

NAG

PC / PLAYSTATION / XBOX / NINTENDO

WIN!

**BORDERLANDS 2
COMPETITION**

Stuff you can't
buy anywhere!

PREVIEWS

Sleeping Dogs

Beyond: Two Souls

Pikmin 3

Injustice: Gods
among Us

XCOM

ENEMY UNKNOWN

Is that a plasma rifle in your
pocket, or are you
just happy to see me?

**ULTIMATE
GAMING
LOUNGE**

What your
lounge
should
look like





WE ARE THE BRAVE.

WE ARE THE FREE.

WE ARE UNITED.

OUR TIME IS NOW



GUILDWARS2.COM

OUT 28/08/12



©2010–2012 ArenaNet, Inc. and NCsoft Europe Ltd. All rights reserved. NCsoft, the interlocking NC logo, ArenaNet, Guild Wars, Guild Wars 2, and all associated logos and designs are trademarks or registered trademarks of NCsoft Corporation. All other trademarks or registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.

BUILD YOUR ARSENAL FROM THE MOUSE UP, NOW AT INCREDIBLE CONNECTION.



In the heat of the action, the smallest things matter.

Getting just that extra bit of speed out of your mouse. Performing a complex macro with just one key press. Hearing your enemies sneak up behind you before they know that you know it. Logitech gaming peripherals help you get a tangible edge.



WARRANTY
2 YEAR

G110 Gaming Keyboard

- Integrated USB audio
- Integrated hi-speed USB 2.0 hub port
- Game/desktop mode
- Removable palm rest
- Instant media access buttons (76506)

R899.95

WARRANTY
2 YEAR

G700 Wireless Gaming Mouse

- 13 programmable controls with macro capability
- Individually sculpted buttons
- Onboard memory profiles
- Plug-and-Forget Nano-receiver (80623)

R1599.95



WARRANTY
2 YEAR

G27 Driving Force GT Wheel For PS3 & PC

- Steel gas, brake, and clutch pedals
- 16 programmable buttons plus D-pad
- Hand-stitched leather
- 900-degree wheel rotation (82163)

R3999.95



WARRANTY
2 YEAR

Extreme 3D Pro Joystick

- 12 conveniently-placed action buttons
- Advanced button customisation and multiple controller configurations
- Twist-handle rudder (47608)

R649.95

POLLUTE THE AIRWAVES WHEREVER YOU GO!

EAR POLLUTION™ by iFrogz



WARRANTY
2 YEAR

Toxix

Silver (79836)
Red (79837)

R199.95 each



WARRANTY
2 YEAR

Nerve Pipes

Spider Red/Chrome (79839)
Flowers Violet (79840)
Hazard Black/Chrome (79838)

R399.95 each



WARRANTY
2 YEAR

Ronin

Snow (79832)
Midnight (79833)

R499.95 each



WARRANTY
2 YEAR

Mogul

White (79835)
Black (79834)

R699.95 each

THIS OFFER IS VALID FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER

Incredible Call Centre 0860 011 700

Prices include 14% VAT. All standard terms and conditions of Incredible Connection & suppliers herein apply. We reserve the right to limit quantities on all promotional items per customer. Prices correct at time of going to press.

All names, logos, images, characters, slogans, likenesses, trademarks, copyrights and other intellectual property featured are the exclusive property of their respective owners and are used under licence from these owners.


Incredible
CONNECTION

WHERE TECHNOLOGY & HUMANITY MEET

GAMES

FROM THE

FUTURE



PRE-ORDER ANY OF THESE TITLES AND GET 10% OFF

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II

Also on PS3, PS Vita, Wii U & PC

Release date: 13 NOV

PRE-ORDER CONTENT:

- The Nuketown 2025 Bonus Map (Only for XBOX360, PS3 & PC)

XBOX 360

HALO 4

Exclusive to XBOX360

Release date: 6 NOV

PRE-ORDER CONTENT:

- Halo 4 Armour Skin
- Halo Pulse Armour

XBOX 360

FORZA: HORIZON

Exclusive to XBOX360

Release date: 26 OCT

PRE-ORDER CONTENT:

- Get 10% Off

XBOX 360

NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED

Also on PS3 & PC

Release date: 2 NOV

PRE-ORDER CONTENT:

- Double Speed Points
- 2 Additional Cars

XBOX 360

WWE 13

Also on XBOX360

Release date: 2 NOV

PRE-ORDER CONTENT:

- Iron Mike Tyson Playable Star

PS3

HITMAN: ABSOLUTION

Also on XBOX360 & PC

Release date: 20 NOV

PRE-ORDER CONTENT:

- Sniper Challenge

PS3

FAR CRY 3

Also on XBOX360 & PC

Release date: 30 NOV

PRE-ORDER CONTENT:

- Lost Expedition Edition (Includes 2 Exclusive SP Extra Mission & MP weapon)

PS3

EPIC MICKEY 2

Also on XBOX360

Release date: 23 NOV

PRE-ORDER CONTENT:

- Limited Edition Figurine

PS3

Pre-order any new release game and get

10% OFF



RCS Card now accepted at all Musica stores

NEED HELP? CONTACT OUR FRIENDLY CALL CENTRE ON 0860 MUSICA (687 422)
MONDAYS - FRIDAYS 08:00 - 17:30, SATURDAYS 08:00 - 13:00

ALL PRICES ARE INCLUSIVE OF TAX AND CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS. ERRORS AND OMISSIONS EXCEPTED. OFFER VALID UNTIL 26 SEPTEMBER 2012 OR WHILE STOCKS LAST. AVAILABLE AT SELECTED STORES. NO CLUBCARD POINTS EARNED ON GIFT CARD PURCHASES.

MEANWHILE...

GAMES SO BIG YOU'LL NEED A BIONIC ARM TO CARRY THEM OF COURSE



Released: 26 October
MEDAL OF HONOR: WARFIGHTER LIMITED EDITION
599⁹⁵
Also on XBOX360 & PC



Released: 28 September
FIFA 13
599⁹⁵
Also on XBOX360, PS2, PS Vita, PSP & PC



Released: 26 October
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 13
499⁹⁵
Also on XBOX360, PS2, PSP & PC



Released: 31 October
ASSASSIN'S CREED III SPECIAL EDITION
599⁹⁵
Also on XBOX360, PC version available in November



Released: 26 September
GRAN TURISMO 5 ACADEMY EDITION
399⁹⁵
Exclusive to PS3



Released: 14 September
TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2
599⁹⁵
Also on XBOX360



Released: 2 October
RESIDENT EVIL 6
599⁹⁵
Also on XBOX360 & PC



Released: 23 September
WORLD OF WARCRAFT: MISTS OF PANDARIA
329⁹⁵
Exclusive to PC



GUILD WARS 2
499⁹⁵
Exclusive to PC



Released: 12 October
FABLE: THE JOURNEY
399⁹⁵
Exclusive to XBOX360



Released: 12 October
DISHONORED
599⁹⁵
Also on PS3 & PC



Released: 21 September
BORDERLANDS 2
699⁹⁵
Also on PS3 & PC



Released: 21 September
F1 2012
599⁹⁵
Also on PS3 & PC



Released: 12 October
XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN
699⁹⁵
Also on PS3 & PC

*PRICES & RELEASE DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.



MUSICA
A WORLD AWAITS

Editor

Michael "RedTide" James
ed@nag.co.za

Assistant editor

Geoff "GeometriX" Burrows

Staff writer

Dane "Barkskin" Remendes

Contributing editor

Lauren "Guardi3n" Das Neves

Technical writer

Neo "ShockG" Sibeko

International correspondent

Miktar "Miktar" Dracon

Contributors

Rodain "Nandrew" Joubert
Walt "Ramjet" Pretorius
Miklós "Mikit0707" Szecei
Pippa "UnexpectedGirl" Tshabalala
Tarryn "Azimuth" Van Der Byl
Adam "Madman" Liebman

Art director

Chris "SAVAGE" Savides

Photography

Chris "SAVAGE" Savides
Dreamstime.com
Fotolia.com

Sales executive

Cheryl "Cleona" Harris / cheryl@nag.co.za
+27 72 322 9875

Marketing and promotions manager

Jacqui "Jax" Jacobs
jacqui@nag.co.za
+27 82 778 8439

Office assistant

Paul Ndebele

Contact details

P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158, South Africa
Tel +27 11 704 2679
Fax +27 11 704 4120

Subscription department

subs@nag.co.za

Internet

www.nag.co.za
www.zinio.com/nag
www.facebook.com/NAGMagazine
www.twitter.com/nagcoza

Printing

Impress Web Printers
031 263 2755

Distribution

On the Dot
Stuart Dickerson / 011 401 5932



Copyright 2012 NAG

All rights reserved. No article or picture in this magazine may be reproduced, copied or transmitted in any form whatsoever without the express written consent of the publisher. Opinions expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the publisher or the editors. All trademarks and registered trademarks are the sole property of their respective owners.
Don't Pirate NAG!

