally getting with *Skyward Sword*. Nintendo seems confident that the title will have been worth the wait, saying that the game is the company's biggest project to date.

"This is the biggest project that Nintendo has ever done, videogame wise," said Nintendo of America's David Young. "A gigantic team of people have been creating this game for months, having put tons of hours into it."

"The great thing about *Legend Of Zelda: Skyward Sword* is that it's filled with content so as you're going through exploring dungeons from place to place you're going to find tons of different things to explore, see and collect."

## Hail to the DLC, baby

// *Duke Nukem Forever* bombed; most people hated it (we didn't, but that's why we're so special), and the market uptake after the first round of purchases was lax to say the least, but that hasn't stopped Gearbox from releasing a multiplayer DLC pack entitled *Hail to the Icons Parody Pack*.

If the name confuses you, then maybe the new map names will help clarify the issue: 2Forts1Bridge, Inferno and Call of Duke. A fourth map, Sandpit, sees mini-Dukes running around a children's sandpit. New weapons include the "N00b T00b" and "DFG". The pack will also include three new game modes – Freeze Tag, Hot Potato (where the potato is actually a babe), and a free-for-all Hail to the King mode.

*Hail to the Icons* will be available by time you read this, and will cost $10/800MSP or absolutely nothing to members of Duke Nukem's First Access Club. It will also bring with it a few bug fixes and optimisations, including texture-streaming improvements on Xbox 360 and reduced loading time on both consoles.

// If an accidentally published press release for the French version of the novel *Halo: Cryptum* is to be believed, Microsoft could be working with director Steven Spielberg and Dreamworks **to produce a *Halo* film**. This could very-well be a rejuvenated effort to produce a film based on the *Halo* series of books, and to expand the universe outside of the games. If you see the name Niell Blomkamp resurface anywhere in the next few months, don't be surprised.

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# E-LAWN

I must be getting older. There was a time when generating vitriol for the things that piss me off was easy. It would ooze out of me like a black sweat of venom and unrequited love. Now I just get mild indigestion or heartburn when something rubs me the wrong way. I'm not complacent, far from it. I still want to grab people by the shoulders and shake them while screaming.

Take bro gamers for example. They're not a new phenomenon, just more prolific lately. Bro gamers play only bro games, and then complain that they're getting bored of games. Try to get them to play a game that actually challenges them, and they sulk. Bro gamers don't like real challenge, and get frustrated by failure very easily. Sniping n00bs in the head isn't a real challenge. Finishing a corridor shooter or cover-based shooter, not a challenge. Finishing something like *Demon's Souls*, that's a challenge. If you disagree, perhaps you need to check yourself for traces of bro.

> **"Error! Hyperlink reference not valid."**

But who cares, right? Part of the problem is the general ennui in the gaming world. Trend gamers have a one-year memory. They're blindly brand/franchise loyal. They've been trained to only care about something vehemently for about six months. After that, it's on to only caring about the next big title on the horizon.

Makes me think of the recent *Deus Ex* spin-off. People need to stop calling things reboots when they're actually spin-offs. Anyway, decent game, no argument. In two years, nobody will even remember it. And yet the game that inspired the first-person spin-off is still important even today. Not because it was a first-person shooter, but because it was *different*.

The current trend of making everything an FPS is annoying. For publishers it's safe, easy money. The conventions are established, the market wants what's safe and reassuring. For an Actual Gamer, it's weak sauce, boring and unimaginative.

A good FPS is fun, no argument there. But gamers don't just play FPS. Look at the new *Syndicate* reboo...spin-off. The *Syndicate* first-person spin-off looks great. I love that dubstep artist Skrillex is doing the theme **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** The return of the female handler voice is slick, awesome, and totally appropriate.

But it's a side-story, a spin-off, an "inspired by". Part of what got gaming started was genre diversity. The original *Syndicate* took what *Cannon Fodder* started and made it fresh. It practically invented a new genre. It's a pity publishers, those guys with the billions of dollars, don't bother with it. Genres other than FPS, that is.

And that's the thing about gaming in the '80s and '90s, really. It was an explosion of innovation, genre, and experimentation. Yes, the indie scene is doing a great job of keeping that spirit alive even now. And considering how successful the indie not-an-FPS games have been, it makes me wonder.

I'm not against taking a game and putting it in a different genre. It worked well for Metroid if you look at *Metroid Prime*. It worked for *Duke Nukem* when he went 3D (the first time). Would it work for *Commander Keen*? I almost wish someone would try it.

The new *Syndicate* will bring the theme of the original to a new generation of gamers. What would have been more impressive is if it had brought the original's genre. The isometric squad-based real-time action genre isn't dead. It's just being ignored by developers who don't get to make their own choices.

**Miktar Dracon**

# id's Rage had a rocky launch on PC

FPS veterans id Software haven't had the greatest launch for the PC version of their newest IP, *Rage*. Thanks to some ATI/AMD driver issues, people have been experiencing a bunch of challenges getting the game to run, while others have given up entirely, opting to sit tight until the game is patched up.

John Carmack issued a statement sometime after the game launched, citing bad timing and incorrect drivers being released as the main culprits:

"The driver issues at launch have been a real cluster !@#$. We were quite happy with the performance improvements that we had made on AMD hardware in the months before launch... When launch day came around and the wrong driver got released, half of our PC customers got a product that basically didn't work... Unfortunately, we have had video driver issues that have caused problems and frustrations with our PC fans. Everyone at id Software is very upset by these issues which are mostly out of our control."

One of the biggest issues PC gamers took umbrage with was the lack of in-game, graphic tweaking options. The fact that one of the platform's champion developers had opted to leave this PC gaming staple out of *Rage* certainly didn't win id any fans. Fortunately the game has since been patched and graphic options have been added to the in-game menus, albeit very few when compared to other PC titles.

Despite all of this, *Rage* is a mutant butt-load of fun to play. You can check out our initial verdict of the game over on NAG Online (**www.nag.co.za**) or you can sit tight for the December issue when we'll give you our final verdict.

# Goooooaaaaalllll!

Universal truth: people love the balls out of any game bearing the FIFA logo. Their supreme popularity has once again struck home with the latest offering from EA Sports' biggest brand. *FIFA 12* had the highest first-week sales figures of any sports game to come before it, and to date it's the highest-selling game of 2011.

EA estimates that, between 27 September and 2 October 2011, *FIFA 12* sold a completely bonkers 3.2 million copies. This means, if EA's estimations are indeed correct, sales are up something like 23% compared to last year's record-hammering *FIFA 11* launch. Sorry, *Gears of War 3* – it seems your time in the limelight as the highest-selling game of 2011 (with three million week-one sales) was to be incredibly short lived.

EA released some other interesting stats, just to truly cement the game's success in our brains. *FIFA 12* had sold 879,000 copies on iPhone and iPad at the time of this reveal, for example. That, and October 1st was the busiest day for online sporting in EA history. On that day, ten million EA Sports game sessions were had, with *FIFA 12* accounting for eight million of those sessions.

Man, people really go mad for this whole football thing, don't they...

# Sony plans to continue spitting on your used games

Online Passes! Project Ten Dollar! Whatever name publishers choose to give this system (whereby gamers who purchase used games are punished by having to pay to access the online components of their second-hand title of choice), the sentiment remains the same: they're tired of not making any cash from the used-game market.

Sony recently jumped on the bandwagon with *Resistance 3*, which comes packing a single-use code that has to be input before you're allowed access to the game's fun-tastic multiplayer arena. Buying the game used means you're forced to fork over more dough to access that part of the game. They've now confirmed that the hugely anticipated *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* will also use Sony's Online Pass. Moreover, they've implied that all future first-party Sony titles that feature online functionality will utilise the system.

From the same statement which brought news of *Uncharted 3*'s Online Pass: "Online Pass will be incorporated into ... future Sony Computer Entertainment Worldwide Studios games with online functionality." Love it or hate it (although, who are we kidding – there's no reason to love it, unless maybe you work for Sony, but we're sure even Sony employees love a good used game as much as the next cash-strapped gamer), it seems Sony's sticking to their single-use code guns.

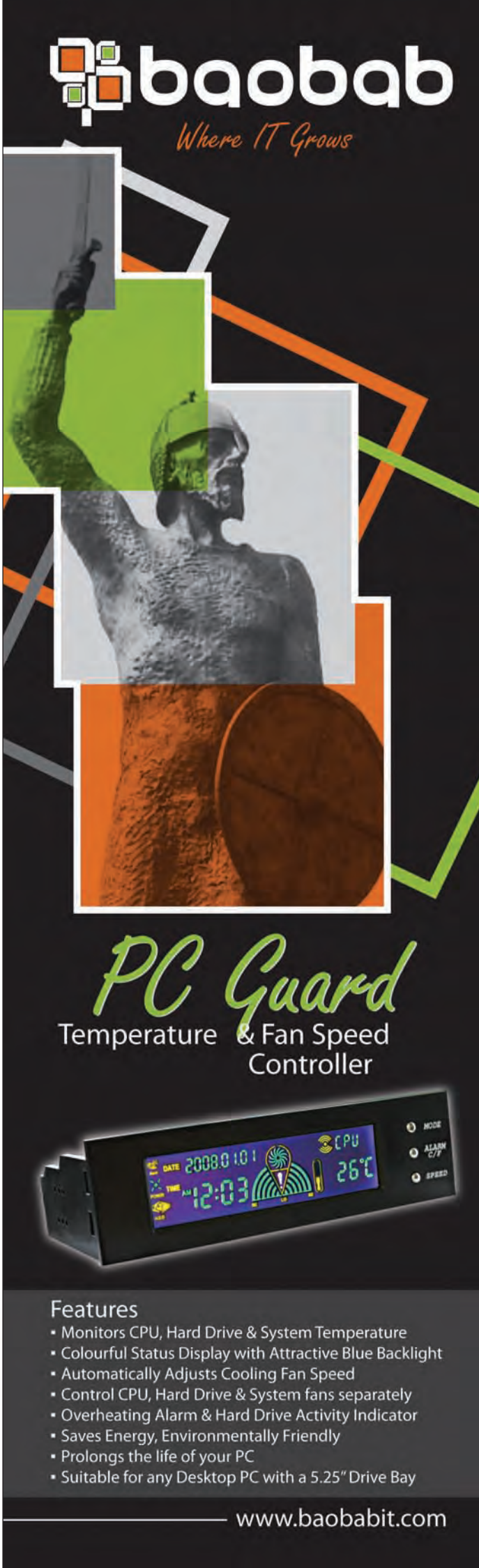
# Lady Popular degrades female gamers for free

A free-to-play online game called *Lady Popular* has been retched up from a developer known as XS Software. Alarmingly, the game has already chalked up 74,000 "Likes" on Facebook, further cementing our opinion that the internet is an arid wasteland populated by people incapable of cognitive functioning any higher than what's required to produce bowel movements.

*Lady Popular* is designed "for girls" and looks like an online paper doll... thing. It's basically loaded with as much subversively demeaning content as you can imagine, all wrapped up in pinks, purples and avatars with lips so plump they look like they've gone twelve rounds with Mike Tyson, or Chris Brown if you want to continue with the whole "demeaning the female population" overtone.

Why should you, girl gamer, play *Lady Popular*? The game's homepage distils that answer into six easy to read points because, you know, your brain is obviously not capable of anything more than six simple points. Some of our favourites include "Dress up, make up and style yourself every day!" and "Dance, party and get a boyfriend." The particular favourite, however, is "Become a talented and successful lady online."

**BELOW:**
**A typical example of a popular lady.**



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## 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

# Two more games you won't have to pay for

It seems like every month we write about one or another MMO going free-to-play. This month is special, however, because now we're writing about two!

First up is *Neverwinter*, which hasn't even been released yet. This title, in development by Cryptic Studios (who apparently just can't get enough of free MMOs) was originally designed as an RPG with multiplayer aspects, but has now shifted focus to become a fully-fledged F2P MMORPG with the obligatory optional premium purchases. The game will reportedly play out in a similar manner to *Vindictus* or *Rusty Hearts*, and, as its name implies, is based on the D&D role-playing model.

The floundering *DC Universe Online* is also undergoing a transformation into F2P within less than a year since its release. The game will make use of three ranks of player: Free players pay nothing and can create up to two characters, have 28 inventory slots and 12 bank slots, and will not be able to trade at all – directly, through the mail system or through the auction house. Those players who spend just $5 on premium content or expanded character/inventory slots (it's not yet clear if that's once-off or once per month), will automatically be granted four additional character slots, and will be limited to 42/24 inventory and bank slots respectively. These "Premium" users will also be able to trade items (not cash) through the auction house, mail system and direct character interaction. Lastly, "Legendary" players can choose to cough up $15 a month and have access to everything the game has to offer, including 16 character slots, full trading and unlimited in-game currency.

Sony Entertainment Online is obviously hopeful that this move to F2P is the kick in the pants that *DC Universe Online* needs to thrive. We'd argue that expanding their potential market by an amount of "every Xbox 360 that's online" wouldn't hurt either, but that's just wishful thinking.

## Oh boy, is S.T.A.L.K.E.R. 2 going to need a permanent internet connection?

Developer GSC Game World has recently caused a bit of a stir when a Ukrainian publication quoted Studio Director Sergey Grigorovich as saying that the game will require "permanent internet access." Piracy is a massive concern for the developer, which points towards rampant piracy levels in Russia and eastern European countries as the primary issue.

"Protection from piracy? Part of the content will be located on the server and downloaded as the game progresses. Permanent internet access is required. Text information, code and quests will be loaded through that connection."

The good news is that GSC scrambled to do some damage control soon after this news was made public. The development team issued a further statement saying that they were still trying to decide what form the DRM would take or if it was going to be included at all. However, this same statement reiterated their concern about piracy, but they insisted that Grigorovich's comment on "permanent internet access" was "a possibility, not a choice."

## We are like U now!

// When all is said and done, the Wii U's big thing is that it uses a controller that has a touch screen. This is awesome and unique, yes? Sorry Nintendo, not any longer, as Sony now claims that the upcoming PS Vita's new trick is that it can do the exact same thing with the PS3. The two basic functions include using the Vita as a primary display, streaming data via Wi-Fi to the device from the PS3, as well as using it as a secondary display for those games that support it, including making use of its touch screen.

Obviously, the library of games that will make use of these features will be small, but we expect at least most of Sony's first-party offerings to do so. Not only is this a great way to sell PS Vitas to existing PS3 owners, but it's effectively creating a relatively affordable upgrade for the console to expand its functionality in a huge way. This is a concept that console manufacturers have struggled to correctly implement almost since their inception, so we'll definitely keep an eye on how this feature progresses.

In related news, Xbox 360 can now interface with Windows Phone 7, allowing you to use your phone to navigate through the Dashboard (and only the Dashboard). You know, because using your phone as a remote control is so much more convenient than a regular controller.

W12
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Badder
Better
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Wii
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THQ
PAL
Nintendo
Wii
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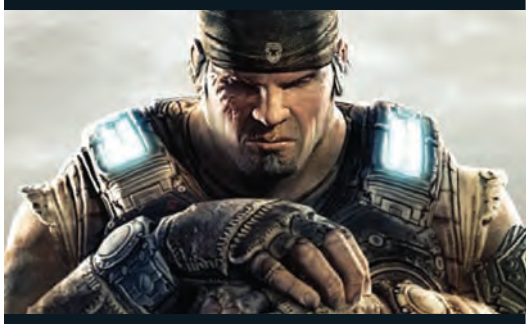
# Split-screen Gears of War 3 kills Xbox 360 profiles



Ouch, there's a rather unpleasant bug that's been giving the folks over at Epic Games some sleepless nights. Xbox 360 owners have been complaining on the Epic forums that playing *Gears of War 3* in split-screen mode causes profiles to become damaged and unusable for any further play sessions. People are reporting all manner of profile-specific glitches but they all seem to be the result of using two profiles to play split-screen, rather than one profile and one guest account.

The game modes triggering this bug vary from playing through the campaign to playing waves of Horde. Once the bug hits, at least one of the two profiles being used becomes unusable in *Gears of War 3*; what's more all stats and progress is reset. Those actually able to load up a new game are greeted with all sorts of numbers on the screen before the game freezes and they're forced to reset their consoles.

Epic Games became aware of this bug through the forums and put together a lengthy questionnaire for those hit with this issue. Hopefully by the time you read this the problem will be sorted out through a software update. If you haven't been forced to download an update in the last three weeks (or even worse, if your Xbox 360 is not connected to the internet at all) then you might want to reconsider diving into some split-screen *Gears 3* with your little brother.

# Disney files trademark for Castle of Illusion

Anyone else here remember *Castle of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse*? We wouldn't be surprised if you don't: it's been 21 years to the month (assuming you're reading this in November 2011) since the game first saw release on the SEGA Genesis/Mega Drive. It was an excellent little platformer starring Disney's favourite mouse as he tried to rescue Minnie Mouse from an evil witch named Mizrabel. It was also an enchantingly pretty game – or it was back in 1990, at least.

Now, *Siliconera* reports that Disney's filed a new trademark request (specifically targeted at videogames) for *Castle of Illusion*, which could point to a couple of possibilities. Perhaps it's a brand new game (something to do with an *Epic Mickey* sequel, maybe?), or it could be the original title re-released on a new platform. Virtual Console, iPhone, whatever – the point is that Disney's got something planned with this, and we expect to learn more about it in the future.

## Look & Listen

**Pre-orders / www.lookandlisten.co.za**

### PC

| | |
|---|---|
| L.A. Noire | November 4th |
| Anno 2070 | November 18th |
| The Lord of the Rings: War in the North | December 1st |

### Xbox 360

| | |
|---|---|
| Ben 10: Galactic Racing | November 11th |
| Assassin's Creed: Revelations | November 15th |
| Saints Row: The Third | November 18th |

### PS3

| | |
|---|---|
| Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 | November 8th |
| The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim | November 11th |
| Need for Speed: The Run | November 18th |

### Wii

| | |
|---|---|
| Happy Feet Two | November |
| X-Men: Destiny | November 4th |
| Puss in Boots | November 25th |

### 3DS

| | |
|---|---|
| Generator Rex: Agent of Providence | November 11th |
| Michael Jackson: The Experience | November 11th |
| Zoo Mania | November 11th |

### DS

| | |
|---|---|
| Zoobles Bundle | November 4th |
| Bakugan: Rise of the Resistance | November 14th |
| SpongeBob's Surf & Skate Roadtrip | November 25th |

### Kinect

| | |
|---|---|
| Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2012 | November 11th |
| The Black Eyed Peas Experience | November 11th |
| Big League Sports | November 11th |

# More undead rising from the East

// The Yakuza series is a bit of strange sort of beast. Within the safe confines of Japan, the series has enjoyed immense popularity, but most of us Westerners are a little too far west to fully understand or appreciate its nuances. Not that this really bothers SEGA, but they might have finally found a way to help the rest of the world get to grips with the sixth instalment in the series, *Ryu ga Gotoku of the End*, or, mercifully, *Yakuza: Dead Souls*.

Due for release Stateside in March 2012 (with the Euro (and us!) release hopefully on its tail), *Yakuza: Dead Souls* drops the serious business of running the Yakuza during normal operating hours in place of killing lots of zombies in the middle of a zombie apocalypse. The main gameplay will be adapted to accommodate this change in pace and combat, with a mix of the series' classic hand-to-hand fighting with third-person shooting action. The game will feature a number of minigames including billiards and darts, and will allow players to craft and upgrade their weapons.

Multiple playable characters are on offer from the series, with four confirmed at this stage: Kazuma Kiryu, Goro Majima, Shun Akiyama and Ryuji Goda. Each character will have its own unique talents and weapon preferences like dual pistols, shotguns, or Ryuji's arm-mounted Gatling gun, the last of which is a feature quite prevalent in games these days.

Those worried that this kind of insanity will break the carefully-crafted storyline of the series can rest easy: this won't be a core title.

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# 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** with the subject line **'November Scarlett'** and don't get it wrong or deleted it will be.

# October Winner

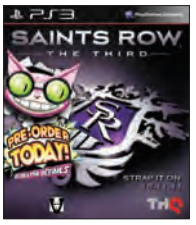
Page 60. No Winner this month. Scarlett wins!

# Win!

An Inflatable Kart for the Wii valued at R579.99. Sponsored by Bowline and CTA Digital.

# 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 *Saints Row: The Third* for PS3 from Ster-Kinekor Entertainment. Send your captions to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line 'November Caption'.



**NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT AT HUMOUR /** Heard at the watercooler: So I was all like, "Braaaaaains!" and she was all like, "No."

**LAST MONTHS WINNER /** "The next-gen of Whack-a-mole ".

**- Bruce Peters**

"We hope that with the announcement that ***L.A. Noire*** **is coming to PC, and the knowledge that our next big game *Max Payne 3* will have a PC release,** we can finally put to rest any misconceptions that we've 'abandoned the PC platform."

**-Rockstar Games**

// In typical Nintendo tradition, **there will soon be a white 3DS available**, in Japan, at least. It's called "Ice White" and it looks sexy, so we hope to see it release over in this part of the world soon. With all the issues that Nintendo has had getting the 3DS into peoples' hands, we're not sure if an extended range of colours is quite what they need, but this could be a decent start.

// *World of Goo* is a fantastic little indie title with physics-based puzzles that involve you connecting together blobs of goo to allow them to escape to freedom, but if you didn't already know that then there's something horribly wrong with you. No matter though, because if you own an Android device, then **you'll "soon" be able to play this gem**, according to a vague blog post by the game's creator – a chap known as 2D Boy. How soon remains to be seen, but the game will be available for both mobile phones and tablets that run Android.

// Not that this should surprise anyone (although it'll probably make you a little bit sad), but *Diablo III* won't be released this year. Instead, **Blizzard has confirmed that it's "aiming" to release the game in early 2012**, which is the closest thing to a release date we've ever seen from the publishers. The game is currently in beta and from the way things look, it'll stay that way close to the game's release, so keep an eye on the beta status for an indication of when exactly the game will launch.