Contents

Regulars

- 10 Ed's Note
- 12 Inbox
- 16 Bytes

Opinion

- 16 I, Gamer
- 18 The Game Stalker
- 20 The Indie Investigator
- 22 Miktar's Meanderings
- 83 Hardwired
- 98 Game Over

Previews

- 44 Sleeping Dogs
- 46 Injustice: Gods Among Us
- 48 Beyond: Two Souls
- 50 Pikmin 3
- 52 The Cave

Reviews

- 60 Reviews: Introduction
- 61 Short Reviews:
Death Rally / Deadlight
- 62 The Secret World
- 64 Jagged Alliance: Back in Action
- 66 The Amazing Spider-Man
- 68 LEGO Batman 2:
DC Super Heroes
- 70 Inversion
- 72 London 2012:
The Official Video Game
- 74 Spirit Camera:
The Cursed Memoir / Project
Zero 2: Wii Edition
- 75 Harvest Moon:
Tale of Two Towns
- 76 Spelunky / Pinball Arcade
- 77 Dyad / Rhythm Thief & The
Emperor's Treasure
- 78 Game of Thrones / Civilization
V: Gods & Kings

Hardware

- 80 Tech News
- 82 Dream Machine
- 84 Lazy Gamer's Guide:
Gigatek PS3 Online Essentials
Pack & Xbox Elite Essentials Pack
- 86 GIGABYTE Aivia Osmium Me
chanical Gaming Keyboard
- 88 GIGABYTE GV-N66TOC-2GD
- 89 HP Pavilion G6 (AMD Trinity)
- 90 MSI R7970 Lightning
- 91 CM Storm Quick Fire Pro
- 92 ASUS Maximus V Extreme
- 93 Sony Xperia S
- 94 GIGABYTE Z77X-UP5TH
- 95 ZOTAC ZBOX Blu-ray AD03
mini-PC
- 96 ADATA XPG SX900 128GB SSD
- Crucial M4 512GB SSD
- 97 Acer P238HL / Sapphire Vapor-X
HD7770 GHz Edition



Features

30 TOP 8 HOLY SH*T MOMENTS IN GAMING

Throughout gaming's relatively short history, we've been treated to a number of moments that very rarely made our minds explode out the back of our heads. Find out what those are.

32 THE ULTIMATE GAMING LOUNGE

Tired of your boring, traditional lounge filled with boring, traditional lounge stuff? Then read this!

36 READER U

The results of our recent reader survey have been tallied and weighed by humans better at mathematics and number-y stuff than we pretend to be! We'd like to share some of the less top-secret results with you.

54 XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

We've played the real X-Com remake. Put your jealousy away and read on, because we've got enough information on its turn-based tactical goodness to make your eyes bleed sugary joy.



INDIANA JONES

THE COMPLETE ADVENTURES



5
Discs

Indiana Jones - The Complete Adventures

Normal price: **R699.⁹⁹**

Pre-order price: **R629.⁹⁹**

save R70

Includes:

- Indiana Jones And The Raiders Of The Lost Ark
- Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom
- Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade
- Indiana Jones And The Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull
- Bonus Disc

Look & Listen is NAG's
preferred DVD & Blu-ray Retailer

Available on Blu-ray™ end of September 2012

TM & © 2012 Lucasfilm Ltd. All Rights Reserved



DVD • CD • GAMES • DIGITAL • ACCESSORIES

Look & Listen
For the Fans

Shop online at lookandlisten.co.za or visit a Look & Listen store near you.

While stocks last. Availability, prices and release date subject to change at the discretion of the supplier. Not all items are available in all stores - please call your local store to enquire on availability.

Reality NAG

Here's a little insight into what happens in the office sometimes.

I'm calling it: The cover signing fiasco of 2012. So, we're giving away an item of NAG memorabilia along with the *Borderlands 2* competition this issue... all because we did four covers for the August issue and someone said "Andy Warhol" one afternoon in the office. It's not because we're vain or anything like that. So, we had to sign them the other day and this is what happened.

I signed first and before I did I asked for a fresh permanent marker, but because *someone* doesn't store them tip down my signature is a little feint at the end. I'm also not happy with how RedTide looks ("untidy" my English teacher always used to tell me). Next up was Geoff who chose the salmon cover because he likes salmon and is probably going to play with the dwarf when the game comes out (has a thing for short hairy folk it seems). So, whoever wins this prize: if you look closely you'll see a very light signature under Geoff's real signature because the pen failed (also see the bubbly looking "GeometriX"). Lauren seemed to be above all this fuzzing around with pens and redoing signatures because hers was fine - we did hear some mocking comments and she smiled away. Next up was Cheryl, short and sweet and no problem (I didn't say they were all going to be interesting). FYI, she's the one who doesn't keep felt tip pens felt tip facing down and is really the reason why this entire bit of writing exists in the first place. Jacqui signed "Jax" - this is her nickname but she didn't actually sign her name (didn't read the whole memo apparently). Next was Chris "SAVAGE", he also signed (but on two covers before we told him it was for only one), he gave the felt tip pen a disgusted look and went to his desk and he didn't write his nickname. Neo seemed equally annoyed with the pen and signed anyway, with an extra sigh when we told him to write his nickname. Then Dane arrived. This was almost an entire paragraph in itself as he danced around the desk eyeballing each cover, undecided on his favourite character. We warned him about the pen and to press hard and this resulted in even more delays. Finally we were all done, and this is why when people spend time at the NAG office they can't figure out how we do a whole magazine each month.

RAGE 2012

It's now 49 days 14 hours 48 minutes and 43 seconds away... no. 41 seconds. We've gone to general panic level numerical 3 at the office as we wrap up this issue and keep up with all the rAge exhibitor demands. And answers emails from people begging us for LAN tickets and dealing with typhoons in the South China Sea that might delay the DVD and trying to book flights for next exclusive cover feature and wondering where to go for a staff farewell lunch (not leaving) and discussing *StarCraft II* strategies and so on and so on. Here's an example, someone wants to do a clever marketing thing at the Dome in the bathrooms (on the mirrors). There are



approximately a million bathrooms at the venue so we need to find out which ones are for visitors to the expo and which ones are frequented the most. We know this because of the cleaning schedule year after year. The Dome people are worried about damage and are trying to specify restrictions which I don't agree with because it is my Dome for the weekend of rAge and I can do what I like... right? So anyway after a few more calls and mails backwards and forwards we've reached a compromise. Now the client needs to see if the material can be flown in in enough time to make it all happen. Now multiply this kind of thing (and this is a simple request compared to some) across all our exhibitors and you see why everyone is crazy these days. Thank goodness we have amazing people working at NAG or none of this would ever happen. So rAge is a thing, 5-7 October is the weekend you need to keep clear. We are arranging busses from the Sandton Gautrain station to the Dome that will run the whole weekend during show hours. Every hour on the hour a bus will leave at each end. Keep an eyeball on the website for more information. Also, tickets to the expo (not the LAN, but the actual gaming expo) go on sale 1 September at Computicket (see the advert in this issue). Note: there are no limits to how many tickets we sell for the expo so you don't need to rush and panic. Tickers are also available at the door during the weekend anytime.

Right, now I need to go and die somewhere quiet.

-RedTide
Editor



GIGABYTE™

Super Cool ! Super Quiet !

GeForce GTX 680 Overclock Edition

GV-N680OC-2GD 1137MHz/ 256 bit GDDR5
77% Performance better than stock GTX 580 3G



- New GIGABYTE WINDFORCE™ 3X Cooling Design with Triangle Cool Technology
- TSMC 28nm Process GPU
- Boost clock OC to 1137MHz (std: 1058 MHz)
- Features GPU Boost - Dynamic clocking
- PCI Express 3.0 x16 bus interface

WINDFORCE
ANTI-TURBULENCE COOLING

WINDFORCE™ 3X
Triangle Cool Technology

rectron

NATIONAL SALES CALL CENTRE : 0860 582 835

LETTERS@NAG.CO.ZA

INBOX

LETTER OF THE MONTH SEPTEMBER 2012

From: Michael

Subject: World Peace Glitch

Hey NAG mag and all readers of it. A couple of days ago I started playing KoA: Reckoning. Since then I've sunk just about every free minute I have into its social-life crippling, relationship-threatening black hole of an existence. I'll admit it's not a very mentally stimulating activity. Or at least it wasn't until a seemingly meaningless glitch got me thinking. Here's what happened: I was just frolicking in a field, plated in armour and generally questing around when I saw a wolf running towards me and, like usual, I swung my greatsword with murderous intent. To my surprise, I missed. The wolf ran straight past me and kept running into the distance. I felt no need to chase it down so I just went the other way and turned in my quest for some juicy gold. At this point I wondered what the world would be like if we all acted a bit more like that wolf. It showed no desire to hurt me and so there was no fight where otherwise there would be bloodshed, death and maybe some health potion consumption. It seems people are sometimes needlessly aggressive and end up in fights because of it. I have to add that upon turning in my quest I received

another one to kill some more meat sacks for cash and glory (which of course I completed with joy) and on my way there I ran into my friend the wolf. I was happy to see it again and wondered why it was different from the rest. As I got near, it howled and ran at me, bearing its teeth. The wolf attacked me and, sadly, I was forced to kill it. So it seems it was just a one-time glitch, but it makes you think doesn't it?

As a sentient race we have only just come down from the trees. Don't let all the computers and jumbo jets fool you, at our core we're still bloodthirsty savages living within ridged boundaries set by governments and society "leaders". Kick dust over these lines in the conscience and throw in a little global Armageddon and I'd say within two weeks we'll be killing and eating each other and maybe even howling at the full moon. Gaming provides a slight release from this forced suppression of our natural animalistic tendencies but don't be fooled, peace and calm can be supplanted by chaos and anarchy at the drop of an asteroid. Sound like I'm on the edge, ready to pop – damn right I am – just like you. Ed.

From: Matthew

Subject: The n00b Paradox

I have been a reformed gamer since 2008. At the tender age of 16 I decided to sell my PS2 and "grow up". Needless to say I made the very mature decision of spending my hard earned savings on a bass guitar and I had hopeful dreams of one day playing in a band and conquering the world! Even though I am not currently lining up to receive a SAMA or a Grammy I don't regret it because I at least stuck it out. However, I went to university in 2008 and realised that I had a great deal of "free time" and needed something constructive to burn up those hours between tests and classes. I decided on the 360, I was now thrust back into the world of FPS, RPGs and MMORPG, I was way in over my head and my

gaming friends had no hesitation of pointing that out to me. I personally still count myself as a noob, or at best a casual gamer. I ploughed hours into researching games on the web and it was then that I discovered the beauty of NAG. But one thing that I also found was an utter disdain for noobs, gamers seem to belong to an elitist social structure, a clan that no one can enter unless you've played an ungodly number of Call of Duty multiplayer games, have a handle on the latest abbreviations and acronyms, or know arbitrary facts like what colour underwear Mario wore in his first adventure [one for you Miktar? Ed].