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CALL OF DUTY MW3
ETA: 8.11.11
JOIN US FOR THE MIDNIGHT LAUNCH 7.11.11

# Kojima wants Metal Gear to continue after his death

Series creator and Vice President of Konami, Hideo Kojima, wants the *Metal Gear Solid* franchise to continue even after he's six feet under. This will obviously be possible because he's been pouring all of the profits from the game series into research that'll ultimately allow his head to live on in a jar, just like in the TV series *Futurama*. There, from the safe confines of his watery home, Kojima will continue to guide the development process of future *Metal Gear Solid* games until humanity wipes itself from the face of the planet, or he finally cracks after making *Metal Gear Solid 901*.

None of this is true, except for that bit about him wanting the series to live on after he's pegged: "First of all, I just want to say that as long as there are fans who want *Metal Gear Solid*, as a producer, I will always want to still make them and I want the series to continue. So even after I die, I still would love to have the Metal Gear Solid series continue."

Kojima realises that continuing to expand on the official canon of the game is a recipe for creative burnout, so he has visions of passing the numerical Metal Gear Solid games onto a new producer, so that he can presumably focus on other *Metal Gear spin*-offs.

# Console Crysis

For those of you who don't already know (shame on you), the original *Crysis* is now available on your friendly neighbourhood consoles. If you log into PSN or XBL right now, you can nab a copy for $20, or 1,600 MS Points. Even with the visual downgrade, it's still an excellent game and well worth checking out to see what all the fuss was about if you didn't have a PC capable of powering Russia when it was initially released. Bear in mind that it doesn't bring the original game's multiplayer mode along for the ride.

# Release List

BL GAMES™

Dates subject to change without notice

## November: Week 1

| | |
|---|---|
| Raving Rabbids: Alive & Kicking | 360 |
| L.A. Noire | PC |
| GoldenEye 007: Reloaded | 360 / PS3 |
| Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception | PS3 |
| The Lord of the Rings: War in the North | PC / 360 / PS3 |
| Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games | Wii / 3DS |
| Just Dance Kids 2 | 360 / PS3 / Wii |
| LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7 | PC / 360 / PS3 / Wii PS2 / 3DS / DS / PSP |
| Happy Feet Two | 360 / PS3 / Wii / 3DS / DS |
| Disney Universe | PC / 360 / PS3 / Wii |
| Pro Evolution Soccer 2012 | Wii |

## November: Week 2

| | |
|---|---|
| Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 | PC / 360 / PS3 / Wii / DS |
| Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2012 | 360 |
| Sonic Generations | PC / 360 / PS3 / 3DS |
| Ben 10: Galactic Racing | 360 / PS3 / Wii / 3DS / DS |
| The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim | PC / 360 / PS3 |

## November: Week 3

| | |
|---|---|
| Assassin's Creed: Revelations | 360 / PS3 |
| Cabela's Survival: Shadows of Katmai | 360 / PS3 / Wii |
| Anno 2070 | PC |
| Need for Speed: The Run | PC / 360 / PS3 / Wii / 3DS |
| Disneyland Adventures | 360 |
| Halo: Combat Evolved Anniversary | 360 |
| Start the Party! 2 | PS3 |
| Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3 | 360 / PS3 |
| Saints Row: The Third | PC / 360 / PS3 |
| Marvel Super Hero Squad: Comic Combat | 360 / PS3 / Wii |

## November: Week 4

| | |
|---|---|
| Rayman Origins | 360 / PS3 / Wii |
| WWE '12 | 360 / PS3 / Wii |
| Metal Gear Solid HD Collection | 360 / PS3 |
| Silent Hill: Downpour | 360 / PS3 |
| Tekken Hybrid | PS3 |

# UE3 caught flashing in public

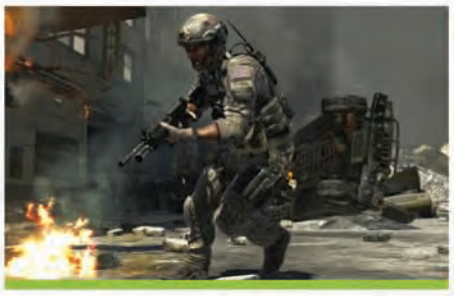
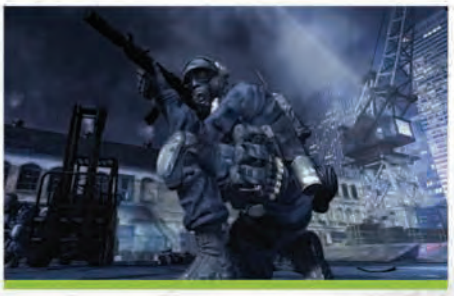
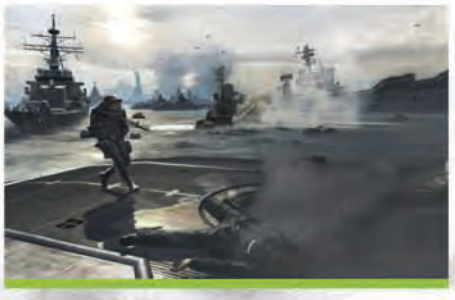
// Indie-loved development framework Unity allows people to develop games on almost every current platform imaginable, and because of that, it's been pulling in a lot of interest from both indie and published developers alike. Well, *UT3* developer Epic Games isn't having any of it, and to ensure that they hang on to the cross-platform development framework crown, has released a demonstration showing off Unreal Engine 3 running in Adobe Flash. Obviously the implications of this are pretty big, as web-based gaming continues to gain popularity, developers already familiar with UE3 can take their expertise and go toe-to-toe with the likes of *Farmville*, or, we guess, more appropriately *Quake Live*.

Then, all of a sudden, Crytek, who would quite happily take Epic's place as masters of game engine sales, announced that they've been thinking about much the same sort of thing.

"It is an interesting approach we've been investigating as well," Carl Jones, director of global business development for CryEngine, said of Epic's announcement. "We're developing a unifying technology to create high quality social and gaming experiences on all platforms including browser, smartphones, tablets, etc. We hope to be able to tell you more about it soon when we present our truly cross-platform solution."

# CALL OF DUTY®
# MW3

## 08.11.11

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# Top 8 things that existed at rAge 2011

If you missed our annual rAge expo, a) you shouldn't tell people, because they might let off a judgemental giggle at your expense and/or never speak to you again, b) what the hell is wrong with you, and c) you were absent from one hell of a gaming and technology extravaganza – the best we've ever played host to, in our opinion. We're about to highlight some of our favourite things that made this year's expo better than all that came before, so that your mind can be post-blown. We hope to see you next year, so you can experience all this and more for yourself. To those who did attend: thanks for your support in making the rAge weekend one to remember!

## 8 Overclocking

There's something endlessly fascinating about watching a bunch of mad scientist-type peeps going all liquid nitrogen over an expensive piece of PC hardware in the pursuit of legendary performance gains. rAge loves overclockers, and overclockers love rAge.

## 7 The loot

Stats reveal that 99.87%* of all rAge attendees walked away with at least one item that they didn't have to hand over any money for. Free stuff is automatically better than non-free stuff, and there was enough random free stuff at rAge this year to keep the entire population of Yugoslavia** glowing with glee.

*** 92.8% of all statistics are made up on the spot**
**** Excluding males over the age of 78 and hermaphrodites.**

## 6 The NAG Chill Lounge

(which you probably didn't know even existed)

Tucked away from prying eyes in a top-secret location within the Coca-Cola Dome lay this wonderful chill room guarded by men with extremely large guns and vicious pocket attack dogs. Officially it was a place for exhausted important people to take a load off and get away from the noise, madness and awesomeness of rAge for a moment. Unofficially it was the ultimate in candy distribution, plastic ant infestations and free booze. Also, bean-bag chairs!

## 5 Cosplay

From the weird, to the wonderful, to the insane, to the downright impressive, this year's cosplayers really took their craft to a whole new level. We salute you! Also, to the guys who took part in that epic medieval sword-fighting exhibition thingy, just remember: it's all fun and games until someone loses a testicle. Seriously though, you're all awesome.

## 4 Booth babes

No gaming expo is complete without a stunning array of gorgeous ladies in very evocative clothing to flaunt products that they know little to nothing about. That's okay though – the only question they're ever asked involves contact details (or underwear), so product savvy isn't exactly a prerequisite. Oh, and would anyone who knows the Lara Croft who worked the Kaspersky stand please give her this message: we found your wallet, and we'd all love for you to come collect it in person [*ask for Michael James, Ed*].

One of these is not a booth babe.

## 3 International developers

This year's show received greater international recognition than ever before. You want proof? Just ask the international developers who were there to demo various games, give behind-closed-doors presentations and just enjoy the whole rAge vibe. Their presence is testament to how gaming on the southern tip of Africa is rapidly growing.

## 2 LAN dedication

This year's NAG LAN tickets sold out in record time. 2196 gamers and their expensive hardware flocked to the Dome, with the first LANner arriving at 10pm the night before the event began to kick off the LAN queue. Add in a number of epic displays of competitive gaming (like our very own NAG Gaming League, the finals of which were played on the main stage) taking place within the LAN, and you've got the recipe for gaming win. We take our hats off to you, you smelly bunch of glorious gamers – we'll see you all again next year.

## 1 The zombie horde

Every year, the horde gathers outside the Dome's entrances. Every year, you can smell the anticipation and excitement exuding from them. This year was no different. These are the real heroes of rAge – the attendees, the gamers, the fanatics and everyone in between. YOU, dear readers and expo-goers, are the real heroes of rAge.

# MACH

We're going to take you back to biblical times, circa 1996, a clan at a LAN recording a demo during a multiplayer session of *Quake*. The map is DM6 ("The Dark Zone") and Clan Rangers are creating history. While they might not have known it at the time, their antics would go on to become what is generally regarded as the first "machinima": a real-time "movie", and the start of an entire industry.

## MACHINIMA?

The word "machinima" is a misspelled portmanteau* of "machine" + "cinema". Before Clan Rangers made their "Diary of a Camper" demo file, most in-game recordings were either speed-runs or stunt-runs.

Speed-runs are when someone tries to get from A to B, usually the start of a level and its end, in the shortest, most economical and optimized path as possible. Players would take advantage of weird engine quirks, movement gimmicks and level layout oddities. Nowadays speed-runs are increasingly "tool assisted", slowing the game down so players can make micro-decisions every second. The end result – when played back at normal speed – looks impressive, but isn't quite as cool as doing it "in the real". A good example of a classic speed-run is the "Quake Done Quick" series, with "Quake Done Quicker" **(www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpUbyirG2xU)** managing to finish the entire game in 17 minutes, and on Nightmare Difficulty no less.

Stunt-runs are when someone tries to get from A to B with as much flair as possible, or manoeuvre into a weird place the game developers never intended players to go. In the multiplayer map "The Edge" for *Quake 2*, there was a specific location in the central courtyard where if one did some creative rocket/grenade jumping, they could pop into the skybox and crouch-walk around in the air, raining LOL-grenades down on everyone before getting rail-gunned like a turkey.

Back then in the pre-YouTube dark ages, the Internet was slow and dumb, so people couldn't send each other videos. Instead, demo files – being a series of recorded actions instead of frame-by-frame captures – were distributed over the Internet. Demo recordings were small, but you had to actually own the game they were from if you wanted to see them.

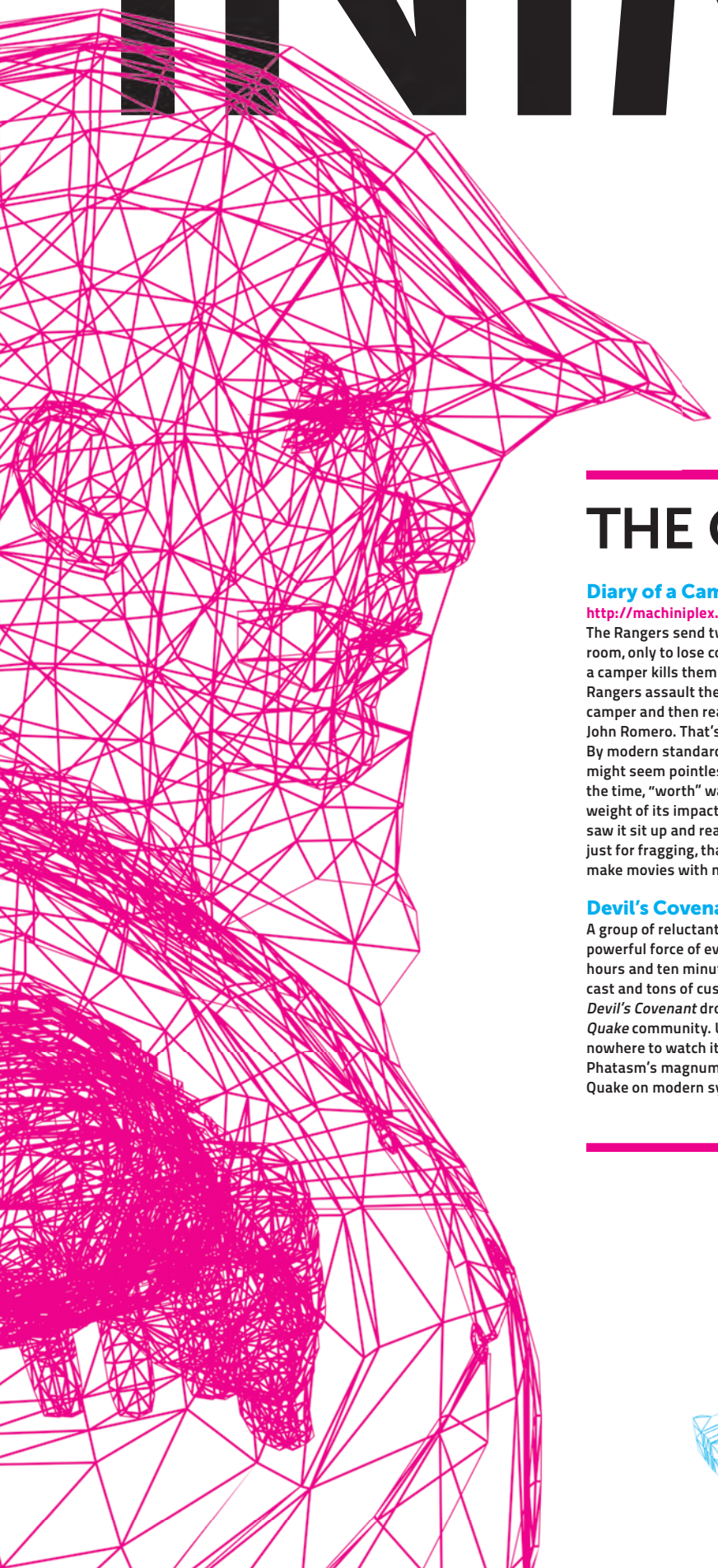
## PRE-HISTORY

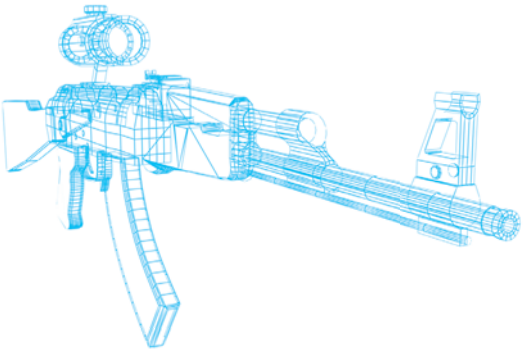
Real-time "movies" did exist before "Diary of a Camper", but they were simplistic affairs mostly focused on technical prowess instead of trying to build a narrative. During the 1980s, software crackers used to add custom credit sequences known as "intros" to programs whose copy protection they had circumvented. As computers became more powerful, those intros become more involved and eventually the "demo scene" formed around just building the intros instead of cracks. The demo scene prided itself on creating complex real-time visuals and 3D demos, many of the elite demo coders would move on to become the programming backbone of today's game developers.

What did set machinima apart from the artistically-bent demo scene was the emphasis on plot, having "actors" and being quite silly. After "Diary of a Camper", everyone and their brother got in on the action, because everyone had a dumb idea for a silly movie. What Clan Rangers did, was impress upon people that *anyone* could make a movie: all you needed was *Quake*, some time and if you were up for it, a little know-how to add that extra bit of oomph. Overnight, players became performers. That same year, machinima got its first two-hour long feature-length *Quake* movie, "Devil's Covenant", and a barrage of strange, silly, hilarious, and epic attempts at movie-making.

***A portmanteau is a blend of two (or more) words into one new word, typically combining both sounds and meanings. Like smog, coined by blending smoke and fog.**

# INIMA





## THE CORNERSTONES

### Diary of a Camper (1996)

http://machiniplex.net/classics.php?id=6

The Rangers send two scouts to the rocket room, only to lose contact with them after a camper kills them both. The remaining Rangers assault the rocket room, kill the camper and then realise that the camper was John Romero. That's the plot.

By modern standards, "Diary of a Camper" might seem pointless and primitive but at the time, "worth" was measured more by the weight of its impact. It made everyone who saw it sit up and realise that *Quake* wasn't just for fragging, that it could be used to make movies with narrative.

### Devil's Covenant (1998)

A group of reluctant heroes encounter a powerful force of evil and must survive. Two hours and ten minutes long with a full voice cast and tons of custom-made content, *Devil's Covenant* dropped a bombshell on the *Quake* community. Unfortunately, there is nowhere to watch it online and getting Clan Phatasm's magnum opus to work right in Quake on modern systems is difficult at best.

### Operation Bay Shield (1997)

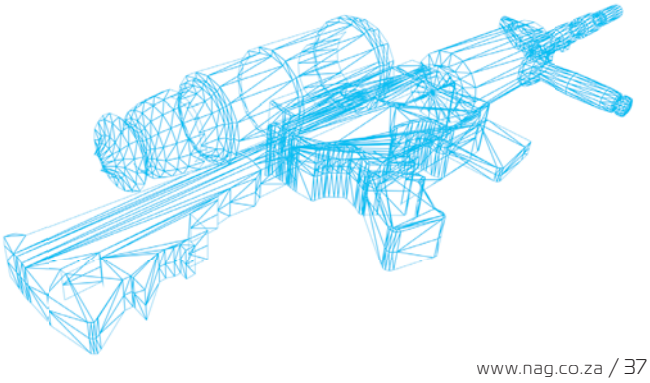
http://machiniplex.net/classics.php?id=7

Terrorists are planning to blow the actors of *Baywatch* using an "MMX chemical bomb". Only a special task force can take out the terrorists, but in doing so they gas Big Jim's girlfriend (a goat). Deathmatch ensues. With custom-written QuakeC scripts, voice acting and special modifications to the game to provide a primitive form of lip syncing, the dumb humour of "Operation Bay Shield" hit all the right notes in the late 1990s. "Hey, what comes from outer space and has three balls? ET, the Extra Testicle."

### Blahbalicious (1997)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqGIIoSSQQ8

With no real plot to speak of, "Blahblahlicious" is a collection of loosely-linked sketches. Described by creator Wendigo as "two fat guys watching TV and flipping through the channels," its absurdist unconventional humour should be familiar to anyone who's seen *Robot Chicken*. The movie used many new models and maps, getting it a lot of attention at the time.

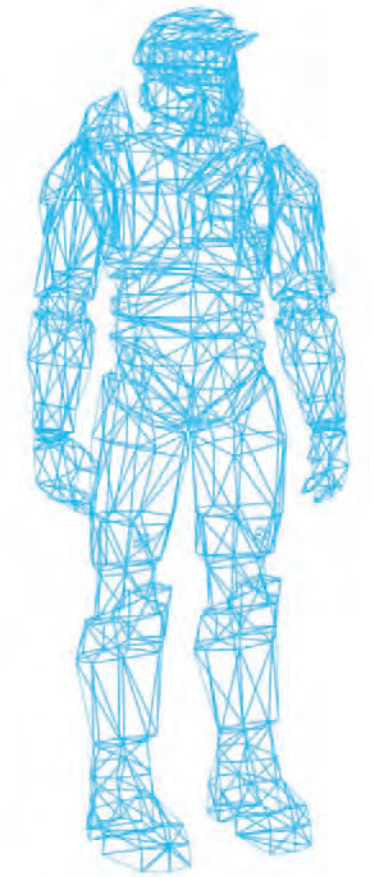


Operation Bayshield

Red vs. Blue

Make Love, Not Warcraft

Legend of Karl



# POP CULTURE

### South Park

**www.southparkstudios.com/full-episodes/s10e08-make-love-not-warcraft**

**In episode 147, "Make Love, Not Warcraft", South Park creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone worked with Blizzard to create a series of machinima animations for the episode. The fictional Sword of a Thousand Truths in the episode actually appears several times in *World of Warcraft*, more recently as the Slayer of the Lifeless (a reference to the line within the episode, "How do you kill that which has no life?").**

### Video Mods

**www.youtube.com/results?search_query=mtv2+video+mods&aq=f**

**Between 2004 and 2005, MTV2 ran a series of music-videos remade using machinima, using characters from games like *SSX3*, *Sims* and *Need for Speed*. Blink 182's "All the Small Things" was re-envisioned in *SpongeBob SquarePants: Lights, Camera, Pants!* While popular, the series was short-lived due to the time and costs involved.**

# THE BIG BOYS

### Red vs. Blue

**http://roosterteeth.com**

**Using Adobe Premiere Pro to add letterboxing to hide the camera player's HUD, Rooster Teeth Productions took *Halo* and turned it into a 9-season long comedy sci-fi. Two opposing teams fight a civil war in Blood Gulch, hilarity ensues. The team pre-records dialogue, and then jumps into *Halo* to "act out" the scenes. Rooster Teeth sells DVDs of their *Red vs. Blue* series and, under sponsorship from Electronic Arts, helped to promote *The Sims 2* by using the game to make a machinima series, "The Strangerhood".**

### Legend of Karl

**www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8AMMgZHoQ0**

**To help sell gamers on their upcoming stat-tracking weapon-load out-creating fully-featured-tournament website Elite for *Call of Duty*, Activision enlisted the help of the fictional "theLEGENDofKARL", a super-fanboy gamer who lives and breathes *Call of Duty*.**

## GOLDEN AGE

When "Diary of a Camper" was made, there were no tools to edit demo files. If you wanted to splice scenes together or change the camera angle or add effects, you had to write your own programs to do so (which one of the members of Clan Rangers actually did). By the time *Quake 2* came around, more advanced tools started appearing on the Internet and non-linear editing became possible. *Unreal Tournament* came bundled with a host of tools to facilitate machinima-making, because by then even game-developers were making in-engine real-time cut scenes for their games and thus needed their own tools to do so.