I swore to myself then that I would never use the word noob to describe anyone, and I would certainly not shy away from defending the novice

*Disclaimer: Most of the letters sent to this fine publication are printed more or less verbatim (that means "we don't edit or fix them" for you slow kids at the back), so ignore any spelling or grammatical errors. It's not us... it's you.



LETTER OF THE MONTH

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

Note: You can't change the games or the platform they come on.

HARD TECHNICAL STUFF

Land mail: P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158

Better mail: letters@nag.co.za

Important: Include your details when mailing us or you'll never get your prize if you win...

gamer, but then it happened! I was on a Facebook forum and found myself getting agitated with a new group member, a person who to all extents and purposes was in exactly the same position I had been 4 years ago. I sat there reading what I had typed, my mouse hovering over the comment button, shocked I exited the page and realised that I had finally joined that elitist social structure! I had become a noob hater.

But this then begs the question, what makes us think this way? Why do we feel the need to defend ourselves from the trappings of the noob?

I've found that the anonymity of the Internet provides two things. One: a safe place to name call and act like an idiot. It brings out the true person inside and it's usually not pleasant. Two: all we have online is our nickname and rank/skill/ achievements and smart mouth to show the world who we are. Trying to be nice is a waste of time because there's always some idiot from camp one. The joke is most of the rank and "skill" you have equates to how much time you've spent in the game. Skill has something to do with it but nothing beats experience. So yes, it's a complicated world and seems to be filled with morons or n00bs training

ON THE FORUMS

Got drunk and said something online you regret? Blame a visiting cousin. Visit our forums: www.nag.co.za/forums

Q: What old school game would you remake if you had a full team and all the resources needed to crank out a triple-A title?

"Evil Genius. Hands down the coolest game you can ever play. Ever. I would probably end up taking a gap year just to play a remake of that game."

Griff3n

"Theme Hospital. Because seeing a case of Bloaty Head with today's graphics would be awesome!"

Spindleshanks

"Abe's Oddysee. Why? It had farting in it I think..."

Spindleshanks

"Michael Jackson's Moonwalker. The arcade version. Why? Two simple words: Dance Magic."

CyniKill

"Heretic. The gothic setting, the demons, the magic."

echo



to be morons. Well done for seeing the light. But..., I'm not a head doctor Jim. Ed.

From: Francois
Subject: Thank You NAG

I've always wanted to get into game design. I just never knew exactly how to start or begin, until the fateful day when I decided to buy the NAG on a whim, as I was paging through I noticed the 'game development' section and immediately thought "this is it!" Sure I've read a lot on the Internet about game design & development but I never expected it to be a viable career choice in South Africa. So now I'm sitting here at home, browsing the web for useful information and using the GECK (for Fallout New Vegas) to start making a series of simple mods so that I can start learning. So basically, thanks, it was the article that jump-started me into actually pursuing this passion with more than a casual glance.

Glad we could be of service. Just remember us when you're raking in those millions. We have to eat too. Ed.

From: Keaton
Subject: NAG History feature?
Flipping through the July issue of NAG, I pondered to myself... where have you guys come from? Whilst I have been following you since 2006, apart from my brief one year absence and subsequent relapses, I actually thought to myself it would be nice to get a feature in NAG on your past 10 years - going on 20 sooner or later - of existence.

I'm unclear whether it is custom for magazine publishers to do such features, but let's be honest... you're not just any magazine, now are you? I personally would really be interested in reading about the inner workings of NAG, what you've done over the years, what you've enjoyed, how things work, and the employees and employers who have come and gone or still remain. Now obviously I'm not asking you to crack open your vault of magazine editing secrets - just give us a little biography of the magazine we all don't-know-that-well-but-still-love! :) I would find it tremendously enthralling to read about how you were established. So I'm a history addict, but I'm pretty sure your other readers can weather the storm. As an incentive, if you do consider this I might "not" have another relapse and neglect to buy you! So enjoy my R39.47!

Clever guy took off the VAT. You only have yourself to blame for your

lack of knowledge. Sometime back (our tenth birthday issue) we did a feature exactly like that. I'll see if we have any copies left in the back and I'll send you one. Next time, don't miss issues! It is a good idea however and we'll have another look at year 15 perhaps. Ed.

From: Michael
Subject: My dream

My name is Michael and I had a weird dream last night- You (NAG) as a whole, was (or were?) there, as a 5 year old child. There was also all the major game development companies- also as children. Then you (NAG) had to decide who to play with. I'm playing Supreme Commander (Gas-Powered Games), Star Wars: KotOR (BioWare) and Worms 2: Armageddon (Team 17) at the moment, which is a funny combination of games. I've also decided that my Sub-Conscious is some weird dream maker.

Clearly NAG is the supreme commander in the setting; the little kids are probably still troubling you after seeing Star Wars where all the younglings were murdered. Worms is all about choosing who to "play" with (rockets or punches). Dreams are easy to work out if you know where to look. I think they're just a way for your brain to sort, store and delete information. Ed.

From: Matthew
Subject: Praise you or curse you...? Hey NAG, first of all, great magazine. Well I was bored the last few days had no internet so I went through all my old NAG CDs (and new ones) and watched game trailers and now because of that I have gone out and bought and pre order most of the games in the game trailers all except Splinter Cell: Blacklist so far. :(So I don't know if I should praise you for encouraging me to buy so many new games or to curse

you for encouraging me to spend all my money well my gaming side praises you and my rational side curses you cause now I am a really happy but broke person. :P

The reason we exist is a secret plot by the game and hardware distributors in South Africa to sell more stuff to the general public. Because most people are mindless sheep they need a single entity they "trust" telling them what to think and what to buy and what to do (government is a decoy). NAG is that "trust entity" and you are one of the mindless sheep. ;) This level of comic honesty is also just here to reinforce the whole system because who would be mad enough to reveal crazy plans like this to the public. Not us. Oh, make sure you buy Call of Duty in November see. Ed.

From: Joanne
Subject: Thanks for the prize
 Thank you so much, I got my prize today. How did you guys know that I really needed a new mouse pad? Well it works great and my brother also took the lariat with the rage and Ubisoft logos on it, he says it's more his style. Here's the goodbye from the mouse pad:

"Oh! Goodbye cruel world", the pad says with its cracking vinyl design, "I never knew this world too much, and only watched what happened around me, But I feel free, even though I'm going back in the draw!" The mouse says, "what the hell are you talking about? Anyway, whatever, dude."

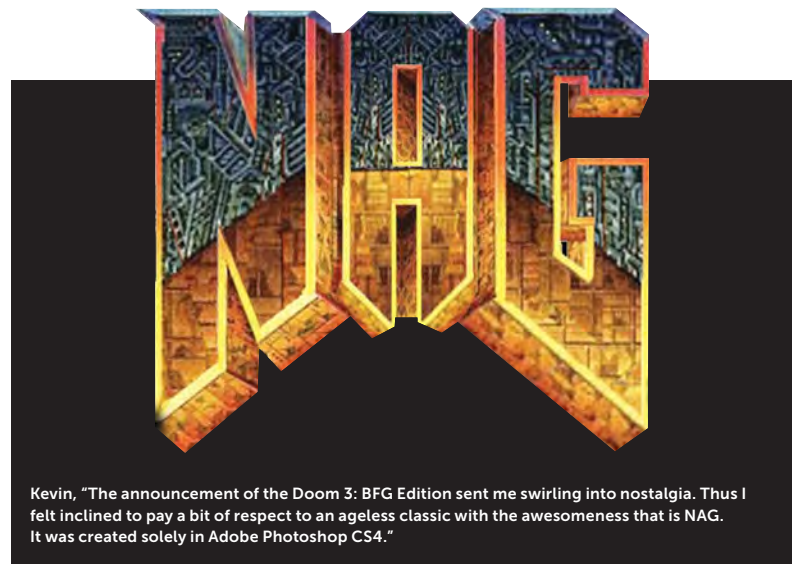
We aim to please, I don't buy your fake conversation between the mouse and the mat... everyone knows they're much closer than this. Ed.

From: Dirk
Subject: More needed
 Thanks to you my 67 year old mom started reading review/preview's to help with crossword that you included this month. PLEASE do some more it's really fun.

LOL... This is our sneaky plan to grow our readership. Ed.

From: Ashley
Subject: Why I still read NAG
 I'm not a regular reader of NAG anymore, I'll be honest. I started reading NAG many, many years ago when I was still in school. I've since completed postgraduate studies but occasionally still read your magazine because, unlike most gaming news publications, yours actually has good writers.

I feel like your group of writers, Neo Sibeko, Tarryn van Der Byl, Pippa, Miklós (and others I'm sure) are actually all intelligent and talented. It doesn't feel as if I'm indulging in some remnant of my



This is the best bit of fan created artwork we received at NAG this month. 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. Just don't go and stick the NAG logo on a picture and send it in because that is dumb and dumb people don't win things.

childhood, it feels as if gaming has grown up with me. Honestly, I think NAG personifies quality journalism over subject matter better than almost anything one can find on the Internet. Which is why I am willing to pay for it when I can easily get news on the Internet. Just read Tarryn's piece at the end of the August 2012 edition and it personifies exactly why I think NAG is still relevant. So keep it up, know that part of your readership appreciates thoughtful, well-written cultural commentary on the phenomenon of gaming. In fact, more of that kind of writing wouldn't be a bad thing - if ever competing with the news and reviews crews becomes tedious/difficult it might be interesting to just give those writers of yours free reign for an issue...

Thanks for the kind words. Truth be told, I never tell my writers what to write in the magazine. This is something they enjoy and I feel it gives everyone the power to really express how they feel. Ed.

From: Dave
Subject: unsung heroes
 If you look back over the past few years there are a number of games that come to mind that truly stank!

Duke Nukem, Brink, Harry Potter, NeverDead, to name but a few. But have you ever stopped to wonder about the people who did a damn good job on those games: The Graphics Designers that spent hours detailing your weapons and tweaking the terrain you walk on. The Sound Engineers that went through countless objects to find the right sound for a juicy head stomp and the Music Composer that worked tirelessly to create music that reinforced the atmosphere of the game. So next time you play a bad game or even review one, don't forget the unsung heroes.

THE SHORTS

Extracts of n00b from NAG letters

"So if the glorious, marvellous and not at all pompous Editor sees it fitting to bestow his witty and awesome comments and sas all over me, then I shall submissively ravel at his feet and thank him for it."
 - WJ

"I hate you for having the life I wish for every day. I love you for being an inspiration to me to someday live the life you're living."
 - Matthew

"So will you please tell me what NAG means?"
 - Thomas

"What do I do when I finish those though? It keeps me occupied for a while but then I lose interest. Please help?"
 - Sean

This is very true. We often talk in the office about the perfect dream team designing a game. The problem then: it would be flawless and blow the minds of all gamers thereby destroying the whole industry because nothing that ever came out after the perfect game would be worth playing. So sing your praises and remember they have to be the victim here for the sake of the whole gaming universe. Ed.

ON TWITTER

Follow us on Twitter @nagcoza

@thepoizone
 Who has started a shopping list for rAge 2012? I've started creating one. So looking forward to #rAge2012 cc @nagcoza

@Louw_Michael
 @nagcoza Cant wait for #lanATrAge!!!! Gonna be my first! Woop woop

@LiezlSwigelaar
 Come home, no water, no electricity... Feel like I'm living in the stone ages. Damn .. All I have is my @nagcoza mag to keep me company!!

@Gnoblar_agency
 @nagcoza Entelect challenge accepted!

@SaartjieJoan
 @nagcoza @iam_devon Yay for girl gamers!! ;)



MEDICAL RECORDS

PATIENT NAME: Cosmo

TREATMENT



FIFA 13

Coming 28 September

- PS3 **R499⁹⁵**
- XBOX 360 **R499⁹⁵**
- PC DVD ROM **R299⁹⁵**
- Wii **R349⁹⁵**
- PS2 **R179⁹⁵**
- PSVITA **R329⁹⁵**
- PSP **R329⁹⁵**



PRE-ORDER INCENTIVES FOR PS3, XBOX AND PC DVD

Kick-start your ultimate team with 24 gold packs, receive a gold pack each week for 6 months to enhance your FUT squad.



Receive the ADIDAS All-Star Team comprising the most talented players in the world - such as Leo Messi, Nani, Karim Benzema, and many others - all united and playing together on the same squad.

For the best prices on all your games, hop online at kalahari.com + get free delivery on orders over R200. Prices are subject to change at the discretion of the suppliers. Please note that not all of the above mentioned games are available to order from kalahari.com. However they will be available to order from our suppliers. Terms and conditions apply.



Coming on DVD and Blu-ray 28 September 2012

PROMETHEUS



DVD **R132⁹⁵**

Blu-ray Disc **R187⁹⁵**

Blu-ray 3D **R262⁹⁵**

WIN!

Order Prometheus and stand a chance to WIN 1 of 4 Alien Quadrilogy DVD Box Sets.

Terms and conditions apply.

www.kalahari.com/prometheus



SEE US AT



WWW.KALAHARI.COM/RAGE2012

For the best prices on all your games, hop online at kalahari.com + get free delivery on orders over R250. Prices, artwork and release dates are subject to change at the discretion of suppliers. Offers valid while stocks last. Terms and conditions apply.





I, Gamer

The World of
TOMORROOOOOOW!

I haven't been excited for a piece of hardware in a while, but there are two offerings on the horizon that have piqued my interest. Both will see the light of day thanks to Kickstarter, and both have the potential to shake things up a bit or turn out to be spectacular failures. I am referring to that \$99 OUYA console and the more recently unveiled Oculus Rift. Both have smashed their Kickstarter goals; clearly I'm not alone in my excitement.

The OUYA represents the closest thing contemporary consoles have had to an antithesis. For a start, it's going to be the cheapest way to get a console hooked up to your HDTV. It's already got an exclusive title in the making, Square Enix has announced that the *Final Fantasy* franchise will be available, and game streaming company OnLive is securely onboard. While that sounds very similar to what current consoles have to offer, hardware developed by Microsoft, Nintendo and Sony is traditionally locked down tighter than a vestal virgin. The OUYA, however, aims to be a wanton slut willing to give up its hardware and systems to anyone wishing to have a go at it. The system is designed to be hacked and rooted, which poses an interesting question: will game developers want to put their game on a system that's designed to be hacked? Indie developers are frothing at the mouth for the OUYA because it represents the most indie-friendly way to get a title to market, but they're also the developers that are most vulnerable to piracy. It's almost a catch 22 situation: the OUYA will allow indie developers to get their game onto a universal platform and into your living room; that same platform's open nature means it could become a haven for software pirates as well. How the developers of OUYA intend to combat piracy remains to be seen, but perhaps the console's low price will be echoed by low game prices? Somewhat similar to those Steam sales, people might willingly pay for the games because they cost less than if you were to buy them on PC or competing consoles.

Fifteen years ago there was a science and technology showcase at the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town. It had all sorts of neat things like GyroGyms, lasers, robotics and Internet connectivity that was, by today's standards, laughable. My enduring memory of that place was being able to play *Quake* with a virtual reality headset. At the time, the headset weighed a ton and was little more than one elongated screen jammed straight in front of your eyes. There was no head tracking, and player movement was an awkward affair thanks to a shoddy motion-control device you operated by tilting your wrist. In retrospect it was terrible, but for me it was the first taste of VR – and it blew my 15 year-old mind.

Considering how fast technology improves, it's odd that I've had to wait another 15 years for something like the Oculus Rift to become a probability. I completely get John Carmack's fascination with the idea of being able to literally block out the real-world and completely immerse yourself in a game. For me, the Oculus Rift is one of the most exciting gaming developments since the dawn of peripheral graphics cards. If Oculus nails their product, and affordable VR gaming becomes the norm, then I'd consider myself dangerously close to being able to die happy.

- Miklós Szecsei

It's noob time again

All about *Black Ops II*'s multiplayer mode

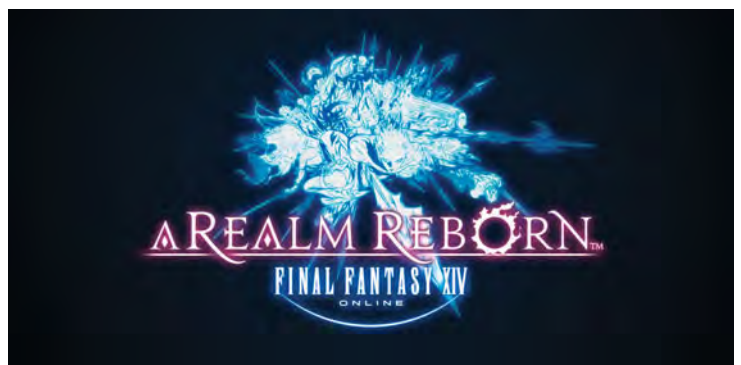
Call of *Duty: Black Ops II*'s recently released multiplayer trailer tantalised our taste buds and made us feel warm and squishy inside, and now that everyone in the games industry has gathered in Cologne to show off their stuff, we managed to get our sweaty paws on the game for a few minutes.

Much has changed in *Black Ops II*'s multiplayer mode, but, as we've seen so often in the past, a lot of that change comes in the form of shuffling around existing concepts. The biggest adjustment hits you before you're even into the game. *CoD*'s age-old class loadout system has been shaken up and renamed "Pick 10". The concept is simple: choose up to ten items from the pool of unlocked weapons, equipment and perks, and place them into your loadout grid, with each item costing a single point. This allows for

far greater customisability as you're never forced to bring along items you never use. To go along with this, Treyarch has introduced Wildcards – optional loadout items (that use up one of your ten points) that give you even further control over your kit, like the Perk Greed card that lets you take an extra perk, or Gunfighter that allows you to strap on a third attachment to your primary weapon. The more Wildcards you use, the more unpredictable you can be in battle, but the fewer weapons and perks you'll have access to.

In the interest of balance and fairness, upgradeable Pro Perks are out, as are those perks that modify the way weapons behave. Item unlocks have also been vastly simplified. Now, throughout your levelling to 55 and over (and over and over) again, thanks to the ten levels of

Let's try that again



Square Enix's last foray into the online gaming space, *Final Fantasy XIV*, was considered by most to be an utter flop. We would've weighed in on the matter when the game was released, but unfortunately we couldn't get our copy to work at all, let alone experience the many gameplay issues that plagued the title. Proving that Square isn't ready to give up entirely, the company has confirmed that they're having another crack at the idea with the upcoming release of *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*.

This is neither sequel nor reboot; it's a bit of strange cross of the two, or, perhaps more accurately, it's Square's way of scrapping the entire first attempt at *FFXIV* and trying again. They've said that *A Realm Reborn* has been rebuilt from the ground up, with an entirely new world and storyline to explore, as well as "visually stunning graphics" and a design that both PC and PS3 gamers will find appealing. All we really want is for them to use a different payment gateway that allows us to actually get into the game. Here's holding thumbs!



Prestige, you'll gain an unlock point per level, with each unlock costing just one point. That means you can unlock any weapon or piece of equipment you want, whenever you want. We've been told that there are more items than total available points per Prestige, so you'll have to choose carefully with each point.