Fast-forward even more, and contemporary machinima is practically invisible to most people. In Lionhead's movie studio management simulator *The Movies*, players could jigsaw-puzzle together their own movies by using a large vocabulary of verbs and scenes. Comedy-act Rooster Teeth is on its 9th season of the popular *Red vs. Blue* machinima made in *Halo*. Most games use real-time cut scenes. For a while (2002 - 2008) the Academy of Machinima Arts & Sciences (AMAS), a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting machinima, recognized exemplary productions through Mackie awards given at its annual Machinima Film Festival.

## SILVER AGE

Today, machinima has become homogenized almost to obscurity. That's not to say the art of machinima is dead, far from it. Publishers use it to promote their products. The videogame store franchise GameStop makes a special TV advertisement machinima for almost every upcoming popular game they have a pre-order promotion for, working with the developers to make them. Activision made "The Legend of Karl" to promote their upcoming Elite service for the *Call of Duty* franchise. Machinima appears in pop culture in movies, music videos and TV shows. Fans of games such as *Team Fortress 2*, *Minecraft*, *Halo*, *Sims* and pretty much anything with multiplayer, fill up YouTube with thousands of amateur videos. It's even easier today for anyone to pick up a virtual camera and start making their own movie or series. All you have to do is point your mouse and hit record. **NAG**

**Miktar Dracon**

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X NEVER MARKS THE SPOT

# Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

## Still the same cocky little shit

hands on tested / hands on tested / hands on tested

### DETAILS

Release Date:
**Q4 2011**
Platforms:
**PS3**
Genre:
**Third-person action adventure**
Developer:
**Naughty Dog**
Website:
**www.unchartedthegame.com**
Publisher:
**Sony Computer Entertainment**

The cargo plane veers violently. It was never a good idea for bullets to be let loose within this awkward flying contraption's innards. But as it always is with any exploit starring Nathan Drake, the smart option isn't always one that's available, and sometimes common sense needs to be left to rot on the runway whenever he feels the need to chase down a cargo plane perched atop a jeep's bonnet. Moments earlier, Drake had sent a burly oaf out the plane's rear end, using a crafty combination of unstrapped cargo and his own face as a decoy for the thug to focus on. That frantic tussle eventually led to this one: angry men with guns shooting up the inside of this delicate airborne transport. Drake's cover slides away from him as the plane upsettingly dips into a turn, leaving him exposed to all manner of vicious punishment. He stumbles into the fray, the plane disturbing his balance. He's prepared for a desperate melee struggle, but before his fists can plant themselves firmly in someone's mouth, the right side of the plane suddenly finds itself with a massive chunk of metal missing.

Drake's attackers are violently torn from their positions as the remaining cargo is flung out of the machine's gaping wound. Drake visibly struggles against the force, anxiously clawing at any piece of the environment that could offer salvation. It's all for nothing, and Drake too is sent out into the open skies above the sprawling, not-at-all inviting desert sands below. This is *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*, and it's a better action movie than most action movies.

It's odd to think that Naughty Dog were once the humble team behind the *Crash Bandicoot* series. It's such a far cry from *Uncharted*'s often alarmingly realistic and beautifully scripted adventures that you'd be forgiven for forgetting that *Crash* was what initially brought the team fame and fortune – but that success is nothing compared to the esteemed position they find themselves in today as they ready up the third title in one of gaming's true blockbuster franchises. Playing through two previously seen (but never before played) gameplay segments revealed a sequel that is comfortingly familiar, but still fresh enough to feel exciting and new.

# UPPING THE ANTE

*Uncharted*'s storyline may aspire to rival Hollywood hits, but there's one area where it's already got them beat: longevity. Multiplayer is a huge part of that, and Naughty Dog say their third title's online component is "a complete evolution from the initial foray [they] made into multiplayer with *Uncharted 2*. The leap forward in gameplay, technology and depth is nothing short of astounding."

The goal: to make *Uncharted 3* the go-to multiplayer game for PS3 owners. Customisation and persistent progression are key to the experience. Players are given a custom character to personalise, or you can choose from characters like Nate and Sully and customise their clothing and more. Weapons can be customised with attachments to alter their use. Things like extended magazines and attachments that increase accuracy can all be unlocked and fitted to your arsenal. Players can also create highly detailed custom emblems, which will appear on your character – and possibly even on the environment during games.

Medals return (providing Kickbacks – temporary character abilities when enough Medals are earned, like giving players instant access to an RPG), as do Boosters (which provide special bonuses – like decreasing respawn time – and now gain ranks the more you use them, increasing their effectiveness).

Power plays can be used by a team that is trailing behind to even the odds a little, while they give the leading team an opportunity to make a ton of in-game cash. Maps feature dynamic events that up the level of chaos during matches. On Airstrip, for example, hostile fighter planes perform strafing runs and attack players caught out in the open, while Dry Docks is a map that rises and sinks in the ocean, allowing players to duke it out in the water. All of the maps boast many opportunities for acrobatic tomfoolery, with zip lines and the like scattered throughout. Maps also place an emphasis on varying elevation. Oh, and split-screen multiplayer will be available, allowing you and a buddy to log in with your PSN IDs and continue to level your characters. It's not available in Free For All mode though, because LOLhax.

## MULTIPLAYER MODES

**Team Deathmatch:** 5v5, kill to win.

**Three Team Deathmatch:** Three teams of two players each compete for the most kills. Features a special taunt system, because there's nothing like high-fiving over the body of an enemy you both killed. You're also able to spawn near your mate's location.

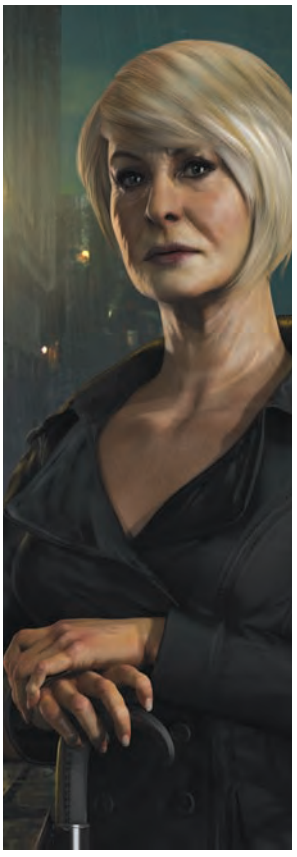
**Free For All:** Eight players shoot each other until one player wins.

**Team Objective:** Complete the objectives for fortune and glory.

**Plunder:** Themed CTF, where the flag is actually a treasure.

**High Stakes:** Put your XP and cash on the line. High risk, high reward, because gambling is fun.

**Hardcore:** No Boosters and no Medal Kickbacks. Strips the multiplayer down to its essence.



## WISH YOU WERE HERE

Following tradition, *Uncharted 3* will send you all over the globe (to places like France and the Rub' al Khali desert) during its single-player story. Drake's searching for the legendary lost city, the Iram of the Pillars, which he describes as the "Atlantis of the sands." Sully, Elena and Chloe all return, with primary antagonist Katherine Marlowe aiming at making life stupidly difficult for our intrepid hero. The story is inspired by the real-world exploits of archaeologist/British Army officer T.E. Lawrence (you may know him as Lawrence of Arabia). We think game director Justin Richmond best describes what you can expect from the storyline: "This is where the *Drake's Deception* title really starts to come in. *Uncharted 3* finds Nathan Drake searching for an ancient 16th century treasure, but he ends up being pulled into an even bigger mystery filled with deceit, pitting him against a shadowy clandestine organization and the occult treachery of its cunning and ruthless leader. Marlowe is always trying to undermine Drake and getting him to do things he doesn't want to do, it adds a brand new dynamic to the franchise."

The first gameplay segment, dubbed Chateau, sees Drake and mentor (as well as close friend) Victor Sullivan attempting to escape a grand old mansion in France as the entire building burns and crumbles around them. The little touches are immediately poignant. Step too close to the fiery blaze and Drake's clothing joins the list of items that are currently on fire, before he hysterically pats out his burning bits. Leave Drake standing too close to a slice of inferno that's crept up through the floorboards and he winces, lifting his leg and hopping away from the flames without the need for player input. After all, a real person wouldn't stand in the same spot, their imaginary health bar whittling away while they wait for some unseen controller to tell them to move – and Drake is more of a real, fully realised person than most of the meatheads and 'roid monkeys seen in other games today. Certain of Drake's mannerisms won't even be noticed or seen as thoughtful by the majority of the people who'll play this game, but every one of them subtly reinforces the notion that this is a game designed to blur the lines between movies and videogames, where almost every possible virtual movement and interaction that the player could take has been predicted and provisioned for, so that the illusion that this story is plausible (well, at least in the same way that Indiana Jones' adventures are obviously fictional, but nevertheless believable) is never broken – and more importantly, to ensure that the player always feels like they're an important part of it.

There's a lot of shooting here, naturally, but Nate's tales have never been solely about the running and gunning. The real excellence of this series shines because of all its elements, not just the third-person gunnery. The platforming, the puzzle solving, the exploration, the combat and even the character interactions join forces, pieced together so naturally that they feel entirely seamless and expertly purposeful. The two tiny chunks of gameplay that we've had the opportunity to play lasted maybe five minutes each, but the tension they maintain throughout is relentless. Struggling to get Drake and Sully to the top of a crumbling spiral staircase as the room burns around them is a truly harrowing experience, thrilling from start to finish. As antagonist Katherine Marlowe puts it, Drake gets off on this stuff, these endless near-death experiences. And there are many of those – handholds give way to Nathan's weight and set off a chain reaction of acrobatic events that almost always end with him less than an inch from certain doom. Sure, a lot of it is scripted, but it's so dynamically strung together that it's barely noticeable and always forgivable when the game wrestles control from the player.

**/ Stealth is getting an upgrade for this third title. It'll be simplified (but in a good way) and more dynamic, all in pursuit of improving the entire experience.**

## THREE-WAY SPLIT

Cooperative multiplayer will once again feature for up to three players. Customisation plays a large part here as well, with special co-op Boosters and more appearing in the three cooperative modes, detailed below:

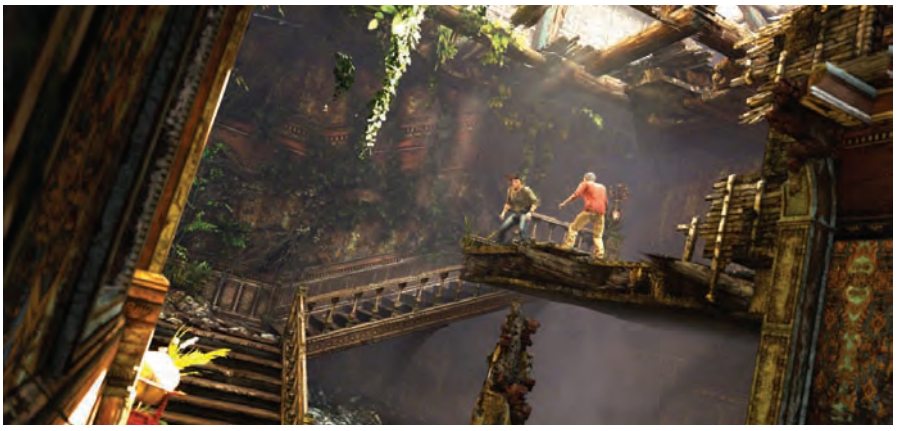
**Arena:** Survive against waves of enemies for as long as possible. Horde mode with *Uncharted* sauce.

**Hunter Arena:** It's competitive, in a way. Two teams of two (Heroes and Villains) fight over three treasures hidden in three separate chests. The Heroes attempt to retrieve the treasures, while the Villains have AI-controlled buddies to aid them in stopping the Heroes. Villains have access to different character classes that mimic the load outs and attributes of various AI enemies, unlocking new classes as they earn more Medals.

**Adventure:** It's like the cooperative Objective mode from the previous game, but better. These self-contained mini stories see three players working towards a common goal. Comes complete with all-new cooperative aspects.

# GO GET 'EM, SLUGGER

Of all the bullet points that make up the laundry list of gameplay improvements, the enhanced melee combat is the most immediately satisfying in the build we've played. Considering that the greatest adventurers always seem to love a good brawl (Indy, anyone?), it seems fitting that Nate's more adept at dishing out close-quarter pain. He's got a variety of attacks and counters, and we especially like the brawls with multiple enemies. Imagine one enemy bear-hugging him from behind, while another moves in for an assisted beating. Drake jumps to kick the approaching enemy before elbowing the other foe in the gut and escaping. It's that sort of thing. Many attacks are contextual as well. If you're fighting next to a desk, for example, Drake will grab the enemy and slam his face into it. Disarming opponents is also possible, and seeing a thug panic after you pull the pin on the grenade on his belt just never gets old.



/ The cinema mode will return, promising vast improvements and a slew of new features. Videos can be uploaded directly to YouTube (although they're limited to 90-second clips), which you can then link your mom to and prove to her just how proud she should be. The best of them will feature on the main multiplayer menu via a feature called Uncharted TV. There's also Facebook integration again, in case you're interested.

The second bit of gameplay, called Cargo Plane, which is detailed to a certain extent in the opening paragraph of this preview, is easily one of the best scripted action sequences in gaming history. It's preceded by an emotional interaction between Drake and returning character Elena Fisher. It says a lot that this interaction is completely out of context and lasts no longer than 30 seconds, but feels more human and holds more emotional clout than a lot of the other AAA franchises out there in their entirety. Incredible facial animation and brilliant voice acting bring this scene to life, and it's enough to lend the action that follows a profound emotional impact that otherwise wouldn't exist, thereby making it more than just another punch up. Games rarely get the human angle right, but it's one of the many things that *Uncharted* thrives on – and it's becoming increasingly clear that this'll be handled even better here than it was in the previous games.

So, this is a game that's shaping up to be an incredible ride – and it's also thanks to the technical side of it. It's a lovely game to look at, even when you're in the middle of a brown, featureless desert. But put Naughty Dog's excellent game engine through its paces by sinking a cruise ship, and the true wonder of the tech really shines through. As torrential water comes pouring into this water-bound behemoth, impressive fluid dynamics, thoughtful lighting and deliberate, but flowing animations are on full show. Objects slide past Drake as the ship violently buckles under the weight of the ocean that suddenly inhabits its interior. He shambles along your chosen path, visibly rebelling against the effect this is all having on his balance. And as the ship half-capsizes, Drake is sent careening from what used to be the ship floor into the half-flooded abyss below, pulled downwards by the force of random environmental objects slowly sinking ever deeper. The stress of this scene wouldn't be possible without this amazing engine – and we expect that what we've seen is only a taste of things to come.

Somehow, the motion-captured animations are even more lifelike than we remember. Drake's extended traversal moves are appreciated and believable, with every lovingly crafted animation being provided extra weight by the remarkable voice work of Nolan "yeah, I'm in everything" North. Using so many different techniques to create these characters is obviously working, because Drake and company are some of the few truly endearing characters in gaming today. Sure, they're not the deepest bunch around – but they've noticeably matured and been fleshed out over the course of these games, and you'd be hard pressed to find a gamer out there (unless they're the type who has the attention span of a puddle of piss and insists on skipping cut-scenes, ignoring story and drowning out dialogue with pop music to simply get to the bits with the guns) who doesn't, or couldn't like these characters and feel connected to their story.

Everything we've seen so far solidifies what we already knew – that this is going to be one of the best games of 2011. Naughty Dog has admitted that, with every game in this series, they've bitten off more than they could chew. Thus far, their overwrought ambition has given us some of the most cinematic, thrilling adventures we've encountered in recent years. There's no reason to think they won't pull it off again with this third outing. This is *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*, and it's a better action movie than most action movies. **NAG**

**Barkskin**

The Elder Scrolls V
SKYRIM
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fpb 18V

# Ridge Racer Unbounded

## The old-school racer goes back to school

### [ details ]

Release Date:
**Q1 2012**
Platforms:
**360 / PC / PS3**
Genre:
**Racing**
Developer:
**Bugbear Entertainment**
Website:
**www.uk.namcobandaigames.eu**
Publisher:
**Namco Bandai Games**

### [ trivia ]

**// Reiko Nagase is the name of the series race queen mascot.**

**// She has a sister in the *Ace Combat* series called Kei Nagase.**

**An exact example of Reiko Nagase.**

When Charlson Choi (Namco Bandai Games VP of marketing) described *Unbounded* as "very different from the *Ridge Racer* you've come to know," it's hard not to imagine him chuckling under his breath at his understatement.

The *Ridge Racer* series had always been defined by its crisp racing, obnoxiously long drifts and hyperkinetic announcer. *Unbounded* retains the hallmark "infinity-drift", but drops the rest in favour of taking a big chance. This is not *Ridge Racer 8*.

The initial teaser cinematic for *Unbounded* brought back the typical series mascot, a hot computer-generated woman, driving through a city in a recognizably *Ridge Racer* car. She parks it in an alley, gets out and walks over to a different car, looking like a muscle car; she gets in and then dives into traffic, hitting a taxi cab so hard it flips over into a nearby building.

In development at Bugbear, the 45-person developer behind the *FlatOut* series, it should come as no surprise that *Unbounded* focuses on aggressive racing. Bugbear has a legacy with destructible environments, having spent the last 11 years working on racing games with physics-enabled cars, walls and track objects. Looking like the lovechild between *Full Auto*, *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit* and *Split/Second*, drifting is immediate. Tap B and you power slide, filling your Power Bar. But instead of drifting clean through a corner, you *want* to crash into objects and smash through fixtures. It's counter-intuitive, but it fills your Power Bar much faster and you don't lose any speed from it. Using your Power Bar you can also Charge Boost, which rams anything in front of you and gets you some speed. Take a corner too hard while going too fast, and you'll go up on two wheels or roll.

**"But instead of drifting clean through a corner, you *want* to crash into objects and smash through fixtures."**

Once the Power Bar is full, you can target specific racers and map-specific walls. Tap A, and they explode into a firework of glass shards, steel flakes and flaming wrecks. Naturally, this happens with a *Burnout*-style cinematic slow-motion camera-panning money shot. Not everything is destructible, the distinction between what is and isn't may become a point of contention. The developers still have time to add a visual cue, such as colour coding.

The cars look like a blend between the *Ridge Racer* drift-rockets and *FlatOut*'s more muscly powerhouses. There will be no tuning stats or anything like that, though upgrades may not be out of the question. Mercifully, there will be no soap opera in *Unbounded*, there are no characters. Not much has been revealed about the fictional city the game takes place in called Shadow Bay, an aesthetic blend of Chicago and New York.

Being born from two distinctly different racing paradigms, it's unclear where this road will take the *Ridge Racer* franchise. **NAG**

**Miktar**

fpb 18V

THE WAR ON HORROR HAS BEGUN

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# Soul Calibur V

## The soul continues to simmer nicely...

**[ details ]**

Release Date:
**Q1 2012**
Platforms:
**360 / PS3**
Genre:
**Fighting**
Developer:
**Project Soul**
Website:
**www.soulcalibur.com**
Publisher:
**Namco Bandai**

**[ trivia ]**

**// The series revolves around a sword that, after years of killing, gained a soul.**

**// *Soul Calibur* and *Tekken* do actually exist in the same universe.**

After *Soul Calibur IV* was released in 2008, the team at Project Soul disbanded, presumably to work on other titles. After a fan-petition on Facebook got the attention of series producer Katsuhiro Harada, the core team was reunited and here we are. Wait, fan-petitions actually work?

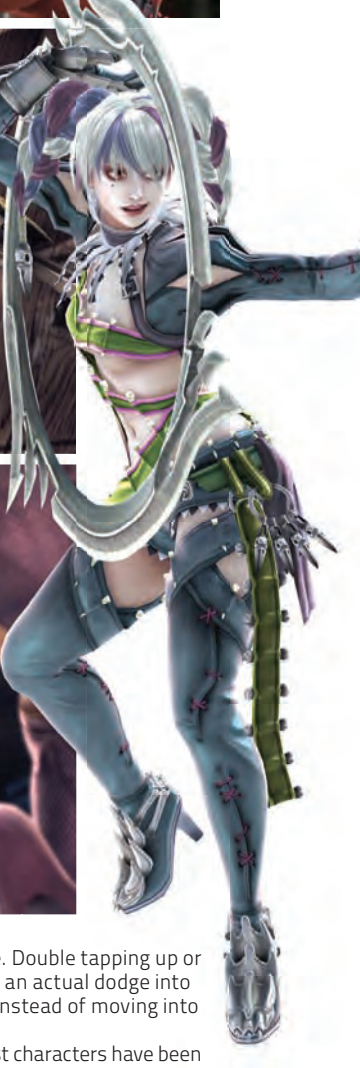
*Soul Calibur V* is set 17 years after *SCIV*, but still cast from the same mould as its predecessor with a few notable additions. This time around the main protagonist is Patroklos, son of long-standing Soul series babe Sophitia (daughter of a Greek baker). The deuteragonist is Pyrrha, the daughter of Sophitia, who has apparently been quite busy.

Project Soul seems to be playing it safe, with all the new characters being direct descendants with regards to narrative or just moveset. New ninja Natsu shares the moveset of her teacher Taki, while Patroklos wields the same sword/shield combo as his mother. Pyrrah's fighting style is a blend of her mother and Aunt Cassandra, but she has a pathological reluctance to fight.

All the base features are confirmed: extensive character customization and online ranked battles. The backdrops look crisp and vibrant, the musical score appropriately rousing. The Soul Edge and Soul Calibur swords do their thing to push the narrative along.