There are a few entirely new features, such as the massive shift to support the eSports community way of doing things. Players will now

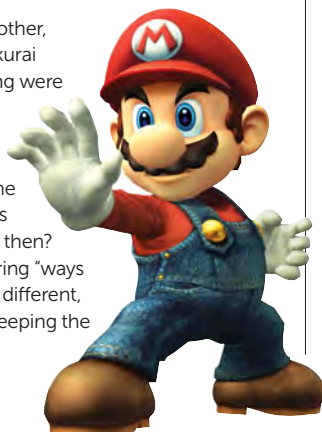
have individual ranks, much like in *StarCraft II*, and, while we're yet to see this in action on our own shores, players will be match-made with competitors who are at their own level of skill – in theory, at least. The game will also support live shoutcasting (commentating) with two dedicated shoutcaster slots available in each game. On every platform, players will be able to live stream their casts to the community as well as save them for later viewing.

Wii U version of Smash Bros. will be familiar, focused

Masahiro Sakurai, director of the upcoming, much-anticipated instalment of the *Smash Bros.* series on Wii U and 3DS, has revealed some interesting details on the game's design philosophy. Sakurai says that the game will keep things focused and fresh without completely redesigning the base mechanics or hugely expanding the character list.

Speaking with *IGN*, Sakurai admitted that because the franchise has proven so popular, the core gameplay is exactly where it needs to be and thus won't change all that much. "The game system itself is complete," he says, "so we don't want to make it 3D or introduce complicated controls just for the sake of it." Still, the Wii U's new GamePad controller will reportedly be used, but without altering the fundamentals.

On guest characters from other, non-Nintendo franchises, Sakurai thinks "Snake and Sonic joining were fantastic," but he's reluctant to stray too far out of Nintendo's trusty stable of characters for fear of losing the "focus of the game." So what's this all mean for new features then? The team is apparently conjuring "ways [they] can introduce a slightly different, fun experience all the while keeping the usual frantic game play."



DEL TORO'S AMBITIOUS HORROR TRILOGY CANNED

Some time ago, struggling publisher THQ decided to team up with Mexican director Guillermo del Toro for the filmmaker's first foray into video game development. Now it's been revealed that the project has fallen through the cracks of THQ's wafer-thin budget, and all assets have been taken out of the hands of developers Volition Incorporated and given to del Toro. Meanwhile, Volition have been freed up to dedicate themselves to *Saints Row*, with the planned DLC *Enter the Dominatrix* now being lumped into a full-blown sequel.



SONUZ

A MULTI-PURPOSE GAMING HEADSET FOR ENTERTAINMENT or ON-THE-GO USE

THE LARGE HIGH QUALITY DRIVERS IN SONUZ WILL BLOW YOU AWAY. IT INCLUDES HUGE BREATHABLE ON-EAR PADDING THAT IS BOTH SOFT AND COMFORTABLE WHILE FACILITATING THE DELIVERY OF DEEP FULL SOUNDS FAR BEYOND YOUR EXPECTATIONS.



Sonic Informed
Computer Component Importer & Distributor

Cape Town
Tel: 021 551 8218
Fax: 021 551 8244

Johannesburg
Tel: 011 314 5800
Fax: 011 252 5974



FRONTOSA
TRANSMISSIONS TECHNOLOGY

JHB
Tel: 011 466 0038
Fax: 011 466 0033

Cape Town
Tel: 021 551 4411
Fax: 021 552 6172

CMSTORM.COM

The Game Stalker



An iPhone also makes phone calls?

I have an iPhone. Yes, I said it, and I'm not going to justify myself in any way. Okay, that's not entirely true because that's kind of the point of this column.

Many people have tried to convert me to Android... and technically I can see the merit in taking that route, but there's something about my iPhone that I love. Initially it was the easy interfacing with my Mac laptop (which I now no longer have). My home machine is a PC and my work machine, yes is a Mac but since it's not technically MINE, I avoid syncing my iPhone with it.

So why have I not discarded my iPhone in favour of something more customisable? My iPhone isn't even jailbroken, so I can't claim that it's because I can customise it in that manner. The iPhone is limiting in many respects, which is something that Apple users pretty much just learn to live with. I once heard it said that Apple doesn't make flaws, they make "features". Oh come on Apple fanboys, it's funny 'cause it's true! And this is coming from a fangirl – I loved my Mac just because (although I'm sure PC fanboys will give me a million reasons why I shouldn't), but I will admit that I prefer playing games on a PC.

I can give you a million reasons (read justifications) as to why I stick with my iPhone: I find it user friendly; it takes good photos, it syncs easily with iTunes, it backs up easily, I like the games released on iOS blah, blah and blah. But the real reason I stick with it is because I'm obsessed with photo apps and random iOS games.

Let's begin with the photo apps – WHY would you rely on the iOS built in camera when you can filter the uh... yeah, that... out of your photos? Now I don't think that just because you add a filter to a photo that makes it all "arty" but just being able to adjust the saturation and contrast a little makes for a better photo than the standard settings on the camera. Plus I like apps that allow me to share directly to Twitter and Facebook. Much as we might mock it, there's a great deal to be said for Instagram which appeals to my visual nature – it's like Twitter, but in pictures. With more food and photos of people's feet.

Then there are the games. Okay it helps that I get a fair bit of developer code to test pre-release games but some of the most interesting and unusual games are often released with little fanfare on the App Store. And I don't know why it is that so many indie games seem to be released on iOS before they hit Android, but it does seem to be the case. I can only assume it has something to do with the difficulty of developing for more than one Android device at a time. For an iPhone game addict however, especially an indie game one, this is complete heaven.

Does this really justify my devotion to Apple, at least where phones are concerned, however? Probably not, but I suppose it's because for me the thing I use my phone for least is calling people. And now I have only three words for you, which if you don't recognise then... well, I might be an even bigger dork than I originally thought.

Ticket To Ride.
- Pippa Tshabalala

Next generation within eighteen months?

It seems like it's almost every month we report on rumours surrounding the next generation of home consoles, but a recent batch of slips, leaks and analyst theories suggests that an official announcement on the matter is just around the corner.

It began with an apparently misunderstood report from The Verge, following an interview with Microsoft general manager Brian Hall, during which Hall referred to a "new Xbox". MS's army of spokespeople later swooped in to clarify the statement, saying that what Hall meant to refer to was merely the next iteration of the console's operating system.

The funny thing is, around the same time, Microsoft posted a job listing (which has since been deleted) that states "Over the next 18 months, Microsoft will release new versions of all of our most significant products, including Windows, Office, and Xbox." We already know that there's a new version of Windows, Office and Windows Phone, as well as the Surface tablets, on the way within the next six months, so an eighteen month window would strongly indicate something more significant. Something like, say, a new hardware iteration from the Xbox stables.

While all of that was going on, two big titles have been confirmed as destined for the mysterious next generation of hardware. Eidos Montreal has told *OXM UK* that the development of *Thief 4* (or "*Thi4f*" – ugh) has shifted over to the new

Xbox codenamed "Durango" and is aiming for a release window of late 2013 (just in time to confirm the rumoured next gen), and the Czech wing of Eurogamer has reported that *Mafia 3* is in development for the next Xbox and PlayStation 4. 2K Czech was reportedly aiming to get *Mafia 3* out the door in time for the next generation's launch, but the studio seems to be struggling to re-staff after it cut loose some 40-odd team members last year as part of a cost-cutting drive.



"When we're doing an action game, we make the second level first. We begin making level 1 once everything else is completed."

- Shigeru Miyamoto,
creator of Mario and Donkey Kong

IsoChronous plays with time

An interesting new indie strategy title has arisen with its core concept centred around manipulating time to best your opponent. As described by Indiegames.com, *IsoChronous* is an "action-strategy game for Windows that boasts a unique time-layering mechanic." What it means is that you play a head-to-head battles in four time layers. Each layer lasts 30 seconds, and rewinds back to the beginning of the battle at the end of each layer.

Each new layer brings a new unit for players to control, while previously deployed units from previous layers remember their past actions and repeat them, so you can effectively use the new unit you obtain with each new layer to support struggling units, or to employ new strategies to bolster previous efforts. With each layer's new units affecting the battle differently, this sounds like it could be an initially complicated, but intriguingly eccentric bit of bite-sized strategy fun. At the time of writing, there's no release date for the title.

Resi ups its game

If you thought that *Resident Evil 6* was reaching into unfamiliar territory after reading our preview in last month's *NAG*, more details have been released that now confirm that the title is pretty much trying to be absolutely everything to everyone.

A new multiplayer game mode called Agent Hunt has been detailed, in which players can jump into the campaigns of other players and take on the roles of the infected and all their varieties. Using machetes, claws, firearms and various mutated limbs, players will attempt to kill civilians and their friends' hero players. It's certainly an interesting idea, and could add plenty of replayability to the single-player mode if you're a sucker for punishment or find the game too easy.

If it still doesn't sound like you'll have plenty of game time with *RE6*, Capcom also revealed that a fifth campaign, in which you play as Ada Wong, will be unlocked once you've finished the game's four primary campaigns. Ada uses a crossbow with various bolt types, and her story will reportedly clarify a number of mysteries encountered during the game.



R100K CHALLENGE CATCH-UP

Entellect's R100K challenge (challenge.entellect.co.za) has been running for a month already. We caught up with the studio to see how it's coming along, and we're happy to say that there's been quite a flurry of interest around the competition.

"The response has been quite broader than we had expected," said Entellect's Tim Kroon. "We've had closer to 300 hundred individuals express their intention in entering the completion. What that relates to in final entries we'll only be able to tell after the closure date."

Although there was some initial confusion and clarification needed on a few technical issues, most of that has been cleared up with the addition on an FAQ on the website – so be sure to check that out if you still plan on entering. And, if you're worried that there's a clear winner already, don't be put off. Kroon told us that "there are definitely a group of individuals so far who appear to understand the problem better than others," but he stated that it's still far too early to tell who's on top.

When asked for a final piece of advice for potential entrants, Kroon said "don't take anything for granted. You don't know what strategy you're up against and this means there isn't a guaranteed win strategy. Think about what would happen if you went up against yourself."



Arcade machines, pool tables,
soccer tables and many more...

Tel: +27 (011) 021 1224
www.eurasianamusements.co.za

25C Beaufort Street, Troyeville, JHB
Mon-Thurs 9am - 5pm, Fri 9am-3pm

The Indie Investigator



Formalising the community

One of the greatest challenges facing the local dev scene right now is the perception that making games isn't a legitimate "thing", at least for South Africans. Sure, we have a pretty broad (and keen) audience for *Angry Farmers* and *Bejeweled 2: Jewel Harder*. And there's always going to be people flooding out expos like rAge or reading opinion columns in special interest magazines. Recognising the development process itself, however, is a little more difficult.

The actual process of game creation doesn't always attract the spectacle of a *Battlefield* clan tourney, and speaking to established businesses, venue owners or investors currently bears the additional weight of that broader social "non-recognition". It can be a struggle to persuade strangers that you're part of an established and carefully-organised movement instead of, you know, just some dude who really, really wants to make video games (even though the latter would be pretty much true, anyway).

We have a growing local industry that isn't yet well-recognised enough to be making its most meaningful impact. There's no formal register of local development studios and the Film and Publication Board technically doesn't have a way to parley with game designers as game designers.

A recent game development meet-up in Cape Town highlighted problems like these and discussed on-going efforts to draw up and present a proposal which could legally define the local community. In basic terms: set up a government-approved game development association. Creating such an entity will help local developers in several key areas:

- Better community promotion. The obvious benefit of galvanising the community under a legally-recognised banner is an explicit "beacon" provided for isolated developers. Until recently, the formal community has been somewhat fractured (although this obstacle has become steadily less problematic), and it's always helpful to have a clear go-to.

- More support for formal studios. Tax and other government-related business benefits can be meaningfully applied for, helping local start-ups exist long enough to start squeezing out profit. Professional game development is risky and often needs a reasonable capital investment to work properly.

- More street cred. When it comes to organising community events, sponsors, strippers or whatever else the local industry as a whole needs right now, it's far more legitimate-sounding to approach with the authority of a socially-recognised association that presumably knows a little about what it's doing. "Really enthusiastic bunch of people" doesn't carry quite the same punch.

At the time of writing, the application to define this new association of game developers was still in progress with plans for the first official AGM to be held at the A MAZE festival in Johannesburg. More information can be found at Make Games SA (www.makegamesa.com) which, if you're not in the know, is the most recent evolution of the local community. With a simple and effective online presence (involving lots of baby blue box borders) and a strengthening offline presence at talks and events, it's currently tied in with a lot of South Africa's established studios and is looking to communicate with others.

The website itself also provides information about monthly community meet ups in Johannesburg and Cape Town, so if you're in either of those cities and can keep a free evening towards the end of the month, look them up!

- Rodain Joubert

Key staffers leave Irrational, but Levine and co. soldier on

Following the announcement of its unexpected delay a few months ago, news on *BioShock Infinite* has since been eerily silent. It's now been revealed that key personnel at developer Irrational Games have left the studio to pursue other ventures. These four former members of the team are art director Nate Wells, principal systems designer Kenneth Strickland, design lead Jeff McGann and director of product development Tim Gerritsen. Of those employees, Wells is the most surprising departure, having been with Irrational for nearly 13 years after joining the team in September of 1999 (the studio's *System Shock 2* days). Wells has been replaced by Scott Sinclair, art director for the original *BioShock*.

Wells' departure comes as a shock not only to the public, but to industry legend and founder of Irrational Ken Levine as well, although he's definitely not letting any of the departures bring him down. "In a company of 200 people you're going to have turnover,"

said Levine in an interview with *Kotaku*. "We never like to see a guy like Nate leave because he's been here for a long time, but it's been 13 years and I think sometimes people want to spread their wings. I'm not going to stop people. We love Nate and I think we'll remain friends. After 13 years he sort of finished his work on *BioShock Infinite*, as you will be able to tell when you see the game again... I think Nate's moving on to something else."

Sinclair's replacement of Wells brings to light a very impressive fact: that every member of the original *BioShock* team is still at Irrational Games, tirelessly working at making this cloud-faring sequel as incredibly poignant an experience as the original game was. "As far as the team itself, the lead artist, the art director, the creative director, the lead effects artist, the senior sound guy, the lead programmer and the lead AI programmer from *BioShock 1* are all on *BioShock Infinite*. I don't think there's a single senior *BioShock* team

The fat lady has sung for Amalur

We've told you before about the tragic story of *Kingdoms of Amalur* and how developer 38 Studios was forced to close shortly after releasing it, but a few new details of the awful management of the company by founder Curt Schilling tells a scary story of how not to run a game development studio.

Right from the beginning, former Major League Baseball star Schilling was spending too much money in all the wrong places, reportedly coughing up \$118 million over the studio's lifespan of just five years. During that period, the company earned no revenue and was supported initially by Schilling's personal stash, and later by a \$75 million loan from the Rhode Island government and a small injection of cash from Electronic Arts for the completion of *Amalur*. Right up until the company's dying breath, 38 Studios was haemorrhaging US taxpayers' money at a rate of over \$5 million a month, and

they still managed to default on a lot of payments (including the salaries of their 400+ employees).

As it stands now, the company's possessions, including all *Amalur* licences and assets for both *Reckoning* and the axed MMO codenamed *Copernicus*, belong to the State of Rhode Island. They'll likely be sold off to another studio or publisher in the attempt to recoup at least a portion of the lost loan.





member that isn't here, which I think is amazing and a testament to their commitment to the studio."

As for news on the game itself, it turns out *Infinitesimal* came very close to shipping with two multiplayer modes to accompany what'll undoubtedly be a remarkable single-player narrative. Both modes have been cancelled. One, a tower defense-style mode, is said to have not worked well at all by the folks at Irrational. The other mode was a cooperative mode that would've

supposedly seen two players working together to complete various missions. The loss of multiplayer is no big deal to us, since the first game didn't need a tacked-on multiplayer component to shine.

Despite what may on the surface appear to be troubling times for the studio with all this news, the game is still in track for its February 2013 release date and Irrational's been quick to assure that there's no need for panic.

Blizzard cites Diablo as reason for decline in WoW subscriptions



In February of 2012, Blizzard's MMORPG megalith *World of Warcraft* sat comfortably at 10.2 million subscribers. At the time of writing this, subscriber numbers had dipped to 9.1 million; still comfortable, but ever so slightly less so. 1.1 million subscribers less so, if you're counting. Blizzard was quick to point out that peak subscriptions of MMOs are cyclical in nature, and that it's still the most popular subscription-based MMO out there. Subscriptions fell before *Cataclysm* and now, with the release of yet another expansion looming (*Mists of Pandaria*), subs have dropped again: but they will surely rise as soon as the expansion lands. Interestingly, Blizzard also pointed at *Diablo III* as a reason for the decline in subs numbers. And with over 10 million copies of *Diablo III* sold, it's highly likely that some of those are *WoW* players who've let their subscriptions lapse while they tackle *Diablo*'s Prime Evils.

ASSASSIN'S CREED III PC ARRIVES IN NOVEMBER

So how's about that *Assassin's Creed III*? Lookin' spiffy 'ey? If you're planning on spending a bit of quality assassination time out in the Americas using your trusty personal computer rather than those newfangled console thingamajigs, we now have a release date for you. The PC version of the game will arrive three weeks after the console versions, on November 23rd. Start sharpening that tomahawk now, and prepare yourself for what is guaranteed to be universally hated DRM being attached to the game to spoil all our frontier fun.

Whatever your taste,
we got you covered...



Website: www.nag.co.za



Durian



Dragon fruit

Twitter: @nagcoza



FACEBOOK: NAGMAGAZINE



Kiwano



Pomegranate

Mobile: [m.nag.co.za](tel:m.nag.co.za)



Steam: NAG Online



Star fruit



Buddha's Hand

Digital: www.zinio.com/NAG



Miktar's Meanderings



Thank you for the game

So I'm reading *Kuroko no Basuke* (*Kuroko's Basketball*), a Japanese manga (comic book) about a high school basketball team trying to make nationals. I like reading manga because of its *genre maturity*.

Generally, Eastern manga covers a much broader range of genres and topics than Western comics and graphic novels: everything from sports, romance, science-fiction, fantasy, business, horror, sexual comedy... even cooking. In Japan, manga tends to be grouped into *shojo* (comics aimed at girls) and *shonen* (comics aimed at boys), and each has a distinct style. But saying manga is specifically aimed at boys or girls is incorrect.

For example, the boxing manga *Hajime no Ippo*, which has been running continuously for 23 years since 1989, has a huge following in Japan of not only men, but women, kids and grandparents as well. The story itself is easy enough to understand, and the characters appealing enough for their own sake, that it breaks through the usual boundaries Western culture tends to erect around content.

Hajime no Ippo goes through multiple genres. At times it is action-packed, *shojo* style, usually during a bout. Using dynamic angles and subjective motion, the reader is inside the action as it happens. But the story also slows to "slice of life" speed at times, focusing more on the interactions between characters, their personal stories and issues. But it's always centered around the main pillar of boxing, the sport of it, and the lifestyle surrounding it. Consistency, and slow, realistic character growth, are hallmarks of most long-running manga that aren't overly focused action, such as the fun and utterly ridiculous *One Piece*, which focuses on adventure instead.

Except for *Cerebus the Aardvark* (which ran for 27 years from 1977 to 2004), a bizarre outlier in Western comics, there are almost no analogues to stories such as *Hajime no Ippo*. Okay, there is *Prince Valiant*, which has been running as a Sunday newspaper strip since 1937, but that's a different kettle of fish.

Back to *Kuroko no Basuke*. At the end of a basketball match, in the manga anyway, both teams would consistently do something: stand in a line facing each other, bow, and say "Thank you for the game!" It didn't matter who won, or who lost, both teams would thank each other for the match itself. It reminded me of the gaming culture equivalent, the "good game" or "GG", which was once considered the polite thing to do. Nowadays I'm not so sure anymore.