Surprisingly, while Project Soul is building the core experience, it's CyberConnect2 creating the hand-crafted animations. The previous game used extensive motion capture. If you've ever played *Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm 2*, then you might be aware how bizarrely talented CyberConnect2's animators are.

**"One new feature designed to lure in fighting fans is the Critical Edge."**



"We're not focusing on players who don't have a pre-existing interest in fighting games," explains game producer Hisaharu Tago. "But since fighting games have become really popular recently, we're trying to get players who play other fighting games to come to *Soul Calibur V*."

One new feature designed to lure in fighting fans is the Critical Edge. People may think it's a copy of *Street Fighter IV*'s super combo system, but Critical Edge existed in *Soul Edge* (1996).

"It's basically an old feature that's making a return." says Tago. "But at the same time, if it makes it easy for *Street Fighter* players to come to *Soul Calibur* then that's something that we're definitely hoping for." Also new is the Evade Move. Double tapping up or down now does an actual dodge into the 8-way run, instead of moving into 8-way straight.

While no guest characters have been confirmed yet, there will be crossover characters but this time without platform-specific lockouts. The returning characters include fan-favourites Ivy, Hilde, Maxi, Mitsurugi, Siegfried, Tira, Voldo and Asteroth. Another new character is Leixia, daughter of Xianghua (like we needed another ankle-biter). The most interesting new addition is Z.W.E.I., a guy who can summon a werewolf-like creature called E.I.N. to help in battle. We're still holding out for confirmation of Lizardman's return. **NAG**

**Miktar**

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Also available on: Xbox360 & PC

Released 08 November

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**699.95**

Also available on: Xbox360 & PC

Released 02 November

PlayStation 3
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception
**599.95**

Released 11 November

PlayStation 3
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
**599.95**

Also available on: Xbox360 & PC

PlayStation 3
FIFA 12
**599.95**

Also available on: Xbox360, PC, Wii, 3DS, PS2 & PSP

Released 18 November

PlayStation 3
Need For Speed: The Run
**599.95**

Also available on: Xbox360 & PC

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# Awesomenauts

## What looks like an `80s cartoon and quacks like a DotA?

### [ details ]

Release Date:
**2011**
Platforms:
**360 / PS3**
Genre:
**Multiplayer online battle arena**
Developer:
**Ronimo Games**
Website:
**www.awesomenauts.com**
Publisher:
**dtp entertainment**

### [ trivia ]

**// Ronimo's previous game was *Swords & Soldiers*.**

**// It was a great side-scrolling RTS.**

If the visual style of *Awesomenauts* does not appeal to you, then take your cold, granite heart outside and bury it next to your childhood.

The side-scrolling multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) genre is far from crowded. In fact, *Awesomenauts* would technically be the first. Okay sure, some people insist that the genre be called DOTA in homage to the original *Warcraft 3* map "Defense of the Ancients", but then some people insist that the world's most popular DotA clone *League of Legends* is totally nothing like *DotA* and should thus be classified as MOBA... Gamers, *oy vey*. Never mind that *Future Cop:LAPD* (1998) started the whole MOBA thing a good five years before it even *was* a thing.

As for *Awesomenauts*, two teams of three try to take out each other's base, fighting through NPC forces, static defences, and each other. *Monday Night Combat* tried to bring the genre to console as a third-person team-based shooter, but its success was knee-capped by Microsoft's draconian policies.

The six starting characters (later expanded via DLC) include a cowboy that can summon a holographic bull, a jet packing Russian monkey and a French assassin chameleon who can go invisible. Each character has individual combat and movement nuances.

There will be full bot support (also for online drop-in/drop-out like *Gears 3*), three-player split-screen, but no dedicated single-player (aside from practice against bots). **NAG**

**Miktar**

# Journey

## The very definition of adventure

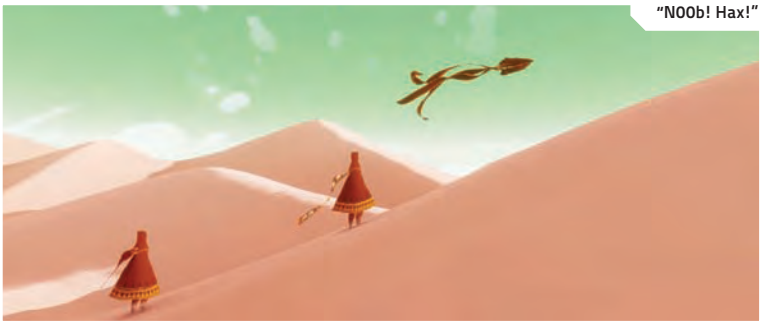
### [ details ]

Release Date:
**2012**
Platforms:
**PS3**
Genre:
**Adventure**
Developer:
**thatgamecompany**
Website:
**thatgamecompany.com**
Publisher:
**Sony Computer Entertainment**

### [ trivia ]

**// You'll find pieces of cloth in the sands, letting you fly for a while.**

**// Hidden areas contain tapestries with clues to the world's history.**



**"N00b! Hax!"**

In the distance looms a mountain. A beam of light shoots from its summit straight up into the heavens. Foreboding yet alluring, it serves as the only visible landmark in a dynamic ocean of desert. Your character is a mysterious figure in cloth, an elegant stroke of red against the peach hues of the sand.

*Journey* is a puzzle game, but more importantly, it's a context for experience. "We wanted to avoid puzzles whose only purpose is to provide a puzzle to the player." explains lead designer Nick Clark. thatgamecompany is known for crafting unique experiences. Their first game *Flow*, placed you as an aquatic microorganism diving through two-dimensional layers of ocean, evolving to adapt and survive. Their second game, *Flower*, had you controlling the wind, blowing flower petals through the air, where you land, life and colour comes back to the world.

Thematically, the studio's games are all about emotional cues and a subtle visual language expressed through colour. In *Journey*, you affect the environment through movement and sound, jumping across ruins in the sand and singing haunting notes to trigger events. The sand is a dynamic height-map, influenced by fluid simulation. Wind pushes on the sand, making for a living environment in which your character exists.

You may come across strangers in the desert if you're online. You don't know who they are, how old they are or where they're from. There is no voice-chat; the only way to communicate is through wordless shouts in ghostly keys. All you know is that it's another human being. Symbols on the front of their robes are unique to each player, so you can tell if you've met them before. You'll only ever meet one person at a time, forming a brief but perhaps meaningful connection as you solve a puzzle together before going your separate ways. **NAG**

**Miktar**

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## The reviewers

**Question:** What treasure (mythical or otherwise) would make you pack up your life to go hunting for it?

**RedTide**

The shaving cream can that was dropped by Dennis Nedry just before he dies. My dinosaur zoo will be better.

**Miktar**

There's only one treasure for me: The Golden Condor, a solar-powered ornithopter from the Mu Empire. If a Spanish orphan in 1532 could find it, so can I.

**Azimuth**

A fire-breathing, rocket-powered robot unicorn with Gatling laser guns bolted to its side. Or true love. I can't decide.

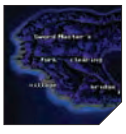
**Mikit0707**

The Gamsaav crystal from Outcast. I've always wanted a quick save feature in RL and if this gives me that then pack up the spades and maps; let's go treasure hunting!

**GeometriX**

The lost diamonds from the Antwerp Diamond Heist. I'd then craft the $100 million worth of diamonds into a suit of armour, obviously.

**Barkskin**



The Legendary Lost Treasure of Mêlée Island. Because I want that f***ing T-shirt. Oh, and Big Whoop™, because I love disappointment.

**Ramjet**

The Kruger Millions... No, seriously, I have actually considered this. Just the tax implications stopped me.

**SAVAGE**

The Arc of the Covenant. [***He's a bit obsessed with Indiana Jones, Ed***]

**ShockG**

An original, 1983, first generation Cabbage Patch Doll.

# Anatomy of a review

## A quick guide to the NAG reviews section

**/1/ Totally interesting stuff:** Developer, publisher, platform, random junk and more. The number of players listed under multiplayer is the maximum number you can have in a game at one time. Local means "couch", not LAN.

**/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.

**/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.

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

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

**/6/ Award:** Comes 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.

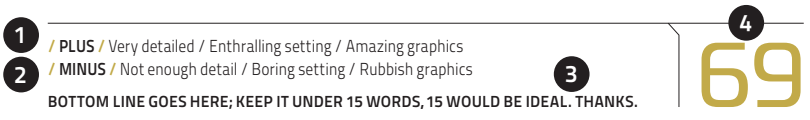
# THE SCORE BOX

**/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.

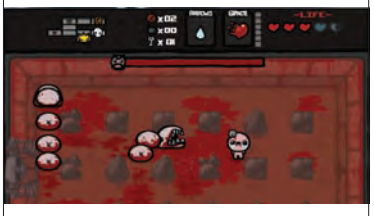


# QUICK HITS

## The Binding of Isaac

Weird doesn't even begin to describe *The Binding of Isaac*. It's something special. It is, at its most basic, a top-down clone of the original *Legend of Zelda* titles, with added rogue like and shoot 'em up elements. Your objective: kill Isaac's mother. You go about this by travelling through a small set of levels, each divided into a number of rooms. Replayability is key: level layout is randomly generated on each playthrough, and while rooms are always the same size/shape, their contents are randomly generated.

As you progress, you kill deranged enemies and collect a diverse assortment of items, each of which alter Isaac's stats, provide him special abilities, or increase his max health and more. Death is permanent, forcing a fresh start, but that's a large part of what makes it so special. Each run is a journey of discovery, bringing new items and revealing new secrets. It's the kind of game that you wish would never run out of things to show you, and there's a mad amount of content here for $4.99. It's a macabre, twisted adventure but it's also absolutely genius.



// AN ADDICTIVE, PERVERTED *ZELDA*-LIKE THAT'S BURSTING WITH CONTENT.

## A New Beginning

Yay! A classic point-and-click adventure game! With hand-drawn characters and backgrounds! And voice acting! I love voice acting! Wait, what's going on? This voice acting is... it's terrible... it's making me want to hurt myself and... punch the screen instead of playing. Must... switch... it... off...

Ah, there. Much better. Now that the worst voice acting in the history of video games has been removed from the equation, *A New Beginning* is actually good fun. It has an interesting premise: time-travellers from the future (or the present, because, you know) go back in time to prevent the devastation of the planet due to climate change and stuff. There's some pseudo-science thrown in to make it appear believable, but as soon as someone in a cut-scene mentioned "nuclear winter", it became apparent that they're just throwing around cool-sounding words for the sake of it.

The puzzles are logical; the environments are interesting; you can't die or screw up hopelessly to the point of having to restart the game. If you enjoy a good old point-and-click, and can push through a little bit of weirdness, you'll have a great time here.

// VOICE ACTING? WHAT VOICE ACTING?

# 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

### Dead Island

75
80
78

### F1 2011

85
84
84

### Gears of War 3

94
91
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### Hard Reset

70
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73

### Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine

82
75
76

### Jonah Lomuh Rugby Challenge

85
68
73

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Look & Listen
For the Fans

# Dead Island

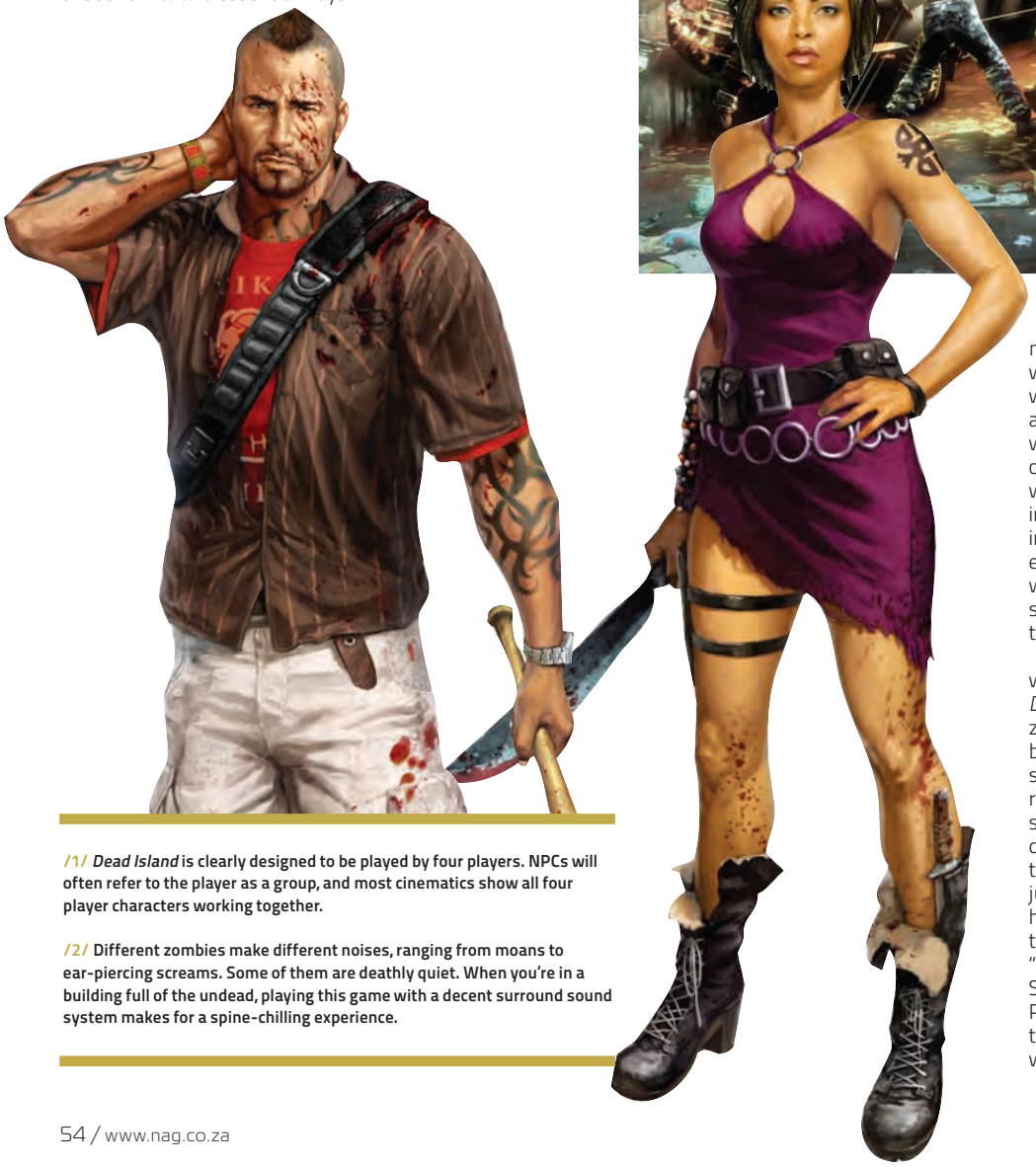
## Who do you voodoo, bitch?

There's something incredibly satisfying about smashing in a zombie's head with an electrified truncheon, or slicing off their limbs with a toxin-dripping scythe. There's also something incredibly disturbing about that sort of brutality – the type that humans would need to employ if ever a zombie outbreak were to actually happen. *Dead Island* handles both extremely well – it's brutal, terrifying, intense and occasionally disturbing, but then it tries to pile on a bunch of fluff that does little to enhance the core game.

True to its name, *Dead Island* takes place on Banoi – a fictional island somewhere near Papua New Guinea that has experienced an outbreak of the living dead. Overnight, the tropical paradise was overrun with zombies. Handfuls of survivors have bunkered down in makeshift fortresses, turned on their own kind for looting rights, or taken up arms and decided to do something about this mess. Your character, chosen from a pool of four – each with their own combat style and skills – is in that last group, and will travel throughout the island assisting the communities of survivors in a range of both trivial and essential ways.

### [ details ]

Platforms:
**360 / PC / PS3**
Genre:
**First-person action**
Age restriction:
**18+**
DRM:
**Internet connection required [Steam]**
Multiplayer:
**Local: None**
**Online: 4 players**
Developer:
**Techland**
Website:
**www.deadislandgame.com**
Publisher:
**Deep Silver**
Distributor:
**Apex Interactive**



**/1/** ***Dead Island*** **is clearly designed to be played by four players. NPCs will often refer to the player as a group, and most cinematics show all four player characters working together.**

**/2/ Different zombies make different noises, ranging from moans to ear-piercing screams. Some of them are deathly quiet. When you're in a building full of the undead, playing this game with a decent surround sound system makes for a spine-chilling experience.**

The majority of the game's combat is melee-based, and Techland has done a wonderful job of conveying a sense of weight and impact for both movement and combat, making every encounter with the screaming, sprinting, shambling or exploding undead one that fills you with dread. Things can go from picnics in the sunshine to a harrowing death in seconds if you're not mindful of your environment or prepared with the right weapon. To be fair, though, you probably shouldn't have been having a picnic in the middle of the zombie apocalypse.

We know that the combat works, which is great, because at its core, *Dead Island* is a game about bashing in zombie skulls, so why that score at the bottom of this review? It's all the other stuff: the RPG mechanics, excessive running around, ultimately unfulfilling sandbox environment, mindless side-quests and awful characterisation. Okay, the RPG mechanics aren't terrible, they just feel inconsequential. Each character has access to three skill trees, designed to allow players to create their ultimate "build" from the four character classes: Sam the blunt weapons expert / tank; Purna the firearms specialist; Xian Mei the bladed weapons expert; and Logan, who prefers to throw his toys rather

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than let the undead get too close. Each character feels unique and handles in their own special way, but you'll be challenged to feel safe with anyone but Sam if you're going to play this game without three other friends. As you kill zombies and complete quests, you'll gain experience points that are used to gain new levels. With each level, your stats automatically increase and you're given a skill point to assign to any of the available skills that increase damage, boost health regeneration, provide new active skills, and the like. The problem is that as you gain levels, so do the zombies, effectively neutralising any gain that you may experience. Aside from the addition of new active abilities (of which there are very few), all you're really doing is making your character good enough to bash tougher zombies in the head without dying too often. This all feeds back into the fantastic combat system, but through the skills themselves, it seldom feels like you're actually getting any better.

Where you do feel your character's progress is in the game's vast assortment of weaponry and environments. As you advance, you'll travel to new locations on the island and encounter new zombie types that offer their own challenges and approaches. You'll also find many interesting weapon types that include simple tools and household items, as well as more exotic weapons and blueprints for modifiable or creatable weapons that range from odd to borderline science-fiction. The range of weapons is impressive, and they give you a variety of ways to deal with the undead – far more so than what's offered by the character skills.

While you're out finding new environments in which you'll bash zombie faces, there's some sort of a story happening in the background. This story has characters with whom you're supposed to feel some sort of emotional attachment. It also has some sort of message about human greed and the importance of community and overcoming personal feelings for the good of the tribe, so to speak, but the whole thing is conveyed through a series of frivolous, poorly delivered main quests and way too many cookie-cutter side-quests that are as good for grinding experience points as they are for extending game length beyond what the game is actually good for. These side quests and the horribly acted, irritating characters that dish them out combine with the large, open world to create what could be called a sandbox game, if that sandbox was filled with mostly inaccessible buildings and a variety of searchable items that yield boring, randomly-generated loot that stops being exciting after about an hour.

*Dead Island* has its fair share of problems. Some of them can't be fixed, but can be ignored, like the practically pointless story, whereas others are irritating because they could have been so much better, like the skills system. Thankfully, none of these problems ever become so glaring and painful that they distract from the most important part of the game – the combat – and with that, *Dead Island* is recommended for anyone who enjoys a good zombie game. **NAG**

**GeometriX**

I'd still hit it.

/ **PLUS** / Great melee combat / Enemies are always terrifying / Fun weapons
/ **MINUS** / A bit buggy / Weak story and characters / Ineffectual RPG mechanics

**DESPITE ITS OBVIOUS FLAWS, *DEAD ISLAND* IS STILL A BLAST TO PLAY.**

75

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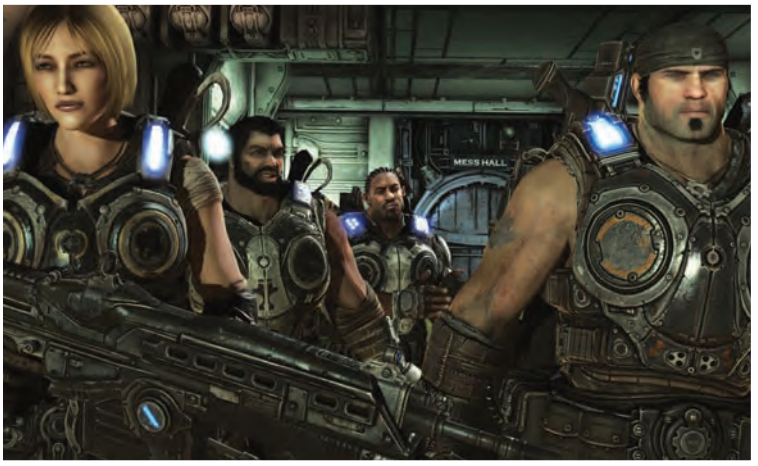
Look & Listen
For the Fans

# Gears of War 3

## Ticker, ticker, BOOOOOOM!



It's been about two years since Delta Squad's big day out in Jacinto. You'll remember, it's the one when they used a Hammer of Dawn to detonate a Lambent Brumak in the Locust-occupied hollows under the city, collapsing the entire plateau and flooding the whole place with a desperately contrived deus ex machina that doesn't make any kind of sense out of context to resolve the plot just enough to make space for another sequel.

With Queen Myrrah and her royal retinue of grey-faced goons finally defeated, the Coalition of Governments' armed forces and other survivors relocate to the island of Vectes and a bunch of warships to start over. Or at least until it turns out that – OH, SURPRISE! – Queen Myrrah and her royal retinue of grey-faced goons weren't quite as finally defeated as previously thought, and it's game on baby for Marcus Fenix and the Amazing Thick Necks.