Especially if you play *Dota 2*, when one side says "GG" (usually the winning side), the other side more often than not says "BG" or "bad game". I've seen people take "GG" as an insult, no doubt reading into it a sarcastic goad. And there's always that one jackass who, if on the losing side, says "noob team", attempting to absolve himself from any and all reasons for losing, while simultaneously insulting the very person he just played with.

Now, I know most people are sociopaths, in corporate business, and in online gaming. Play enough *MineZ*, a server-side mod that turns *Minecraft* into a version of the permadeath zombie-survival *ARMA2: Combined Ops* modification *DayZ*, and you'll quickly start thinking in the binary of "kill them before they kill me".

But still. Win or lose, wouldn't it be nice if everyone was thankful for having been able to play in the first place?

- Miktar

But mooom, innovation is tough!

This'll likely enter the history books as one of the most controversial strings of words to exit the mouths of gaming's infamous executives, if the response from gamers, journalists and cute fluffy pandas everywhere is anything to go by. This particular sequence of misguided fluff was born of 2K head Christoph Hartmann, who has seemingly confused "innovation", "experimentation" and "inspired invention" with "stuff that looks real". Here's the quote that caused the facepalm, from an interview with *Games Industry International*:

"Recreating a *Mission Impossible* experience in gaming is easy; recreating emotions in *Brokeback Mountain* is going to be tough, or at least very sensitive in this country... it will be very hard to create very deep emotions like

sadness or love, things that drive the movies," said Hartmann. "Until games are photorealistic, it'll be very hard to open up to new genres. We can really only focus on action and shooter titles; those are suitable for consoles now." He continued, "To dramatically change the industry to where we can insert a whole range of emotions, I feel it will only happen when we reach the point that games are photorealistic; then we will have reached an endpoint and that might be the final console."

Now, Hartmann does bring up a few interesting points. Photorealism would undoubtedly aid certain games in specific categories: particularly ones that rely on creating as convincingly emotional and human an experience as can be done, as with something like *Heavy Rain*. But it is not a requirement for evoking powerful emotions.

Rise of the Triad rises again

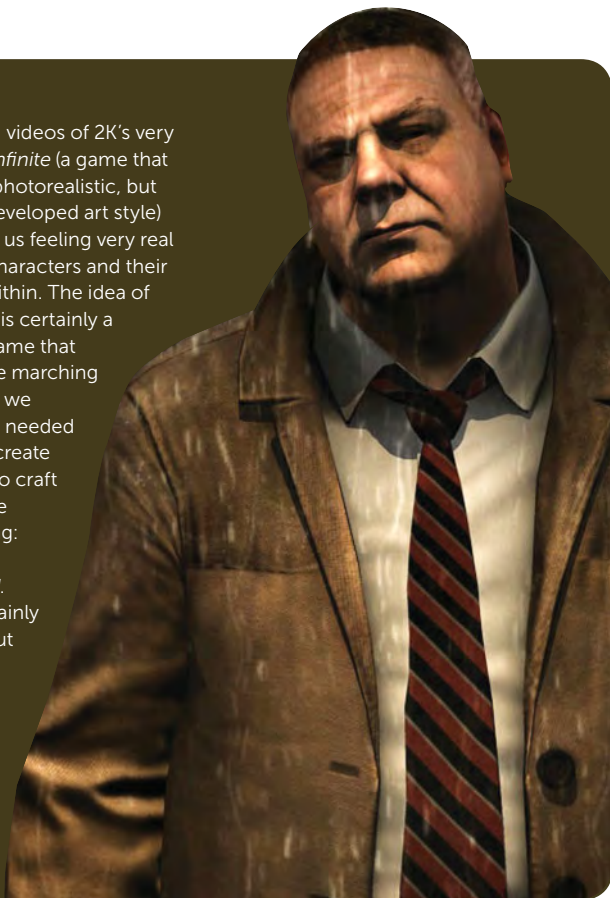
As well as the expected massive LAN and excessive Carmack worship, this year's QuakeCon was host to a surprise that's sure to delight anyone who called themselves a PC gamer in the '90s: *Rise of the Triad* is being remade.

The Unreal Engine 3-powered remake will faithfully recreate the original game with HD textures and 3D models, and will be available either through Steam, or directly from developers Interceptor Entertainment in DRM-free form. Both versions will cost just \$15 (R125), and will include the full single-player campaign as well as multiplayer. Players can choose

to play as one of five characters in the campaign, each with their own special abilities. The game will include an all-new soundtrack that's been "forged in the fires of heavy metal", but players will have the ability to keep it real with the original 1995 audio, should they so wish. *ROTT* will also be fully moddable, as you'd expect of a UE3 title, and the developers have promised that the game will receive post-launch DLC which won't cost a cent. Currently, the only feature not confirmed for launch is co-op play, but it's right on top of the studio's to-do list, so expect it to come knocking shortly after release.



Merely watching videos of 2K's very own *BioShock Infinite* (a game that is by no means photorealistic, but has a potentially developed art style) is enough to get us feeling very real attachment to characters and their predicaments within. The idea of a "final console" is certainly a believable endgame that gaming might be marching toward. And yet, we certainly haven't needed said console to create new genres, or to craft games that make us feel something: games like *Dear Esther* and *Braid*. Books have certainly gotten by without it, perpetually managing to send emotions bubbling to the surface without the need for visual fidelity.



HAX!



If you haven't already been prompted to update your Battle.net password, now's a good time to do just that. As revealed by Blizzard, their all-encompassing online service was hacked, and a large amount of data was stolen. There's no need to panic just yet – the US servers were hit the hardest and, unless you've engaged in some regional finagling, you're likely on the Euro servers. But anyway, here's the list of stuff

stolen: From US servers: email addresses, answers to security questions, encrypted passwords (they need to be cracked before they'd be usable), and authenticator information. From the EU servers, only email addresses have been stolen, so at worst you'll have a bit of extra spam in your inbox.

Regardless of what's actually been taken, this is a huge blow to Blizzard and will no-doubt have some long-running implications. Hackers have their eyes on the company and, even though more stringent security systems have been put in place, they'll likely continue their attacks on the company's servers. Additionally, all Blizzard digital authenticators (like the kind you have on your phone) will require an update soon to comply with the increased security. Physical authenticators are apparently still good.

HOW NOT TO PLAY COD

A teenager in Columbus, Ohio has sought to teach all of us a very valuable lesson in video games and the playing of them, acting as a sort of unwitting guinea pig in an idiocy experiment. After a four-day gaming binge in which the fifteen-year old did nothing but play *Call of Duty*, he eventually collapsed and had to be taken to hospital due to severe dehydration.

The boy's mother reveals that her son only briefly exited his cocoon during his four-day session to get the occasional snack and to use the bathroom. We salute the young man for putting his health on the line so all of us could learn an important lesson in "how not to be completely stupid." The mother has since confiscated her son's Xbox.



K series



THE ADVANCED SOLUTION OF AIRFLOW AND PERFORMANCE

The K series are computer cases built for the general PC user. A bold, futuristic design is the trademark of the K series. A front mesh panel and air vents give optimized airflow that provide the coolest temperatures possible. High-end graphics cards are supported. Seven HDD bays increase expandability. The K series comes in four models: K280, K350, K380, K550.



Sonic Informed
Computer Component Importer & Distributor

Cape Town
Tel: 021 551 8218
Fax: 021 551 8244

Johannesburg
Tel: 011 314 5800
Fax: 011 252 5974



FRONTOSA
MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGIES

JHB
Tel: 011 466 0038
Fax: 011 466 0033

Cape Town
Tel: 021 551 4411
Fax: 021 552 6172

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

DISTRIBUTORS	
Apex Interactive	011 796 5040
ASUS SA	011 783 5450
BT Games	0861 4 GAMES
Compuseed	011 781 8880/2/3
Comstar	011 314 5812
Core Gaming	011 535 9000
Corex	011 655 8800
EA South Africa	011 516 8300
Evetech Solutions	012 326 6547
ESET	0860 313 872
Frontosa	011 466-0038
Incredible Connection	0860 011 700
Intel Corporation	011 806 4530
Look & Listen	011 467 3717
Megarom	011 361 4800
Microsoft	0860 225 567
Musica	0860 687 422
Nu Metro Interactive	011 340 9300
Phoenix Software	011 803 5437
Prima Interactive	011 799 7800
Rectron	011 203 1000
Samsung	0860 726 7864
Silverscreen Trading	011 794 9749
Sonic Informed	011 3145800
Ster Kinekor	011 445 7700

Could Valve have a Source engine 2 waiting in the wings?



If freshly uncovered scripts and files buried within the innards of the recently released Source Filmmaker are anything to go by, then Valve might currently be fiddling with an updated version of their Source engine. Source, originally used to power *Half-Life 2* and *Counter-Strike: Source* upon release back in 2004, is still a mighty impressive engine after all this time, capable of delivering striking visuals in games like *Portal 2* many years later. Still, we've long wondered when the aging engine would see a true update, beyond the incremental upgrades that Valve have applied to it over the years.

All this sudden excitement was brought about when Valve-related news wagon *Valve Time* went for a dip in Source Filmmaker's code, where they discovered more than 60 references to "Source 2". The most revealing of those lines was this one:

"Return an str with the current

engine version. If key doesn't doesn't exist, assume 'Source', otherwise invalid — assume next-gen 'Source 2'."

Meanwhile, another group has discovered a set of icons labelled "Source 2 tools", which is assumed to be preparation for Source Filmmaker's eventual Source 2 integration. As a final piece of evidence, Valve cheekily made a stealth update to their business profile on their website. To the end of the section that details the Source engine, they added a single line: "And it's about to get even better."

Naturally, this has all caused a huge stir within Valve's zealous following. Cries of *Half-Life 3* ring out across the Internet once again. And we can't help but get excited by the prospect, because there'd be no better time to announce *Half-Life 3* than with a new engine. Who knows what's really going on here? Valve. That's who.