*Gears of War 2* was, according to game designer Cliff Bleszinski, "bigger, better, and more badass" than the first. So where to for the big finish? Biggerer, betterer, and more badasser, obviously. So much so, I've even invented those cool new words to describe it [*The things I let you get away with... Ed*].

editor's choice / editor's choice / editor's choice

### [ details ]

Platforms:
**360**
Genre:
**Third-person shooter**
Age restriction:
**18**
DRM:
**None**
Multiplayer:
**Local: 2 players**
**Online: 10 players**
Developer:
**Epic Games**
Website:
**www.gearsofwar.com**
Publisher:
**Microsoft Game Studios**
Distributor:
**Comztek**

Most immediately, the game's had a significant upgrade aesthetically. War's a drag, maybe, but that's no reason not to look your best. The Unreal Engine's texture pop has been sorted out, the lighting effects are extraordinary, and for the first time ever, there's REAL COLOUR. Loads of it. Turquoise and green, even, and who'd have expected it? It's a pretty dramatic change from previous games, with emphasis on the "pretty". This game is just absolutely gorgeous to look at, and definitely one of the most visually impressive on the Xbox.

In terms of gameplay, it's still the same cover-based, pop-shotty gibbing we know and love, although some of the "stickiness" has been fixed, and the roadie run feels much more responsive. Going online, there's also none of the geometry clipping and glitching that so pervaded the second game, and even on rubbishy connections (I play on 1mbps wireless), there's not much chop.

Further along on the *New! Improved!* frontline, the campaign mode now supports up to four players, a change that's subsidised by a narrative that breaks away from Marcus and Dom Santiago's bromance, and takes turns putting Damon Baird, Augustus Cole, and a number of other characters in the spotlight instead. Quite in spite of this, however, the game's a much more personal trip this time around, presenting its stars as somewhat more real and – dare I say

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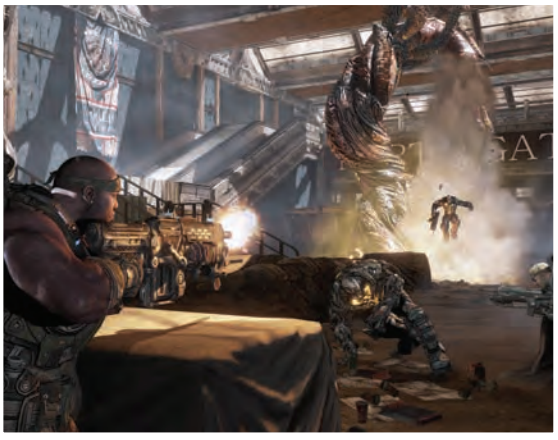
**/1/ GO FOR THE EYES, BOO! GO FOR THE EYES! Aw, damn it, my miniature giant space hamster is in my other pants.**

**/2/ Omnomnomnomnomnom.**

**/3/ And remember, kids, those little things will take you out instantly on Insane difficulty.**

**/4/ The first choice in conflict resolution, guaranteed up to 3,000kg of raw meat / one plank wood.**



it – emotionally engaging than before. Sure, the explosions and swearing are in all the right places, but the story is unexpectedly poignant at times too. I'm not going to spoil anything, but if you don't shed a tear at least once during the game, you're a hollow husk of a human being and probably a psychopath.

When all is said, done, and blown to itty-bits, *Gears of War 3* ends the trilogy well enough, with a conclusion that perhaps doesn't answer every question (OKAY, SERIOUSLY, WHY DOESN'T MYRRAH LOOK LIKE A LOCUST?), but feels just about right (OKAY, BUT SERIOUSLY, WHY DOESN'T MYRRAH LOOK LIKE A LOCUST?). My only major gripe about it is that the Insane difficulty mode – always a challenge until now, but never unreasonably so – is dialled up to "STUPID HARD" here, with instant death replacing the down-but-not-out status. That wouldn't be such a bad thing, except that the "instant" in "instant death" is the really important bit, and when it gets to the Lambent Zerker, you'll know what I mean. It's like the AI is equipped with thermonuclear weapons or something, and it's the exact opposite of fun. It's also a bit of a shame that Epic didn't include a theatre mode or any kind of screen capture functionality, but that's not such a big deal.

I'd hate to use a drab cliché like "a love letter to fans", but I just did, and now that I'm committed to it – well, *Gears of War 3* is a love letter to fans. And with a chunky campaign clocking in at 10 hours or so, as well as Beast, Horde, and versus multiplayer modes, there's so, so much to love about it. Delta Squad in yo' house? Phoreals.

## DIIIIIG!

The new Beast mode is, basically, *awesome*. Ostensibly enough, it's Horde mode in reverse – with you putting on your Locust stuff instead, and taking on increasingly formidable waves of those silly, meaty 'oomans – but underneath its simple premise, there's something really special here. Playing it on Casual or even Normal difficulty is mostly a matter of cashing frags, repeat(); but push it up to Hardcore or Insane, and it's suddenly one of the most cleverly conceived co-op op modes ever, and something much closer to, say, Team Fortress than anything else.

Even the cheapest, most fragile units have clear, immensely useful roles, and progressing is a much more complicated matter than simply buying the biggest, most expensive units. Playing as a low-level supporting Kantus, for example, and healing / reviving comrades is probably one of the mode's most important roles, and probably also one of the most overlooked. That said, being a Berserker is kind of amazing.

## GRIIIIIIND!

If you thought *Gears of War 2*'s Seriously 2.0 Achievement was hardcore, get ready for a reality check. This time, you'll have to rank up to 100, and work up your in-game medals to fourth-tier Onyx status. It sounds much easier than it is. Be prepared to invest many, many hours into *Gears of War 3*, but that's almost certainly the point. NAG

**Azimuth**

**/ PLUS /** Guuuuuuns! Wiiiiiith! Chaaaaaainsaws!
**/ MINUS /** Insane difficulty is... insane / No theatre mode

**OUT WITH A BANG. A BIG ONE.**

**94**

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Look & Listen
For the Fans

# Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine

## Waaagh!

Even if you're not a fan of Games Workshop's tabletop strategy extravaganza, there's something inherently fascinating about the Warhammer universe – both 40K and Fantasy Battle. This eternal struggle punctuated in blood, death and men in beefy metal armour. Everyone hates everyone else, and nobody's willing to share their candy with a bunch of smelly aliens. It's pretty much exactly like the real world, but with swords that are also chainsaws. Relic's no stranger to this captivating universe, having developed two wonderful real-time strategy titles (each with about seven million expansion packs) set in this blood-loving universe.

*Space Marine* tells the tale of the Imperial Forge World, Graia, and a nigh-unstoppable Ork invasion that has befallen it. You, as Captain Titus of the Ultramarines, are deployed to the planet (along with a couple of Space Marine buddies for backup) to quell the offensive and secure a number of strategic assets before the attackers get their loot-loving hands on them. To do this, you've got all manner of iconic Space Marine weaponry at your disposal: from bolters and chainswords to power axes and melta guns. It's all faithfully represented too, sure to get any fan of the franchise hopelessly aroused. Being in an Imperial Manufactorum, menacingly trudging around this battered Forge World (with an appropriately stirring soundtrack playing in the background), seeing sights like a heavily guarded Imperial Guard outpost and hearing an Ork horde unleash their "Waaagh!" as they rush you from all directions before you singlehandedly push back their attack will be massively satisfying for franchise fans, or even just for fans of Relic's *Dawn of War* series. The visuals put on a good show as well, with massive (if somewhat repetitive) environments, flashy weapon effects and big booms to sell each scene. I especially like the level of detail on various armour pieces in the game – particularly those of the Chaos Marines and the Space Marines themselves, their armour adorned with all manner of tiny, but nonetheless appreciated details. The audio effects for each weapon deserve specific mention too, because each packs a mighty punch – as well they should.

Gameplay is a mix of melee and ranged combat, allowing for seamless switching between the two to match any situation. This whole spiel of

### [ details ]

Platforms:
**360 / PC / PS3**
Genre:
**Third-person action**
Age restriction:
**18+**
DRM:
**Internet connection required [Steam]**
Multiplayer:
**Local: None**
**Online: 16 players**
Developer:
**Relic Entertainment**
Website:
**www.spacemarine.com**
Publisher:
**THQ**
Distributor:
**Ster Kinekor Entertainment**

Looks like Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli got here first.

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"cover is for pansies" is wonderfully rewarding and Relic has done an outstanding job capturing the feel of being a genetically modified superhuman in chunky baby blue armour. The melee combat isn't very taxing, with simple combos that can be modified to stun enemies and follow it up with a brutal execution, but despite its simplicity, it's continually pleasing. There's something special about that first time you charge straight through a piece of cover and send the enemy hiding behind it flailing helplessly through the air before replacing their vital organs with the business end of your thunder hammer. Ranged combat is, well, ranged and therefore boring by comparison, but all the weapons operate as superbly as they sound and when a shot finds home, the satisfying "thwomp" on the other end will always bring the smiles. There's a third aspect to the gameplay – "Fury," a sort of power meter that gradually builds up as you smash faces and eventually allows you to become an even more brutal melee force, or slows down time when using ranged weapons to allow for more accurate shots. That's it, really. There are no puzzles, no platforming bits or anything of the sort. Just pure action from start to finish – and while it's part of the game's appeal, it's also its greatest enemy.

I think it happens somewhere around the time you've killed your five hundredth Ork and bashed in your 25th 'Ard Boy's skull. Fatigue starts to set in, because you've been doing this for hours already and you wish there was something more to it. Aside from the occasional new weapon, nothing about the fundamental gameplay ever really alters. The game shows its hand early on, and then never offers much freshness. Later, when Chaos appears, they drastically increase the challenge level, but otherwise everything stays pretty much the same. The only part of the game that manages to avoid repetition lies in the few sections within missions that allow use of a jump pack. It's mostly because they're disappointingly scarce and reach their end very quickly, so every time you're given the opportunity to use it, it's a brief blessing. I can't help but feel like they could've done more with the game, especially considering its lengthy development.

Thankfully, there's class-based multiplayer to flesh everything out – but here too, it feels like there's untapped potential. As with almost every other multiplayer title these days, you've got persistent stats, along with weapon, armour and ability unlocks. The system lends itself naturally to the wealth of cool stuff in the 40K universe, allowing you to unlock toys like plasma cannons, new perks that let you adapt your play style and various armour pieces as you battle through the two game modes on offer. The customisation options for kitting out your Space Marines and their Chaos counterparts (there are no Orks here – because I imagine that'd be a balancing nightmare) are fantastic, and it allows for more neon-pink blokes per server than is socially acceptable. The two game modes are Annihilation (standard team deathmatch) and Seize Ground (point capture/defend), and each side has access to three classes that are distinctive enough to cater to any play style. Also, jump packs feature more prominently in multiplayer, which makes this automatic win.

Despite the fact that it feels like this game could've offered so much more on all fronts, it's still an amazingly fun ride. The story is standard-issue stuff as far as 40K goes, but it's definitely worth playing through, because the feel of the combat alone makes it endlessly gratifying. Shooter fans are sure to get a kick out of it, and Relic has once again treated the 40K licence with more than enough reverence to satiate die-hard followers. There's no other game out there that so brilliantly captures the feeling of being a hulking Space Marine, capable of obliterating countless enemies without getting even the tiniest of scratches on your flashy armour. NAG

**Barkskin**

**/1/ Multiplayer matches are brilliantly chaotic. Plasma cannon shots rain down like deadly purple hail, Assault Marines and Raptors tear through the air, crashing down with a powerful crunch to disrupt entrenched foes, and there are few things more immediately terrifying than seeing a Devastator or Havoc hunkering down to deliver their deadly payload.**

**/2/ Every aspect of the game has been designed to facilitate perpetual forward momentum. In addition to your regenerating armour, you regain health by performing brutal executions on stunned foes.**

**/ PLUS /** Incredibly potent combat / Looks and sounds lovely / Faithful to 40K / Chainswords!
**/ MINUS /** Gets repetitive in many ways

**DESPITE THE FACT THAT IT EVENTUALLY BECOMES A BIT STALE, *SPACE MARINE* IS A LOVINGLY CRAFTED BOOM-A-THON.**

**82**

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htc
quietly brilliant

# F1 2011

## Better candy from the lollipop man

Prior to *F1 2010*, it's safe to say that F1 games were less than exciting – in fact, they were rather dismal. With the success of last year's title from Codemasters, many racing enthusiasts and in particular F1 fans were expecting *F1 2011* to really distance itself from the previous effort. This time, Codemasters would have more experience in developing an F1 racing simulator and they were not working from ground zero.

*F1 2010* was not perfect. It had many faults that, at their worst, could detract from the entire experience. Nevertheless, given just how much of an improvement it was on anything else before, all infractions were forgivable.

With *F1 2011*, these little issues are not so easy to overlook. Largely because some of them persist from last year's title. For instance, there is are unique driver characteristics. The AI is improved for sure, but it's virtually identical for all drivers. What sets drivers apart from each other isn't reflected in this game and this can be annoying given just how well everything else works.

This was true for *F1 2010*, but considering expectations, it leaves us a little disappointed. Part of the magic about F1 is the individuals who partake in the sport and how they set themselves apart from their peers. Jenson Buttons' ability to make the right decision at the right time and save tires is one of his strong points and is what has put him in contention for a 2nd place finish in the 2011 season. In contrast, Vettel's ability to extract the most out of an incredible Red Bull car is what has won him the championship, making it his second in two years. These little nuances are strangely absent in *F1 2011*. In fact Red Bull, contrary to reality, is slower than both McLaren and Ferrari in this game. Mysterious and impossible performances by the likes of Vitaly Petrov and others of his ilk finishing in the points are a regular occurrence in this game.

If you can overlook such shortcomings *F1 2011* is a worthwhile update in the series. The inclusion of this season's rules, a safety car and such really add to the drama of the sport. More so now than before, your performances per race make a notable difference. Should you continue to outperform your teammate, you will become the focus of the R&D

### [ details ]

Platforms:
**360 / 3DS / PC PS3 / PS Vita**
Genre:
**Racing simulator**
Age restriction:
**3+**
DRM:
**Disc-based Internet connection required [GFWL]**
Multiplayer:
**Local: 2 players Online: 16 players**
Developer:
**Codemasters**
Website:
**www.formula1-game.com**
Publisher:
**Codemasters**
Distributor:
**Megarom**

**/1/ Improved weather effects add to the drama of the race weekend.**

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team. Perform admirably and above expectation and your targets change accordingly. So if you were only expected to finish 12th and you magically manage to win a race in a Force India, the following race will require you to finish solidly in the points. This does help you progress much faster in your career and offers from better teams will come quicker than if you merely fulfil the targets set out for you at the beginning of the season.

Visually, *F1 2011* is not much different to *F1 2010*. It is cleaner and the weather effects are improved, but short of that it seems to have less character than its predecessor. It does perform well and the perception of speed is improved making it somewhat easier to navigate and hit those brake points consistently. One of the problems with *F1 2010* was the unpredictable car handling, especially prevalent in cars from the lower-ranked teams. The amount of under- or over-steer in those cars was ridiculous to say the least, where they would lack down-force to the point of making sure that you relied solely on mechanical grip thereby destroying your tires significantly quicker than realistically possible at this level. This isn't the case in *F1 2011*; the cars all handle a little better and some may even find that the difference between cars like Red Bull's RB-7 and the Lotus T128 are significantly understated when in reality there is anything from three to six seconds a lap difference between the two.

The media interactions prior to the release of this game were said to have been improved, but this isn't the case. They remain largely the same, with the choices presented to you being anything but meaningful or compelling in any way. It's pretty much the same as what the previous title offered and as such serves no real purpose as you are still unable to connect with the on screen driver in a meaningful way. That you don't have a manager that actually speaks to you further diminishes any form of immersion or empathy you have for your onscreen persona.

Overall, this game feels more like a highly tweaked version of *F1 2010* than anything else. The real differences in this game are subtle and one can be forgiven for thinking DLC could have delivered the same experience. It's not a bad game by any stretch of the imagination and those who have *F1 2010* would do well to buy this title as an upgrade. One should do so however without expecting significant changes in how the game feels or functions. Fans returning to the title will be impressed by the detail with which Codemasters has recreated the tracks, especially where the racing line, elevation grip areas etc. are located. Despite whatever problems this game may have, it is head and shoulders above anything else out there that features an F1 car as an option and that includes *F1 2010*. **NAG**

**ShockG**

/ **PLUS** / More realistic than *F1 2010* / Looks a little better
/ **MINUS** / Not a significant improvement / Lacks polish in some areas

**SLIGHT IMPROVEMENTS ON *F1 2010* MAKE THIS THE BEST F1 TITLE TO DATE.**

**85**

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# Hard Reset

## You have died!

With all the hyper-realistic forays into the dark, gritty truth behind war, represented by scripted corridor shooters that manage to take place outdoors; it's nice to have a change of pace. *Hard Reset* reminds us of the good old days of first-person shooters, when we shot things for no reason and didn't stop to ask "whyyyyyyy?!?" but not everything is better when viewed through a pair of rose-tinted specs.

The Flying Wild Hog is made up of former People Can Fly, CD Projekt Red and City Interactive developers, and the influence from the *Painkiller* developers is obvious. Unfortunately, that influence stops at the gameplay, with the story obviously conceived, and the cutscenes written and directed, by someone who's never actually read a story before. There's something about a singularity event; the earth is overrun with machines that kill people. You're a soldier with some sort of high-tech weapon and you need to kill the machines. Then there's all this stuff that the developers try to intertwine into the story, but none of it matters because it's poorly told by ill-conceived and poorly acted (although rather well-illustrated) motion comics and voice-overs that after about ten minutes, you stop paying attention.

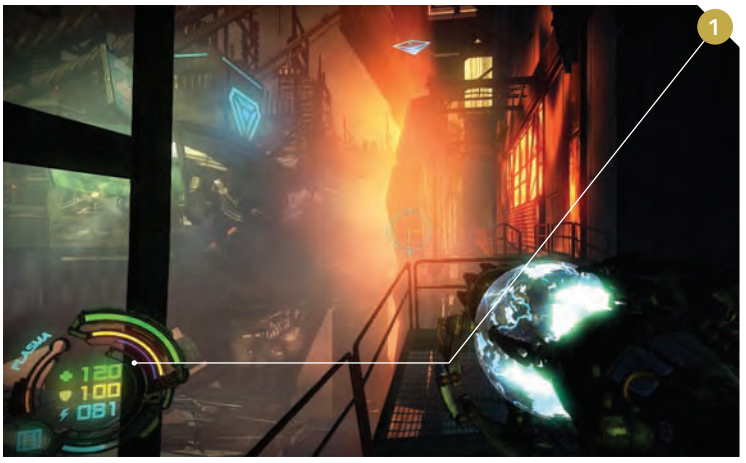
That's the bad stuff, or at least some of it, so here's some good stuff to make you feel better about setting yourself the task of reading this page: the gameplay itself is really fun. It's tough as nails on the hardest difficulty but exciting and challenging on the normal setting. Sometimes too challenging, actually, as a few of the boss battles will take you a handful of attempts to beat and the checkpoints are way too far apart. When you get the opportunity to stop shooting at robots that want you dead, you should take a look around the world – it's fantastic. The *Blade Runner* influences are everywhere in this futuristic cyberpunk world, and the level of detail in the environments is impressive. The world around you isn't just there to look good, however, as you'll have to make careful use of many different kinds of explosive and electrical traps to help you deal with the huge numbers of enemies you'll often face. For all the high-tech, fancy pants weapons you have, they often feel ineffectual and you'll be grateful to find an explosive barrel or two to make gunning down your enemies easier.

There are so many throwbacks to the old school way of playing – non-regenerating hitpoints, explosive walls with hidden secrets, vast waves of enemies, and boss battles – but a few modern FPS concepts like checkpoints, upgradeable weapons and vision blurring effects don't mix too well. As a result, the game feels like it's trying too hard to please everyone, and ultimately becomes just a bit of fun that won't leave an impression. And, as a game that pays such homage to the old school, the lack of multiplayer is most unfortunate. **NAG**

**GeometriX**

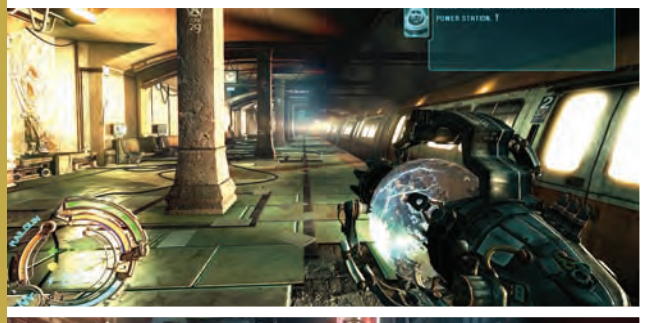
### [ details ]

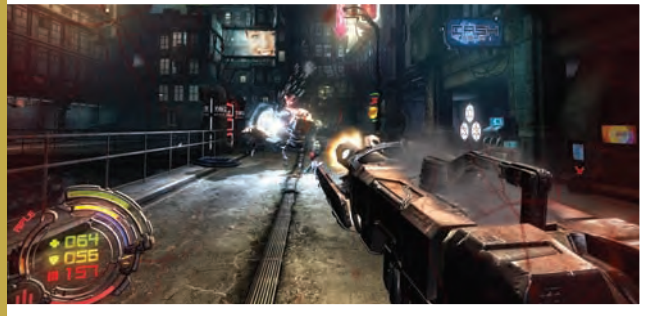
Platforms:
**PC**
Genre:
**First-person shooter**
Age restriction:
**18+**
DRM:
**Internet connection required [Steam]**
Multiplayer:
**Local: None**
**Online: None**
Developer:
**The Flying Wild Hog**
Website:
**www.hardresetgame.com**
Publisher:
**The Flying Wild Hog**
Distributor:
**Valve Corporation**



**/1/ Your health can only be regenerated by picking up green health orbs, but your ammo count will regenerate up to a certain point on its own. It's the game's way of saying "if you want to live, get out there and start killing some things!"**

**/2/ Your two basic weapons can be upgraded to offer up to five firing modes each (with alternative fire for each). Unfortunately, about half the upgrades are almost identical between the two weapons.**





**/ PLUS /** Fun, tough combat / Looks fantastic / Great environments
**/ MINUS /** Difficulty spikes / No multiplayer / Broken story / Unimpressive weapon upgrades

**IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING THAT REMINDS YOU OF *PAINKILLER* OR *SERIOUS SAM*, THIS IS A GREAT PLACE TO STOP FOR A FEW HOURS.**

**70**

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# Ace Combat: Assault Horizon

## I refuse to put a *Top Gun* reference here

Just when you think there isn't already enough *Call of Duty*-influenced gaming to be had out there, along comes a flight simulator that proves no genre is safe from *COD*'s touch [*Revvin' up your engine, listen to her howlin' roar, Ed*]. Ace Combat: Assault Horizon is loud, it's bombastic and it's got enough explosions to sink 1,000 aircraft carriers [*Metal under tension, beggin' you to touch and go, Ed*]. It's also ridiculously good fun, particularly if you've got no more than a passing interest in using various digitally recreated real-world planes to blow things up [*Highway to the Danger Zone, ride into the Danger Zone, Ed*].

Unlike most former titles in the series, *Assault Horizon* doesn't take place in the "Strangereal" alternate version of Earth, instead opting to ground itself in reality. It's given the designers a chance to run with their obvious *COD* inspirations. You'll hear characters talking about their tours of Iraq, and you'll see instantly recognisable locations like Dubai really come to life thanks to satellite imagery helping to flesh out the locations. It also means that it ditches the series' trademark "*Top Gun* meets anime" feel, which might immediately put off long-time fans.

That's not the only change that might put them off either. The control system has been overhauled, although you've got the option to switch between two control styles. The biggest change comes by way of Dogfight Mode, or DFM. Get close enough to an enemy, and you can mash two shoulder buttons to lock your aircraft into a semi-auto chase of whichever craft you've locked on to. Acceleration, deceleration, aiming and firing are still up to you, but the plane basically steers itself. At times, it's used to send you on wild, exhilarating scripted chases as the enemy weaves in between skyscrapers, through tight valleys and more. Centre the enemy in your sights long enough and you'll be able to fire a highly accurate rocket straight up their tailpipe, or you can use good old fashioned machine gun fire to bring them down. Kills in DFM usually result in a stylish, slow-motion shot of the enemy plane being torn apart by your fire, and these slow-motion killcams are used in other instances as well. Similar to DFM are ASM (Air Strike Mode, for air-to-ground attacks) and a mini-game for landing your plane, but neither feel as substantial an alteration as DFM.

There are more than just fighter jets here. There are missions that see you switching characters and piloting choppers, being the door gunner of a Black Hawk, manning the firepower of an AC-130 (more *COD* influence) and more. Unfortunately, even with all this gameplay variety, things do eventually become a bit monotonous, especially in the longer missions. It's in large part due to unimaginative mission objectives – the air-to-air missions, for example, more often than not simply involve downing wave after wave of enemy fighters.

Still, as an arcade flight simulator, it's one of the easiest to come to grips with for casual players. There's three-player online cooperative multiplayer for some of the missions, and competitive multiplayer (the 8v8 Capital Conquest mode – in which teams attack or defend a city – is the star of the show here) with perk-style unlocks in there as well. In short bursts, it's satisfyingly good fun. NAG

**Barkskin**

### [ details ]

Platforms:
**360 / PS3**
Genre:
**Arcade flight simulator**
Age restriction:
**16+**
DRM:
**None**
Multiplayer:
**Local: None**
**Online: 16 players**
Developer:
**Project Aces**
Website:
**acecombatassault-horizon.namcoban-daigames.eu**
Publisher:
**Namco Bandai Games**
Distributor:
**Megarom Interactive**

**/1/ This is Air Strike Mode in action. It assigns an entry point from which you start your strafing run, and you then move along a semi-fixed path destroying any ground forces along the way. It decreases your machine gun's heat generation and the cooldown time of your missiles, so that you can unleash fury faster.**

**/2/ Some of the craft you'll be flying include: F-22 Raptors, F-16 Fighting Falcons, F-117 Nighthawks, A-10 Thunderbolt IIs and the AH-64D Apache Longbow. There's even the opportunity to fly a B-2 Spirit stealth bomber.**

**/ PLUS /** Gameplay variety / Looks and sounds good / Easy to get into
**/ MINUS /** Gets monotonous / Mostly boring mission objectives

**LONG-TIME FANS OF THE SERIES MIGHT HATE IT, BUT IT'S GOOD FUN.**

75

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Look & Listen
For the Fans

# Supremacy MMA

## All bark...

There is a massive fascination with MMA these days. I guess if two guys want to beat each other to a pulp and use the excuse of it being a sport, that's okay... it worked for boxing, after all. But the fuss about mixed martial arts is massive at the moment, and everyone and his dog is trying to cash in on the idea.

Kung Fu Factory (developer), are joining the fray. Their *Supremacy MMA* join's THQ's UFC and EA's MMA franchises in what could prove to be a very lucrative fighting game market. But, unlike the two big names in the ring, *Supremacy MMA* falls flat in too many areas to make it a serious competitor.

First off, there are only pre-set characters to play, with no option to create your own brute. It's not too much of a problem, until you realise that all the characters have pretty lame back-stories, and are... well, rather un-engaging. This lack of character depth goes along with pretty bad voice acting.

### [ details ]

Platforms:
**360 / PS3**
Genre:
**Fighting**
Age restriction:
**18+**
DRM:
**None**
Multiplayer:
**Local: 2 players**
**Online: 2 players**
Developer:
**Kung Fu Factory**
Website:
**www.505games.com**
Publisher:
**505 Games**
Distributor:
**Apex Interactive**

**/1/ Damage is very visible on combatants.**

**/2/ The simple control scheme makes for easy fighting in all situations.**

One thing that the game does get right is the control scheme. Rather than bog down the player with complicated concepts, *Supremacy MMA* presents a simple, yet effective set of controls to use during fights. The finger gymnastics required by other MMA titles doesn't exist here, which is great, and strikes, grapples and ground-attacks are fairly easy to use.

The implication that goes along with that is that this is a fast-paced fighting title, but that is not what's happening here. The game feels slow, and the fighters seem oddly clumsy as the player desperately tries to land a blow or two. Their reaction times are off, and living through a fight can be a painful experience for the player. The game has a super-fast control scheme, but still feels sluggish.

Graphically, *Supremacy MMA* is solid, particularly when it comes to dealing damage. The characters show the marks of their sport beautifully in the game, although some of the animations feel a little off.

But the overall package does little to elevate itself as a fighting game. And that's essentially what it is: a side-on fighter, much like one would expect from *Mortal Kombat* or *Street Fighter*, with an MMA theme. The player, as with those titles, spends more time concentrating on their life-bar than planning strategies, and the game does lend itself to button mashing – although more out of desperation than necessity.

*Supremacy MMA* has an MMA theme, sure, but that's as close as it comes to being a simulation of this sport. In truth, it is little more than a fighting game, and a mediocre one at that. It certainly will not be king of the ring. **NAG**

**Ramjet**

**/ PLUS /** Easy controls / Nice 'damage' model
**/ MINUS /** Sluggish / Not a simulator

***SUPREMACY MMA* MAY STYLE ITSELF AS AN MMA SIMULATOR, BUT IT IS LITTLE MORE THAN A MEDIOCRE FIGHTING TITLE.**

**50**

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Look & Listen For the Fans

# Jonah Lomu Rugby Challenge

## Down Under

There was quite a bit of smack-talk leading up to the release of the two big names in rugby simulations – the only two rugby simulations, actually – as the World Cup drew closer and closer. Well, both games are out now, so the proof is in the pudding. And of the two major rugby releases, the latter is the sweeter.

In truth, the only thing that brings *Jonah Lomu Rugby Challenge* down is the fact that it has too few licensed teams. Unless you want to play the game with Australian or New Zealand teams (ok, and a few others) you're going to be getting some odd player names, altered team names and inaccurate kit. South African regional squads, for example, aren't called things like the Bulls or the Lions or the Sharks. Rather, they are identified by their regions, like Pretoria, or Johannesburg. But here's the thing – they're there. Where the *Rugby World Cup* game had all the national sides, there were no provincial club teams or competitions to speak of. That particular title was all about the World Cup, where *JLRC* gives the player more options, and possibly more longevity. And, if you're really into it, you can go through the painstaking process of renaming everything you care to. The kits will never be perfect, but that's not really a train-smash.

*Jonah Lomu Rugby Challenge* is also a more complex game, in terms of controls, but it is only slightly so. That said, the player has far more options when it comes to playing the game, and certain aspects of the title, like managing players during rucks, are far more manageable and strategic, thanks to this added complexity.

One of the great aspects of this title is that it has a tutorial. It's slightly tougher accessibility is mitigated by this, and the game is easier to come to grips with thanks to it. It's not a very long tutorial, but it is enough to get the player going.

With good graphics and decent sound, not to mention the fact that it does a very fine job in capturing the feel of this often complex sport, *JLRC* is an awesome title for rugby fans who want a virtual version of the sport. It has a lot going for it.

But it will take tweaking for those who want a brilliant experience. Aside from the licenses, the player will need to make a few changes to make sure that the game runs the way they want it. The default camera setting, for example, is extremely nasty, but changing it is fairly simple.

In the end, this is a great option for rugby enthusiasts... and let's be honest, there are very few South Africans who don't fall into that category. **NAG**

**Ramjet**

### [ details ]

Platforms:
**360 / PC / PS3**
Genre:
**Sports**
Age restriction:
**3+**
DRM:
**Disc-based**
Multiplayer:
**Local: 4 players**
**Online: 4 players**
Developer:
**Sidhe**
Website:
**rugbychallengegame.com**
Publisher:
**Alternative**
Distributor:
**Megarom**

/1/ **'At least it's the 'real' All Blacks doing their silly dance...'**

/2/ **'Controlling elements like rucks is much less haphazard in this one.'**

/ **PLUS** / Tutorial mode / Nice strategy elements
/ **MINUS** / Not enough licenses / Nasty default camera

***JLRC* IS A VERY WELL BALANCED, GOOD LOOKING, ACCESSIBLE RUGBY TITLE.**

**85**

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## By the Numb3rs

# #10

According to a recent survey undertaken by NVIDIA, in 2011 PC hardware is potentially 10x faster than current-generation consoles. Analysts commissioned by the graphics chip maker state that PC gaming revenue will overtake consoles by 2014.

### Ultra Bright USB LED Light

Ideal for use with a notebook, you simply plug the LED into a USB port and position it where you need it, via the flexible metal wire. In a dark room it basically lights up your entire desk.

**R70 | www.digitalplanet.co.za**

### JOYSTICK-IT Pad

If you play a lot of games on your tablet or mobile phone then this cool little joystick is a must-buy. It can be used with the iPad, most Android tablets, and mobile phones that have capacitive touchscreen displays.

**R99 | www.digitalplanet.co.za**

# Corsair Dream Machine

At rAge, the Corex Alliance announced 10 of SA's top players in *StarCraft II* and 10 in *Call of Duty Black Ops*, based on individual League Results, so a total of 20 players all together. Voting then started on the Corex Alliance Facebook page where the public could go and vote for their favourite player. At the end of this month-long voting period two final winners (one *Black Ops* and one *StarCraft* player) will each be awarded with a Corsair Dream Machine to the value of R30,000, and the opportunity to continue to review products and brands under the Corex Alliance logo.

**Here are the specs of the PC:**

- Corsair 600T white chassis
- Corsair Enthusiast Gold 750ax PSU
- Corsair Vengeance Low Profile 16GB 1600MHz RAM
- Corsair Force 3 SSD 120GB
- Corsair H100 Extreme CPU Liquid Cooler
- AMD 6 Core CPU
- MSI 990FXA-GD65 Motherboard
- MSI GTX560 Ti Twin Frozr III
- TTesports – Keyboard, Mouse, Headset, Mousepad and Bag
- Monitor

## Quote

"We're proud of our one billion milestone, but we're even more amazed at the way people have used Google Earth to explore the world"

**- Brian McClendon, VP of Engineering, Google Earth and Maps.**

*Google Earth has been downloaded over a billion times since it launched six years ago. This figure is a cumulative tally of all Google Earth platforms, including the desktop client, mobile apps, and the Google Earth plug-in.*

# Mosh Pit

### iPhone 4 Keyboard
Connecting this wireless QWERTY keyboard to your iPhone 4 via Bluetooth allows you to switch between your touch screen and the actual keyboard.
**R369 | www.digitalplanet.co.za**

### dLAN 200 AV Wireless N Powerline Adapter
Whether you're using WLAN or a network cable to connect your game consoles and TV to the Internet, the dLAN 200 allows you to easily set up individual WLAN zones in your house, and connect up to three cable-based devices, using just one adapter.
**R1,260 | www.galasol.co.za**

### Superhero 4GB Flash Drive Key Ring
The Pink Ninja or Batman are one of a selection of super hero 4GB USB Memory Sticks you can choose from. There's also Captain America, the Flash and the Hulk.
**R149 | www.digitalplanet.co.za**

## Snippets

**CM Storm announced a new gaming mouse**, the CM Storm Xornet. Xornet is apparently the first mouse with on-the-fly USB speed adjustments, which allows you to switch from 125Hz to 250Hz, 500Hz or 1000Hz with the push of a button.

**The Tritton Detonator**, from MadCatz and Microsoft, will be the first in a series of official 360 headphones. Features include a USB cord, stereo sound, a detachable boom mic, voice monitoring capabilities and an in-line volume control.

**Corsair have announced their new line of Vengeance PC gaming peripherals**, which include two gaming keyboards and two laser gaming mice: The Vengeance K60 and Vengeance K90 gaming keyboards and the Vengeance M60 and Vengeance M90 gaming mice.

**MSI recently held their fourth annual MSI Master Overclocking Arena** competition in Taipei, Taiwan. Sixteen teams worldwide competed using benchmarks Super PI 32M, 3DMark 11 and 3DMark 2001SE. Previous winners Romania won the competition.

**Thermaltakes new V3 BlacX Edition chassis** is an evolution of the V3 Black Edition Chassis with the BlacX docking station mounted on the top.

**NZXT has launched the Phantom Big-Tower in pink,** which is intended for the female gamer base. It will also come equipped with USB3.0 connectivity.

**The CM Storm Trooper full-tower chassis** is the first in its class to include an ultra-strong carrying handle. Other features include full dust filter coverage, a fan controller, an external SSD drive hot-swap dock and two uniquely designed modular hard drive cages.

**ASUS will soon be adding to its ROG product** line-up with its first desktop system - the ROG CG8565 Tytan. It's an Intel based system built around the Z68 chipset. The Tytan comes with a one-button overclocking feature that shifts between three overclock modes allowing you to take the ooptional Intel Core i7 2600K chip to 4.6GHz.

# Nintendo 3DS

## [ info ]

RRP:
**R1,899**
Website:
**www.nintendo.com/3ds**

## [ technical ]

Weight:
**235 grams**
Dimensions:
**134x74x21mm**
Chipset:
**Nintendo ARM processor with custom PICA200 graphics processor**
RAM:
**128MB FCRAM**
Storage:
**2GB NAND flash memory; SD/SDHC card; cartridge save**
Media:
**3DS, DS and DSi cartridge support**
Display:
**Primary 3.53" 800x240 (effective 400x240) glasses-free 3D display; secondary 3.02" 320x240 resistive touchscreen**
Connectivity:
**2.4GHz Wi-Fi; Infra-red**

## [ summary ]

/ Pros:
**Great controls; Extra features; Social aspect**

/ Cons:
**Poor battery life; Inconsistent 3D experience**

/ Alternatives:
**Sony PSP (now)**
**Sony PS Vita (soon)**

Mobile gaming has grown in leaps and bounds in the last few years. Smartphones do battle with dedicated gaming devices on a daily basis, with more and more games available on a variety of platforms. Regardless of the power offered by many smartphones these days, it's almost impossible to beat a dedicated machine that has physical buttons designed specifically for gaming. The 3DS is Nintendo's current champion, offering everything you'd need from a handheld platform, and a little bit more.

### /1/ SLIDE PAD

This analogue nub is the best way to control in-game characters that don't require precise movements. It's smooth to use and measures slightly larger than the original PSP's equivalent, with a rubber coating to ensure your thumb never slips.

### /2/ D-PAD

Some titles will allow players to use either the slide pad or d-pad for character movement (specifically fighting games), whereas others use the d-pad for quick weapon changes, aerial manoeuvres, or other specific controls.

### /3/ FACE BUTTONS

These little guys look and behave exactly the way you'd expect.

### /4/ SHOULDER BUTTONS:

We haven't found many games that depend on the use of these buttons, but they're there for those titles that demand extra controls.

### /5/ TOUCH-SCREEN

The lower screen features resistive single-touch input for a variety of games. This screen is used for inventory management, map display, access to special abilities or any number of features. Having a dedicated display for these sorts of features is a great way to keep the main screen clutter-free, and the addition of touch input allows for virtually unlimited control schemes.

### /6/ BITS AND PIECES

There's a volume slider on the left, and a Wi-Fi on/off toggle on the right. The iconic Select/Start buttons are always accessible, and a quick tap of the Home button suspends the current game to allow you to return to the device's main menu. The 3D slider on the right of the top half allows you to reduce or increase the impression of 3D for the top screen.

## To 3D, or not to 3D...

...that is indeed the question, and we still can't decide on which we prefer. We've chatted to a lot of people who have their own preferences, complaints one way or the other, and opinions on the matter, but ultimately the choice is yours. Using the 3D slider, you can adjust the distance at which your eyes will need to focus to achieve the 3D effect without causing everything to look blurry. Think of those 3D images from the '90s – if you were "good" at them, then you'll be fine here. Our advice is to start at the lowest setting and work your way up to whatever you're comfortable with. If you find that the 3D is just too distracting or causes you strain, then you can switch it off. We've found that some games look great with 3D enabled, while others look just fine without it.

# What's inside?

Even if you buy your 3DS without a single game (which would be silly), you'll still have access to a few neat toys to keep you entertained.

### 3DS Camera
The 3DS uses dual front cameras to capture images in 3D or 2D. Those images can then be viewed in a gallery or shared.

### 3DS Sound
Record audio directly through the device's microphone, edit audio clips and string them together.

### Mii Maker
Just like on the Wii, you can create your very own avatar to be used in supported games and for all your virtual socialising both online and through StreetPass. You can even use the inside camera to capture your likeness and create a (very rough) approximation of your virtual self.

### StreetPass Mii Plaza
By simply walking around with your 3DS in sleep mode, you'll be able to populate your device with the virtual likenesses of other 3DS users. Their Miis, together with their profiles, can be copied to your device and used in two games: Puzzle Swap and StreetPass Quest. The former requires that other Miis give you puzzle pieces to unlock hidden 3D images, and the latter sees you gather other heroes to help fight ghosts and unlock hats (of course) for your Mii.

### AR Games
Use the included Augmented Reality cards to turn your surroundings into a game. It's weird, but pretty entertaining.

### Face Raiders
Photograph yourself, your friends, your cat or a drawing of a banana with a face, and transform them into flying pests that you'll shoot at to gain points. It makes heavy use of the gyroscope so you can look like a crazy person waving about your 3DS at things that aren't really there.

# Nintendo 3DS - The games

## Dead or Alive: Dimensions

Perfect for those who played and loved the *Dead or Alive* series, *Dimensions* is a scaled-down "recap" of the entire series. In Chronicle Mode, players can play through an abridged version of all four core *Dead or Alive* titles, complete with pertinent characters and cut-scenes, although the cut-scenes have pretty weak animations and would benefit from higher production values.

26 playable fighters from across the series are present, with alternate costumes, including Bayman, Christie, Gen Fu, Leon, Tina Armstrong, Kokoro, and even Ryu Hayabusa from the Ninja Gaiden series.

For a handheld fighter, *Dimensions* is surprisingly rich. The four face buttons are used for punch, kick, guard/counter, and throw, with high/mid/low variations available on all basic attacks. The bottom screen is used to display combos for your current character, which we think is a perfect use of the screen that would otherwise feel tacked-on in a fighting game.

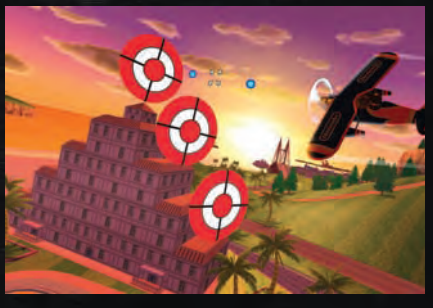
**BOTTOM LINE/** WHETHER YOU'RE A FAN OF THE SERIES OR A NEWCOMER, *DIMENSIONS* IS A SOLID FIGHTER WITH PLENTY OF DEPTH, BOTH TECHNICALLY AND, SURPRISINGLY, IN NARRATIVE.

## Pilotwings Resort

If you haven't heard of the *Pilotwings* series, you'd be forgiven for thinking that this game came out of nowhere. *Pilotwings* was first launched in 1992 on the Super Nintendo, and even saw a sequel in 1997 for the Nintendo N64. Like its predecessors, *Pilotwings Resort* is all about flying, although *Resort* is a little less focused on the simulation side of things, it instead opts for a more forgiving, Wii-style approach.

You'll take your Mii to the skies in an aeroplane, hang-glider or jetpack. Each has its own control scheme and style of flight, and has its own set of challenges to accomplish on the fictional Wuhu Island, on which *Pilotwings* Resort takes place.

*Pilotwings Resort* is a fun, silly sort of game, but the higher-tier challenges can get pretty tough, so you know there's room for every level of gamer here.



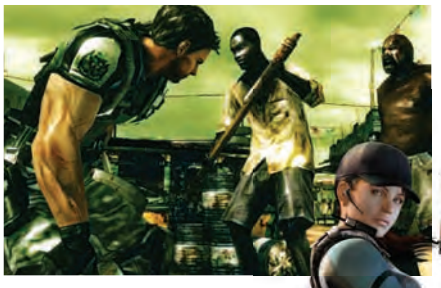
**BOTTOM LINE/** LIGHT-HEARTED AND ENTERTAINING. IT'S NOT TERRIBLY DEEP BUT SHOULD OFFER ENOUGH OF A CHALLENGE TO GAMERS OF MOST SKILL LEVELS.

## Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D

From the screenshots, *Mercenaries* looks like a nifty scaled-down version of *Resident Evil 5*, but unfortunately, so much has been ripped out from the original game that this hardly even classifies as a part of the series.

In *Mercenaries*, you'll play as one of eight *Resident Evil* characters, including Chris Redfield, Jill Valentine and "HUNK". Each character has access to up to three weapons that you'll use to dispatch waves of enemies in familiar *Resi 5* settings. You need to kill all enemies on each map within a specified time limit, and can collect ammo, green herbs, grenades and time bonuses as you make your way through your environment. That's about it, really. There's no explanation of why you're doing any of this, or even what the enemy is that you're fighting (they're just "the enemy"), so to the untrained spectator, this could well seem like a game that features armed soldiers gunning down poor people.

The only saving grace here is that *Mercenaries* comes with a very brief playable preview of *Resident Evil: Revelations*, which looks and feels like a proper *Resident Evil*. From what we played, *Revelations* is going to be well suited to the platform.



**BOTTOM LINE/** A DECENT TECH DEMO FOR THINGS TO COME, AND IN ITSELF FAIRLY FUN IN A SIMPLE WAY, BUT NOT WORTHY OF THE *RESIDENT EVIL* TITLE.

# Super Street Fighter IV 3D

One would think that scaling down a full-size fighting game to this tiny portable format would force it to leave behind something... anything. You'd think so, but you'd be wrong. *Super Street Fighter IV 3D* is the entire *SSF IV* experience crammed into the 3DS, complete with the full roster of characters, moves and gameplay modes, as well as a few new tricks especially for this version.

If you have StreetPass set up and enabled, your 3DS keeps track of your own fighting abilities and will then "fight" against other StreetPass-enabled 3DSes, and you'll receive a notification to let you know how you performed. Then, you can choose to challenge those other players online when you get home to see just how accurate your virtual presence was.

BOTTOM LINE/ A GREAT PORT OF A GREAT GAME. IT'S GOT EVERYTHING YOU NEED.

# Star Fox 64 3D

One of the neat things about the 3DS is that it's perfectly positioned, in terms of processing power, to give players access to ports of some of the better N64 games. Like *Zelda*, mentioned elsewhere on this page, *Star Fox 64 3D* is an almost one-for-one recreation of the original N64 title, and one that's been in the Nintendo stables since its 1993 debut on the Super Nintendo.

True to its lineage, *Star Fox* sees players take on the role of Fox McCloud – ace Arwing pilot and would-be saviour of the Lylat system that the evil genius Andross seeks to destroy. Not that the story really matters here, as this mostly on-rails shooter requires your twitch-shooting abilities over anything else.

At first glance, it appears as though not much has changed since the N64 version, but all of the game's textures have been redrawn, and the audio has received a much-needed overhaul. While the visual changes are appreciated, it's pretty tough to spot the differences on this tiny screen. The game offers two control schemes: classic N64 and motion-controlled 3DS. The 3DS controls make use of the device's built-in gyroscope, and feel pretty decent to use, but as soon as you attempt to use gyro controls with 3D enabled, you'll be in for a tough time due to the system's requirement that you keep your eyes centred on the screen to see the 3D effect (as opposed to the brain-hurting blur you'll get otherwise).

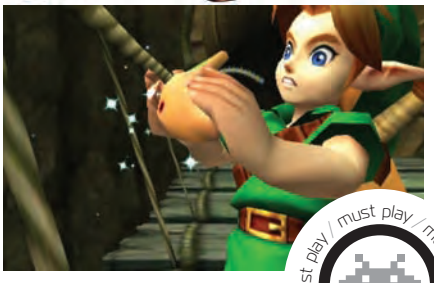
The game also includes a few multiplayer modes for up to four Wi-Fi-linked players using a single cartridge. Online play is missing, and while this is a welcome break from the standard game, it doesn't really add much depth to the package.

BOTTOM LINE/ A SOLID REMAKE THAT FEELS GOOD, BUT DOESN'T OFFER MUCH THAT'S CONSIDERABLY NEW.

# The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D

When the 3DS was announced, a 3D port of *Ocarina* was one of the most anticipated titles for the platform, and we're happy to say that it doesn't disappoint – provided you weren't expecting much more than a port.

Like *Star Fox*'s port, *Ocarina 3D* features completely re-drawn textures that you'd be hard-pressed to actually notice. Similarly, the gameplay has made a smooth transition to the small screen, although *Ocarina* benefits from an excellent map/inventory screen that occupies the bottom screen. As an action-RPG (with platforming elements), *Ocarina* definitely benefits from this control system as it keeps up the game pace and ensures you're never forced to leave the action to see where exactly you are. Likewise, the 3D display is excellent, and creates plenty of depth thanks to the many outdoor environments and the importance of platforms, bridges and jumping stones in this game.



BOTTOM LINE/ THERE'S NOT MUCH TO IT; *OCARINA OF TIME 3D* IS THE *ZELDA* YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR ON THE 3DS.

## Display
**Samsung P2770HD**
www.samsung.co.za

## Motherboard
**GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD9**
www.gigabyte.com

## Storage drive
**Seagate Barracuda XT 2TB**
www.seagate.com

dream machine

# Dream Machine

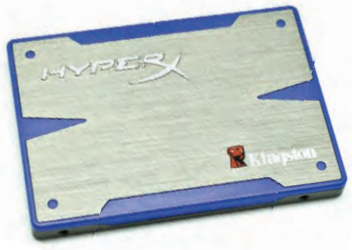
| | |
|---|---|
| Processor | R8,999 |
| Motherboard | R6,275 |
| Graphics | R5,499 |
| PSU | R2,399 |
| Memory | R1,899 |
| OS drive | R5,699 |
| Storage drive | R1,499 |
| CPU cooler | R1,099 |
| Case | R1,799 |
| Display | R4,799 |
| Keyboard | R1,899 |
| Mouse | R899 |
| Mousemat | R319 |
| Sound | R2,599 |
| Speakers 5.1 | R3,699 |

**TOTAL: R49,381**

## PSU
**Antec High Current Pro 1200 Watt PSU**
www.antec.com

## OS drive
**Kingston HyperX 240GB SSD**
www.kingston.com

NEW




## Processor
**Intel Core i7 980X**
www.intel.com

## Mouse
**Roccat Kone[+]**
www.roccat.org

## Keyboard
**Logitech G19**
www.logitech.com

## CPU cooler
**Corsair H100 Extreme Performance Liquid CPU Cooler**
www.corsair.com

## Speakers 5.1
**Logitech Z-5500 Digital**
www.logitech.com

## Mousemat
**Roccat Alumic**
www.roccat.org

## Case
**Coolermaster HAF X 942**
www.sonicinformed.co.za

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

## Memory
**Corsair Dominator GT 2000C8**
www.corsair.com

## Graphics
**MSI GTX580 Lightning**
www.msi.com

# To upgrade or not to upgrade

For every new platform, over the last six or seven years, it seems both AMD and Intel can't help but promise us a new way of doing our computing. Naturally this is expected, given that selling computers grows increasingly harder every year. However, one can't help but think that most of these promises never really materialize for the end user. Sure enough, the technologies employed by these new platforms do work, but I'm not entirely convinced that they warrant any investment from the end user.

A classic example is the triple channel IMC as found on the X58 platform. It is indeed working, and its performance advantage is easily measured in synthetic memory tests, however it remains meaningless everywhere else. In fact, all dual-channel systems employed by the P55 and LGA1155 supporting chipsets deliver better performance in those very tests. Obviously more efficient IMCs are the cause but the bottom line remains that, for end users it makes no difference at all.

**"Sure enough the benchmarks will report the discrepancy in performance in an astounding way, but the truth is most people have not changed their computing habits for at least a decade."**

It's easy to understand why vendors sell all kinds of useless gimmicky hardware, but for these two companies charged with shaping our computing experiences, there has to be a better way to make all these advances relevant. Right now, at the end of 2011, we have more powerful processing units in our phones than what super computers had in the early '90s. The difference however is, while that power was used to change the world back then, today that power is used mainly on checking Facebook updates.

Today, there's not a compelling reason why anybody should upgrade their machines that are 4 or 5 years old. Sure enough the benchmarks will report the discrepancy in performance in an astounding way, but the truth is most people have not changed their computing habits for at least a decade. You could watch movies 15 years ago, pretty much the same way you do now. Indeed the experience is significantly better, but that's not due to any platform or computing power advances.

The real change is in how seamless the same interactions we had many years ago are today, and that's something quite abstract and not easy to put into a bullet point. It is, however, the only thing that is meaningful to end users. You can't measure it synthetically like you can IMC efficiency, but it's so much more important.

How we go from social interactions, to web browsing, video content and gaming within the same framework is something we take for granted, yet it is only in the last six years or so that we have been able to do that without hassle or pause. This is only possible because of the advances we have made in computing power and obviously storage.

A SATA 6gbps controller doesn't mean anything to anyone really. Sure enough if you're reading this you know what that is, but does it mean anything to you and the way you interact with your PC? Chances are it doesn't so native support for it in the latest platforms means nothing to you.

At most it speaks of your potential upgrade path, but that should not be something one even considers when purchasing or building a PC. Yet that is how these platforms are sold. I suspect that end users would make better decisions and potentially spend more if these manufacturers would focus on what real value they bring to the users with their technologies instead of selling technology itself with no real application to how we use our computers.

**Neo Sibeko**

# ASUS ROG MARS II

Supplier: **ASUS** / Website: **za.asus.com** / RRP: **R16,000**

If you don't remember the previous ASUS MARS card, then you probably missed out on the most ridiculous graphics card of the DirectX10 generation. It was massive, cost a fortune but was incredibly fast. An exercise in engineering, a halo product that hopefully convinces Joe Soap to buy other ASUS graphics cards, even though they share nothing in common with the MARS.

ASUS has done it again with the MARS II. This card features two GF110 Cores, operating at 782MHz, which if you're not aware is actually faster than the reference GTX 580 clock by 10MHz (ASUS style) and over 170MHz faster than the reference GTX 590.

All this performance translates into ridiculous numbers, in fact the pixel pushing power is so staggering that a 4GHZ 2600K or Core i7 990X will not be able to extract the most out of this graphics card. Should you be the kind of person who thinks having two of these in SLI is somehow useful you'll find that there's no CPU you can buy on any platform that will power this setup sufficiently enough to warrant the spend on it.

So if the numbers do not move you, forgive us, it's only because we have to keep the same system configuration for all our benchmarks and as a result our host system is underpowered and incapable of powering the MARS II. This was very evident in 3D Mark Vantage where the GPU score was twice as high as the CPU score. Ideally it should be the other way around and in a perfect world you'd want these numbers to be around the same figure. However with the MARS II it's not going to happen.

The MARS II is what we call excessive and unnecessary. However it doesn't mean it does not have a market. 3D Vision changes everything and if you want to max out all games, current and any in the near future, while making use of stereoscopic 3D, you'll want this kind of power. In that context you'll not need a massively overclocked CPU or a mega tasking CPU such as the 12 thread Core i7 or AMD FX 8 core CPUs. You'll be graphics card bound (barely) in titles like *The Witcher 2, Crysis 2, BattleField 3* and others at highest visual settings which will bring down those stratospheric numbers and in some way make this a worthwhile purchase for the ultra-high end gamers with incredibly deep pockets.

hardware award / hardware award / hardware award

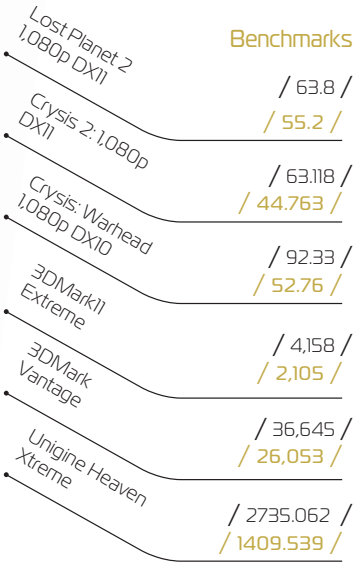
## [ specs ]

Core:
**782MHz GF110 (40nm)**
Processors:
**1024**
Render Outputs:
**96**
Memory:
**3072MB GDDR5 4GHz (384.8GB/sec)**
API:
**DirectX11/OpenGL 4.x/OpenCL 1.X/ PhysX/CUDA**

The US Dollar price for this card is $1,000 and what that translates into locally is not worth going into. Suffice to say, if you have to ask you're likely going to find it too expensive to even dream about.

Performance aside, this card is only at home in a deserving machine. By that we're not talking about the CPU to match only, but the rest of the machine must come to the party, so look at 16GB of RAM, a 3D Vision monitor (or even better, "3D Vision Surround"), a massive XL-ATX motherboard and a PSU in the order of 850Watts or more. It may seem like a little too much to ask for, but the power draw on this card can exceed 600watts at full load. When overclocked that number shoots up dramatically and will most certainly not be suitable for anything less than a 1 KW unit.

There will be no faster, or at least grander, graphics card to come out in this generation. The MARS II is a simple representation of what ASUS can afford to do which no other competitor can. Indeed there are plenty of GTX 590s on the market, but none are anything close to what the MARS II represents. It is still a ridiculously large card; in fact it's even larger than the original




Baseline: NVIDIA GeForce GTX580

"All this performance translates into ridiculous numbers, in fact the pixel pushing power is so staggering that a 4GHZ 2600K or Core i7 990X will not be able to extract the most out of this graphics card."

MARS, dwarfing everything else in the computer or on the motherboard. It's a three-slot behemoth that will certainly not fit in most mid-range cases and in some high-end units as well. This one is for the people who spare no cost on their PCs and have just about the best of everything money can buy.

There are only 999 units of the MARS II if that kind of thing matters to you. Each card is individually labelled and thus, a true collector's item if there is such a thing in this industry. What prevents this from being a truly unique and somewhat worthwhile experience to some is that, after spending so much on a graphics card you will not get a single game with it. Sad indeed, but then again in ASUS' defence, if you can afford this kind of equipment, a free game that you most likely have already is hardly going to impress you, and if anything, just add to the stack of DVDs and CDs that you receive packaged with virtually everything these days.

In closing, we can't say this is the most impressive graphics card we have ever seen that isn't quite what this is. It is certainly the biggest, the most power-hungry, the fastest and by far the most expensive ever, but it is not the most impressive. Simply because such products are virtually non-existent at retail level all over the world and what may be posing as exclusivity is merely a hardware vendor limiting the manufacturing of a part that is probably not profitable but works as a marketing tool. After all, it's a fact that as of now, "ASUS makes the fastest graphics card on Earth."

It's hard to like this card and see it as anything other than excessive in all respects, but you can't argue the numbers and they are nothing short of unbelievable. As such it is deserving of our Hardware Award if only for being the fastest graphics card we have tested to date. **NAG**

**Neo Sibeko**

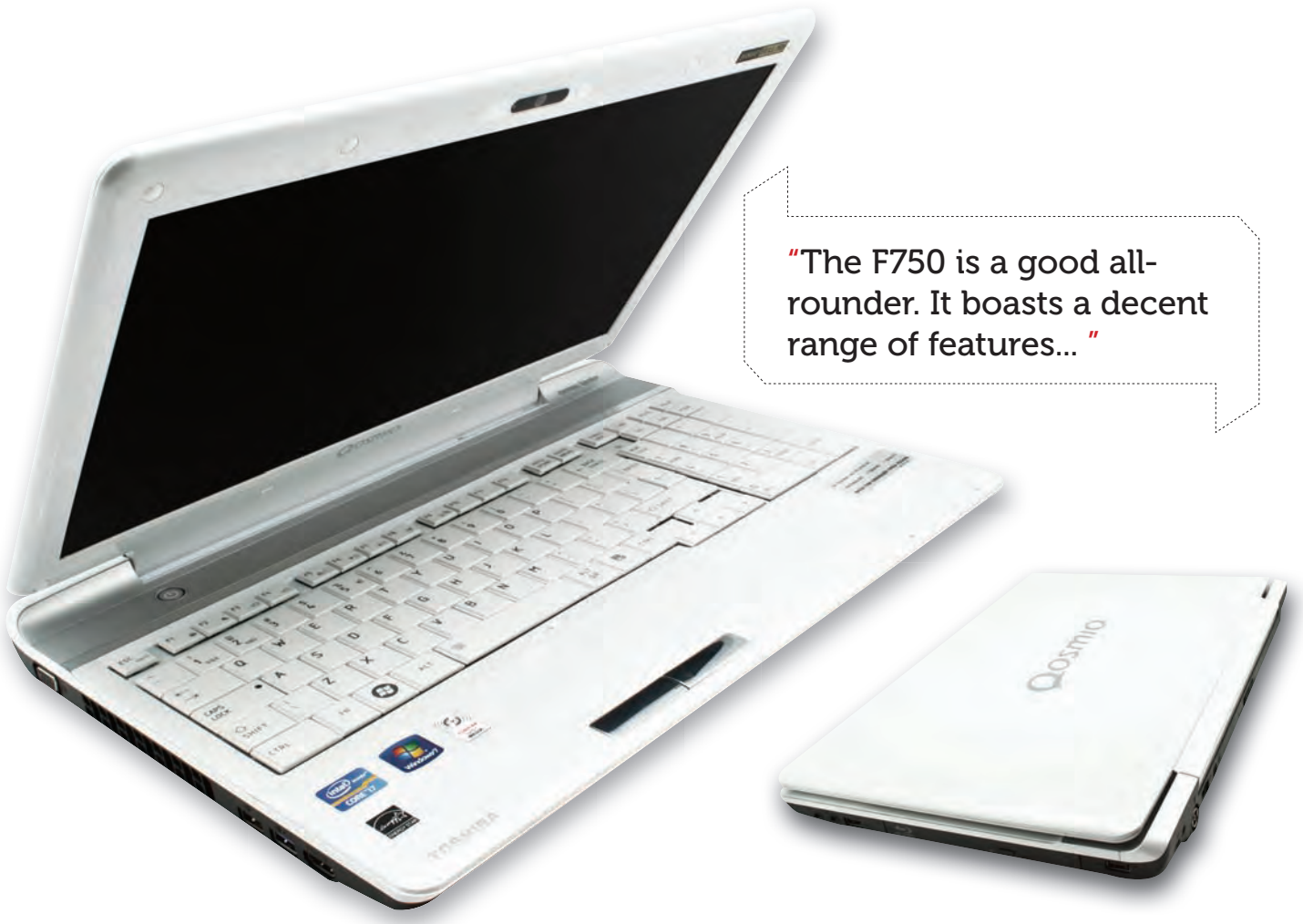
**/ PLUS /** Incredibly fast
**/ MINUS /** It's the size of a toddler / Price / Power draw

**THE FASTEST GRAPHICS CARD ON THE PLANET.**

**8**
OUT OF 10

# Toshiba Qosmio F750 3D

Supplier: **Toshiba** / Website: **http://uk.computers.toshiba-europe.com/innovation/series/Qosmio-F750-series/1108007** / RRP: **R14,999**



"The F750 is a good all-rounder. It boasts a decent range of features... "

Glasses-free 3D is definitely the way forward in pushing 3D on the mainstream market. Thus far, the technology has yielded mixed results, but Toshiba wants to get in on the action by releasing what they're calling the world's first glasses-free 3D notebook. It's the latest in the Qosmio series of notebooks, and it offers a good range of features and decent all-round performance to complement its main selling point.

I can't decide if I like the all-white aesthetic that Toshiba has gone for with it, but it definitely catches the eye and looks unique. The keyboard will be instantly familiar to anyone who's fiddled with a Qosmio before, offering satisfying key strokes and comfortable use. The touch-sensitive keys that once adorned the entire length of the notebook above the keyboard (or ran down the side of it, in the case of newer models) now occupy a much smaller space on the top-right edge, above the numpad keys. It's here that you'll find the key for enabling the glasses-free 3D effect.

We didn't have much choice when it came to testing the 3D. The test unit came pre-installed with three Blu-ray quality clips that could be viewed in 2D or 3D – so we've not had the opportunity to test it out in games, since we currently don't have any 3D games that are supported by the F750's glasses-free tech.

Still, the clips were enough to prove what this notebook is capable of. It makes impressive use of the webcam to track the user's face, displaying a different image to each eyeball to ensure that the 3D effect is visible even when you move your head. It's definitely clever, and we almost wish Nintendo's 3DS used similar face-tracking tech. It's not perfect though, and there's one downside that needs to be highlighted – only one person can view the 3D effect at a time, so no party viewing here. Still, with only a 15.6-inch display, we don't imagine multiple people will be viewing this display anyway. To offset this, you could always use the HDMI output to stream 3D content from the notebook to a 3D-capable television.

The effect itself is clear enough and easy on the eyes, but it's not the same level of quality that can be achieved with active shutter glasses. It's also quite a shallow result and unquestionably blurry compared to active 3D, but it's not a deal breaker. A nice feature is the ability to view 2D and 3D content simultaneously – you could have a 2D document and a 3D movie sharing the screen, for example.

Performance wise, the F750 is decent, but nothing extraordinary. The *Resident Evil 5* benchmark running at 1,920 x 1,080 with 2xAA at the highest settings achieves an average frame rate of 27.8. Unigine Heaven in DirectX 10 mode with 16xAF at 1680x1050 achieved a score of 378. 3DMark Vantage with the performance profile selected awarded the F750 4,440 3DMarks. They're not great scores, but you'll still be able to run most games – provided you're willing to make some sacrifices in visual quality.

The F750 is a good all-rounder. It boasts a decent range of features, coupled with performance that can be expected from its price. The glasses-free 3D, its main draw card, isn't perfect, but it's nevertheless quite impressive. NAG

**Dane Remendes**

## [ specs ]

CPU:
**Intel Core i7-2630QM 2GHz**
GPU:
**NVIDIA GeForce GT 540M**
RAM:
**8GB DDR3 1,333MHz**
Display:
**15.6-inch Full HD 3D** display
HDD:
**450GB**
Audio:
**Harman Kardon stereo speakers, Dolby Advanced Audio**
Drive:
**Blu-ray rewritable drive with BDXL multi-layer support**
OS:
**64-bit Windows 7 Home Premium**

**/ PLUS /** Glasses-free 3D / Decent performance / Good audio
**/ MINUS /** 3D effect isn't perfect

**THE GLASSES-FREE 3D ISN'T FAULTLESS, BUT THIS IS A GOOD ALL-ROUND NOTEBOOK.**

**7** OUT OF 10

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# AOC e2352PHz 3D monitor

Supplier: **Platinum Micro** / Website: **www.platinummicro.co.za** / RRP: **R3,995**

[ specs ]

Native resolution:
**1920x1080**
Refresh rate:
**60Hz (5ms)**
Inputs:
**DVI, D-Sub, HDMI (1.4a)**
Backlight technology:
**White LED**

If you're not a fan of anything 3D, then you're out of luck because it looks like just about anything that has a display these days is turning 3D. These monitors of late have become all the rage and passive or glasses-free displays are fast becoming popular with consumers. Understandably so as well, because unlike active shutter glass mechanisms, these monitors are significantly cheaper and for the most part easier to setup with comparable quality for videos and console gaming.

The AOC e2352PHz is one such monitor that makes use of polarized glasses to display 3D content, given that passive stereoscopic systems usually allows more light to enter the iris than active shutter glass systems. In addition to being LED backlit, this monitor displays a comfortable image in most light conditions. Comfortable is the word we choose because that is the best way to describe the viewing experience. It will not blow you away and you'll be hard pressed to say you've not seen better, especially if you have experience with some active shutter glass systems.

The viewing angle is rather limited and the image fidelity is somewhat disappointing with what can only described as very thin horizontal lines across the image, corrupting what would be a pleasant experience. The resolution is definitely not a match for what a monitor such as the ASUS VG36H can offer you in stereoscopic mode for example, but then again that monitor uses a different system and costs significantly more than what the AOC monitor is retailing for.

On the upside, this monitor does not rely on expensive shutter glasses, and the included pairs need not ever be recharged, so where costs are concerned there are some massive advantages to passive 3D monitors such as this one. Another huge advantage is the ability to use this monitor with your game console for 3D content such as movies and games that support this mode. Something that is not possible with virtually all monitors that support NVIDIA's 3D Vision technology, as they are mostly limited to an active shutter glass system which no console supports.

Some games support this kind of passive 3D as well, (*Deus Ex: Human Revolution* and *Avatar: The Game,* for example*) so this monitor has* a broader appeal than other monitors on the market which cater exclusively for users of NVIDIA graphics cards and the entire 3D Vision ecosystem.

For the asking price of this monitor you actually receive more than what other vendors usually offer. Sure enough the quality isn't going to move you in any way, but it is certainly better than the average monitor, and the LED backlighting helps immensely. Connectivity wise you're not going to find any surprises and we'd have liked to see the ability to use DisplayPort, but that is forgivable as it's not as popular yet as DVI and HDMI.

Overall this is a nice monitor with an above average visual quality. Physically it's not convincing and does seem flimsy, however, that could purely be because of just how light the monitor is. It's relatively thin as well and needs no external power brick to function. This monitor isn't the best at any single thing, and the 3D capabilities, while allowing you compatibility with several platforms and devices, aren't going to blow you away at all.

Having said that, the e2352PHz is a worthwhile monitor and you could spend as much on another monitor that offers similar quality but no 3D functionality at all. So if you're not sure how committed you are to 3D technologies but want to give them a try without investing too much in 120Hz displays, this just may be the monitor for you. NAG

**Neo Sibeko**

**/ PLUS /** Light weight / Led backlit / Bundled passive glasses
**/ MINUS /** Passive 3D only

**THE AOC E2352PHZ IS MORE THAN YOU WOULD EXPECT IN A 3D MONITOR AT THIS PRICE RANGE.**

**8** OUT OF 10

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# GEIL EvoTwo 8GB DDR3 2000 dual channel RAM

Supplier: **Elementek Distribution** / Website: **www.geil.com.tw** / RRP: **R1,399**

DRAM finds itself in a sad state of late. Almost all vendors are selling what are essentially the same RAM kits dressed in different heat spreaders. We've seen CL9-11-9-X kits for many months now and the days of low latency DDR3 are truly behind us. We will always lament this and with the price of DRAM having fallen through the floor, it's a certainty that high speed, low latency kits will never make a return.

As grim as the situation may seem, we now have platforms that are capable of handling 4GB DIMMs at high speeds quite well. This was always a tricky issue with platforms or chipsets of old, but now 2,133MHz 4GB DIMMS are common and what we have with the GEIL set is something along those lines. This set instead of being 2,133MHz certified, is only 2,000MHz capable. Not a bad thing in itself as that's plenty of speed, but on LGA1155 systems, 2,000MHz isn't a selectable speed and all you have is 2,133MHz which this set will not do. The only other option is 1,866MHz, which is still high-enough a speed, but the problem here is that much like many other 8GB Kits, the EvoTwo set would not tighten from the default 9-11-9 timings.

What ends up happening is that if you have a Sandy-Bridge based system, you may as well have bought the 1,800MHz set as you're not going to be able to use the extra headroom anyway of this set. If you're looking for truly high speed memory from GEIL, you should look to the PC-17000 set which is identical to this kit, but comes in at a useful 2,133MHz. With this kit you cannot go wrong and whether you're using an AMD AM3+ or Intel platform, you will have the right multiplier to make the most out of your DRAM kit.

As it is though, the DDR 2000 set from Geil is a little more than average in the eyes of gamers and enthusiasts. Having said that, if you can find this set for a reasonable price and are looking to upgrade your 2x2GB kits, then this kit is worth considering. NAG

**Neo Sibeko**

Benchmarks

| | |
|---|---|
| AIDA64 copy | / 20331MB/sec / / 25061MB/sec / |
| AIDA64 latency | / 46.8ns / / 39.3ns / |
| MaxxMem score | / 1399.4 / / 1689.7 / |

Baseline: Kingston HyperX LoVo 1800C9

[ specs ]

Size: **8GB (2x4GB)**
Memory type: **DDR3**
Frequency: **2,000MHz CL9**

/ **PLUS** / 8GB
/ **MINUS** / Won't overclock much at all

**A HIGH SPEED 8GB KIT THAT IS SADLY NOT OPTIMIZED FOR USE IN THE MOST POPULAR PLATFORM TODAY.**

7 OUT OF 10

# Kingston HyperX 240GB SSD

Supplier: **Kingston** / Website: **www.kingston.com** / RRP: **R5,699**

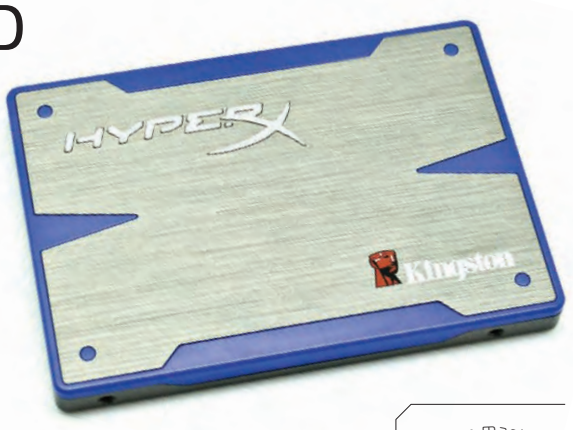
Testing SSDs these days has become a very repetitive process and to a large degree a predictable exercise. Virtually every vendor uses the same controller and NAND memory. The Kingston HyperX SSD is another drive that uses the SF-2281 controller found in almost all high performance MLC based SSDs on the market.

The NAND, while from Intel as expected, is surprisingly the 25nm NAND which is rated at 5,000 erase cycles instead of the typical 3,000 found on other NAND offerings of the same or similar node. Which means this drive should last you longer than other drives which may be competitive in performance but are not as durable.

For those who are not concerned with such things, you'll be pleased to know that this drive is overall the fastest drive we have tested to date. In 4K performance it's a little slower than the OCZ Vertex 3 which was our Dream Machine SSD, but the HyperX drive matches it everywhere else. What makes this drive that much better than other similar drives is that the PC Mark performance blew away everything else we had tested before by a staggering margin. It was fastest in every other test (save for 4K) but not by such margins. The Kingston drive scored over 20,000 points higher than the OCZ drive in PCMark Vantage's HDD suit.

This kind of performance advantage is nothing to snivel at. Some tests we did which are not represented here continued to give the nod to the Kingston drive as it proceeded to edge out everything we've had before including the highly impressive Patriot Wildfire drive. Max IO response time was only matched by the Corsair ForceGT which we tested in our previous SSD 4-way shootout. Priced almost identically as the OCZ Vertex 3, there's really no reason to pick up any other drive over the Kingston HyperX SSD. Besides offering better performance, it offers a longer life span as well. If you're in the market for the highest performing SSD you can buy right now (SLC drive withstanding), look no further than the Kingston HyperX SSD. NAG

**Neo Sibeko**




Benchmarks

| | |
|---|---|
| Average read | / 504.1 / / 471.4 / |
| Average write | / 303.6 / / 234.7 / |
| 4K read (QD32) | / 170.9 / / 183.1/ |
| 4K write | / 205.2 / / 238.4 / |

Baseline: OCZ Vertex 3 240GB

dream machine / dream machine / dream machine

[ specs ]

Controller: **SF2281**
NANDtype: **MLC**
Form factor: **2.5"**
Interface: **SATA 6Gbps**

/ **PLUS** / Fastest SSD we've tested
/ **MINUS** / Nothing

**THE KINGSTON HYPERX SSD IS THE FASTEST MLC SSD YOU CAN BUY RIGHT NOW.**

9 OUT OF 10

# Speedlink Medusa NX

Supplier: **Dawn of Gaming** / Website: **www.speedlink.com** / RRP: **R699**

The range of surround sound headsets available to consumers is getting bigger every year, with manufacturers like the Germany-based Speedlink now entering the fray. This offering is aimed at the PC gaming enthusiast who already has a high-end (or, at least, discrete) sound card, as it makes use of 3.5mm headphone jacks to interface with your PC, as opposed to other purely USB-based solutions.

We tested this headset with a variety of games and music, and the overall performance was quite good. Clear high-frequency audio was delivered through this set, although the mid-tones were a little muddy. We contribute this to the use of larger 40mm bass drivers that tend to slightly drown out the smaller 30mm front, centre and rear drivers per cup.

We also found that in terms of ergonomics, this headset offers more good than bad, but isn't quite perfect. While the entire unit is light, and the headband comfortable, there is a little too much pressure on the sides, which is worsened by the slightly too-thin ear pads that only just manage to keep the speaker grill from pressing too hard against the ear. Of course, your experiences may well differ, depending on just how your head is arranged.

The included wired remote control allows you to independently adjust volume for the front, rear, and centre channels, as well as setting the vibration amount from the bass speakers. While effective, the vibration generates too much rattling and is best kept low. Unfortunately, there is no overall volume control, nor any settings to adjust the volume of the microphone; the only other setting on the remote is an on/off toggle.

One last factor worth mentioning is that this headset is definitely not for those with onboard sound. The unit uses USB power and when plugged in, this will generate a lot of noise on the lines unless you have a high-end motherboard with well-shielded IO ports. This isn't really a problem with the device itself, but is something to be aware of. NAG

**Geoff Burrows**

## [ specs ]

Impedance:
**128Ω at 1kHz (front/rear/centre); 16 Ω at 1kHz (subwoofer)**
Sensitivity:
**115dB 1 kHz (front/rear/centre); 120dB 1kHz (subwoofer)**
Frequency response:
**20Hz to 20 kHz**
Cable length:
**3.8m**
Speaker size:
**30mm (front/rear/centre); 40mm (subwoofer)**

**/ PLUS /** Four independent drivers per cup / Comfortable headband
**/ MINUS /** Too tight on the sides / Remote control lacks features

**SUITABLE FOR MOST USERS LOOKING FOR A MID-RANGE SOLUTION, BUT UNABLE TO KEEP UP WITH ITS HIGH-END COMPETITORS.**

**7** OUT OF 10

# HTC ChaCha

Supplier: **HTC** / Website: **www.htc.com** / RRP: **R3,299**

Take just one look at the bottom-right corner of HTC's ChaCha and you'll know who it's meant for: Facebook socialites and their kin. However, even without that little blue Facebook button, the ChaCha would still be a good choice for anyone looking for a mid-range smartphone.

It's a nice size, easy to use, with the screen tilted upwards at an angle that makes use of its 2.6-inch touchscreen slightly more pleasant. At 120 grams, it's fairly weighty. The keypad's buttons are quite small, but once you get used to it, you'll be typing away at decent speeds. A nice touch is the addition of frequently used keys (like comma and question mark), along with four directional arrows for navigating certain aspects of the UI, as well as for use in certain apps.

It's all running on Android v2.3 (Gingerbread) out the box, with HTC's custom Sense UI keeping things clean, neat and classy. There's a ton of options for customising homescreen layouts, allowing you to set up various combinations of widgets to suit your needs. You'll also be able to customise the look and feel of everything using Skins and Scenes, two features that take the interface customisation even further.

That dedicated Facebook button is great. Let's say you're looking at a photo within an album. Press the button, and it'll ask if you want to upload that image directly to your Facebook profile, or it'll allow you to select multiple photos from the album for upload. There are other context-sensitive applications for it as well. Obviously, there's also a ton of useful gadgets for use with Twitter and Flickr.

Unfortunately, the ChaCha's landscape display does cause a few issues. The small size makes for often uncomfortable layouts in certain instances (like web browsing), while not all apps in the store feature support for landscape orientation. Other than that, the screen is excellent. Aside from the minor annoyance, there's not much to whine about with the ChaCha - it's a great option for anyone looking for a phone in its class, especially if you've got a hard-on for social networking. **NAG**

**Dane Remendes**

## [ specs ]

CPU:
**800MHz ARMv6 processor**
Memory:
**512MB RAM**
Storage:
**512MB ROM**
Expansion slot:
**microSD card**
OS:
**Android 2.3 (Gingerbread) with HTC Sense 2.1**
Screen:
**2.6-inch (480x320) capacitive touchscreen**
Camera:
**5MP with autofocus, geo-tagging, face detection and LED flash**
Connectivity:
**Bluetooth 3.0 / Wi-Fi 802.11 b/g/n / microUSB 2.0**

**/ PLUS /** Comfortable QWERTY keypad / Highly customisable UI
**/ MINUS /** Small screen causes minor issues

**THE HTC CHACHA IS AN EXCELLENT MID-LEVEL SMARTPHONE, PARTICULARLY FOR THOSE WITH SOCIAL NETWORKING OBSESSIONS.**

**8** OUT OF 10

# Sony Ericsson Xperia PLAY

Supplier: **Sony Ericsson** / Website: **www.sonyericsson.com/play** / RRP: **R5,099**

Some of the games that are currently available locally for the PLAY are *FIFA 12* on Android, *Minecraft Pocket Edition*, *Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light*, and *Lode Runner X*. Over 150 games were announced at Gamescom for the PLAY.

Sony Ericsson's Xperia PLAY isn't the first attempt at a gaming-focused phone, but it's easily the most likely to succeed at taking gaming on mobile phones to the next level. With its dedicated gaming keys (all familiarly PlayStation themed) and massive screen, it's currently peerless in its purpose - but it'll come down to the available, exclusive games to decide if it's a worthwhile purchase.

It's a sexy looking handset, especially in white. It boasts impressive design in almost every regard, particularly in terms of build quality. It's a side-slider design, with the majority of the gaming controls on the bottom slide. Used in landscape mode, it's incredibly comfortable - and it's even got two shoulder buttons perfectly placed on its side for use while gaming. In addition, you've got a d-pad, four face buttons (which will be familiar to anyone who's ever held a PS controller), two circular, touch-sensitive pads meant to mimic analogue sticks and even Start and Select buttons.

It all adds up to the best gaming experience available on any Android-powered smartphone, but it comes at a price: it's a bulky gadget, bigger and heavier than most of its smartphone competitors. It makes one-handed use a chore until you get used to it, but when used in two-handed landscape orientation for gaming, it feels fantastic. That huge screen is even bigger than that of the ill-fated PSP Go. The hardware it's packing isn't the most powerful - but it provided adequate power for the games our test unit shipped with.

There's another problem: browsing the Xperia PLAY's dedicated gaming store immediately brings up a concern with region locking. There are currently a few original PS1 titles available in other countries, but we presently don't have access to them here in SA. Considering it's got the potential to have the most exhaustive, exclusive games library of any phone out there, it's a shame that we're falling prey to region-specific rubbish. And again: it's the games that'll decide the Xperia PLAY's fate. **NAG**

**Dane Remendes**

hardware award / hardware award / hardware award

## [ specs ]

CPU:
**1GHz Scorpion processor, Adreno 205 GPU, Qualcomm Snapdragon MSM8255 chipset**
Memory:
**512MB**
Storage:
**400MB internal, expandable via microSD**
Expansion slot:
**microSD (up to 32GB, 8GB included)**
OS:
**Android 2.3 (Gingerbread)**
Screen:
**4-inch (480x854) LED-backlit capacitive touchscreen**
Camera:
**5MP with autofocus, LED flash, geo-tagging and image stabilization**
Connectivity:
**Bluetooth 2.1 / Wi-Fi 802.11 b/g/n / microUSB 2.0**

**/ PLUS /** Great gaming potential / Huge screen / Feature rich
**/ MINUS /** Chunky / Could be more powerful / Region locking

**THERE'S NO BETTER GAMING-CENTRIC PHONE OUT THERE, BUT REGION LOCKING IS A PROBLEM.**

**8**

# TOP RATED GAMES

**VISIT NAG ON YOUR PHONE AND DOWNLOAD ANY OF THE PREMIUM GAMES FEATURED ON THIS PAGE. WHILE YOU'RE THERE, CHECK OUT THE HOTTEST NEW PREVIEWS, HANDS-ON REVIEWS, THE LATEST FEATURES AND A WHOLE LOT MORE PURE AWESOMENESS.**

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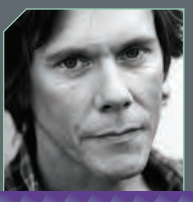
# Games are bad VI: The Baddening[1]



Have you heard about "game transfer phenomena"? It's totally the latest big thing in it's-cool-because-it's-about-games-and-games-are-cool pop-social psychology, and it explains why you feel an almost innate aversion to red and green trashcans on the pavement, why you'll sometimes find yourself reflexively grasping for an absent mouse or controller when you're considering your possible responses in an argument with your significant other, and why you see interrogative icons floating above other people's heads.

Okay, that last one doesn't happen to me either, but apparently it happens to some of us. "Us" being "them", that is, because I don't hang out with loonies[2].

So according to a recent study over at the universities of Nottingham Trent and Stockholm, more than half of the 42 research subjects reported some kind of game-based intrusive thinking in their actual, real, humdrum lives. Which perhaps explains why it happens at all – black ops mission briefings are so much more exciting than staff meetings[3] - but that's almost certainly quite beside the point.

More worryingly, however, was the study's conclusion that "intensive gaming may lead to negative psychological, emotional, or behavioural consequences, with enormous implications for software developers, parents, policy makers and mental health professionals." Basically, it's a tabloid-class controversy all dressed up in the uniform of academic authority. Cue Fox News Special Edition theme here, sung to the tune of public hysteria[4].

I mean, what's so bad about it, anyway? Unless you're strapping yourself up with hand grenades because you've just checkpointed and you can reload reality later if it doesn't work out[5], maybe, but I think if you're strapping yourself up with hand grenades, playing too many games probably isn't the real problem and being a mad person probably is.

**"intensive gaming may lead to negative psychological, emotional, or behavioural consequences, with enormous implications for software developers, parents, policy makers and mental health professionals."**

I don't understand why it is that we're so quick to blame this, that, and *Dungeons & Dragons* for the "negative psychological, emotional, or behavioural consequences" of people's stupid decisions, rather than blaming the people themselves. Whatever happened to moral agency and personal accountability? Apparently those evil video games are so much more convenient, although I guess it's got a bit more immediate credibility than a childhood bacon deprivation.

Now you want bacon. My work here is done. NAG

Tarryn van der Byl

[1] The Baconing.
[2] My friends don't count.
[3] Also, scoping your local mall's food court for optimal sniper spots is just being responsible. Locust Emergence Day is always a headline away.
[4] It sounds like 1980s hair metal.
[5] SPOILER: It doesn't work out.

## Extra Life

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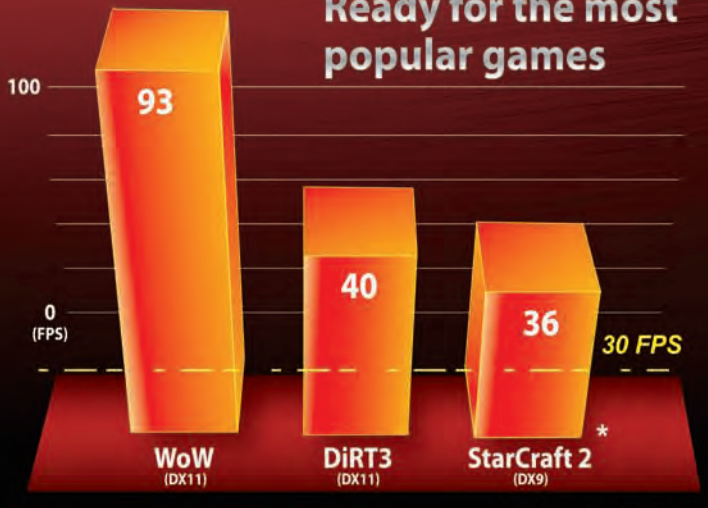


*The performance may vary by different system configurations
*Tested with AMD A8-3850 + MSI A75MA-G55

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