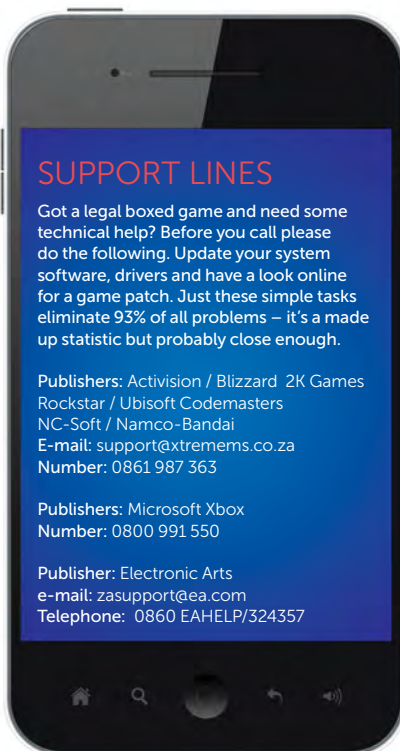
"I am thinking of bringing the original *Blood* game back. I would also make it work on all platforms, not just PC. My goal of course is for this all to be free, and all about gameplay and fun. You can rest assured that I have the resources to bring *Blood* back properly"

- Jace Hall, founder of Monolith Productions

FIREFALL WANTS ALL OF YOUR ESPORTS

Red 5's free-to-play online multiplayer shooter *Firefall* is looking slick. It's now been revealed that the game will launch with a strong focus on encouraging eSports interest thanks to its "eSports toolkit." It boasts two modes for shoutcasters to take advantage of, helping them keep track of the action. The standard observer mode, which is available to all players, lets you watch any match from a top-down viewpoint, or from the perspective of any player on the map.

Elsewhere, specifically approved broadcasters will get their own set of tools that'll grant them more options for viewing and commentating on matches — like the ability to fly around the map, or to watch different cameras from the game at the same time. According to developer Red 5 Studio's Morgan Romine, they're doing everything they can to make eSports a priority for *Firefall*, continuously tweaking things like the core movement speed of characters and the classes within the game to get the game optimally balanced for competitive play. Romine revealed to *PC Gamer* that the goal is to "have an FPS that has the long-term viability of a *Counter-Strike*."



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.

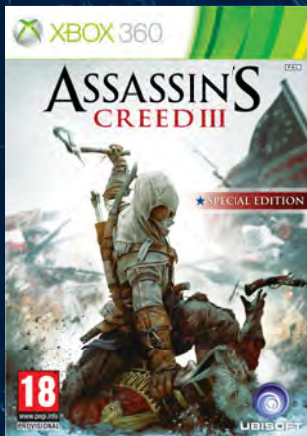
Publishers: Activision / Blizzard 2K Games
Rockstar / Ubisoft Codemasters
NC-Soft / Namco-Bandai
E-mail: support@xtrememem.co.za
Number: 0861 987 363

Publishers: Microsoft Xbox
Number: 0800 991 550

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

PRE-ORDER your games at Top CD

and get up to R150 discount to spend on any Game, DVD, CD or Book of your choice*



ASSASSINS CREED 3 SPECIAL EDITION

(PS3, 360) **R599.95**

ASSASSINS CREED 3

(PS VITA) **R499.95**

31 October 2012



CALL OF DUTY BLACK OPS 2

(PC) **R499.95**
(PS3, 360) **R699.95**
13 November 2012



BORDERLANDS 2 (Includes 1st Access DLC)

(PS3, 360) **R699.95**
(PC) **R499.95**
21 September 2012



WoW - MIST OF PANDARIA EXP

(PC) **R329.95**
25 September 2012



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

(PS3, 360) **R599.95**
14 September 2012

Find us on Facebook



See the great selection of games at Top CD stores in:

Pretoria:
Menlyn Park / Kolonnade / The Grove / Wonderboom Junction / Quagga

Johannesburg:
Cresta Shopping Centre



Dial 08610 Top CD (08610 867 23) to speak to your nearest Top CD

*Top CDs standard Ts & Cs apply: Loyalty and Discounted or sale items do not apply. Prices and release dates are subject to change. Stocks are limited.

Zynga and EA get their claws out



Social games champions Zynga are no strangers to copyright infringement lawsuits, but when one comes in from EA, protecting one of their most prolific franchises, then it's time to sit up and get serious. The suit claims that Zynga

blatantly ripped off gameplay mechanisms from EA's *The Sims Social* to make their own Facebook-based life sim *The Ville*. It's worth noting that some of the similarities are so utterly obvious that it's a wonder the case hasn't already been settled out of court. To give you an example, the skin colour options available during character creation are exactly the same in both games, down to specific RGB values.

As expected, Zynga has taken a defensive approach to the allegations, and even took the opportunity to call out EA on *SimCity Social*'s "uncanny resemblance" to Zynga's *CityVille*, and that the publisher "clearly demonstrates a lack of understanding of basic copyright principles." Ouch.

Apparently employees within Zynga aren't quite as confident as the company's lawyers, and the studio's COO John Schappert resigned soon after the lawsuit went public. To curb the expected mass exodus, Zynga is reportedly handing out stock options to all full-time employees, but with the company's share price at an all-time low (less than one-third of where it was at when it first listed in December 2011), somehow we don't see that as a terribly enticing offer.

Animal Crossing 3DS details



The 3DS version of insanely addictive real-time village sim *Animal Crossing* (a series of games that see you purchasing a home in a village populated by animals and then, well, essentially just living there – you can do anything from fishing and digging up fossils to buying furniture and planting trees) has had some of its features teased by *Famitsu*. It's been previously reported that your *Animal Crossing: Jump Out* (the game's full title) character will eventually become mayor of your town, overseeing its development if you so choose, but we now know that there'll also be a few other first-time features for the series.

Tom Nook is now a real-estate agent, rather than running the general store. From him, you can buy your first, tiny house and gradually increase its size and fanciness as you earn the requisite cash, as always. A new thrift shop run by Lisa the alpaca, there's a full shopping mall beyond the town outskirts, a new shoe store and there's even a gardening shop – selling flower seeds and the like – run by a sloth. In addition, the museum will have a larger collection of fish and fossils to discover, and there'll be a wealth of new items to work towards purchasing.

Look & Listen

Pre-orders www.lookandlisten.co.za



PC

Borderlands 2	September 21st
Dishonored	October
Hitman: Absolution	October 12th

Xbox 360

NHL 13	September 14th
FIFA 13	September 28th
Resident Evil 6	October 2nd

PS3

Far Cry 3	September 7th
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	October
Assassin's Creed III	October 31st

Wii

Just Dance 4	October 2nd
Skylanders: Giants	October 31st
WWE 13	October 31st

3DS

Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	November
Pro Evolution Soccer 2013	2012
Ben 10: Omniverse	2012

Do Western developers put graphics before gameplay?

While 2K's Christoph Hartmann is (perhaps misguidedly) touting the powers of photorealism and its proposed effect on gaming's future, Hideaki Itsuno (game director for upcoming *DmC: Devil May Cry*) is quietly observing that Western developers tend to put graphics before gameplay. The *Devil May Cry* reboot is in itself a clash of East meets West, and Itsuno has picked up a few trends in Capcom's collaboration with Ninja Theory in developing the game.

"I think this speaks to the differences in the core of how Western games are developed compared to games in Japan," said Itsuno in an interview with *Siliconera*. "Well, at least at Capcom because we can't speak for everyone. Given our experience, it seems like with the West and Ninja Theory they focus on the visuals stuff at the beginning and then build the gameplay on top of that."

"Whereas at Capcom Japan, we focus on the game logic and getting the systems down in the beginning then we gradually build the visuals on top of that. The key to the feedback and the kind of advice we've been giving is we've been trying to find a hybrid system where we take a best of both worlds approach. It hasn't been easy, but I think we're happy with the results we have."

BACK TO THE STARTING GRID

Well here's a thing: Codemaster's hugely celebrated 2008 racing title *Grid* is set to receive a sequel, upholding all of the ideals that made the first game such a hit among racing fans. Built in the latest version of Codemasters Racing's Ego engine, executive producer Clive Moody told *Eurogamer* that the team is aiming to "make street, track and road racing exciting again."

"The core design philosophy for *Grid 2* is that we treat the race as a character, not a consequence of simply putting cars on tracks," said Moody. "Everything that goes into the game impacts on that second-to-second, in the moment, blockbuster drama – the feel and personality of the race."

The game will build on the handling model seen in the original with what they're calling the "TrueFeel Handling System" – which promises to use real physics to balance the game comfortably between arcade and simulation. *Grid 2* will span three continents (North America, Europe and Asia) and will boast races set in locales like Paris, Abu Dhabi and Miami across everything from licensed circuits to mountain roads. Multiplayer progression and customisation will be handled via Codemaster's online racing portal, RaceNet. It's due out on Xbox 360, PS3 and PC towards the middle of 2013.

BORDERLANDS 2



PRE-ORDER NOW!
IN STORES SEPTEMBER 21

WWW.BORDERLANDS2.COM



Well hello, sexy lady!

Ladies and germs, we'd like to introduce you to Roxy, our official rAge mascot for 2012. It's not that we don't love Scarlett anymore, it's just that rAge turns 10 this year, and we thought it was time for a new babe sporting some cool gear. So we briefed South African illustrator Warren Louw, who also did Scarlett for us back in 2010, and our vision for a rAge/NAG gaming chick was created. We think she's hot and would play her in a video game any day.

Every month we'll hide her somewhere in the magazine – your mission is to go find her.



Send your sighting to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line "September Roxy", and of course your contact details, and you could win a prize.

August winner



Rudi Doubell, page 35

THIS MONTH'S LOOT

An Xbox 6 in 1 Starter Kit valued at R499.95. Sponsored by Musica and DreamGear.



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 *Dead Island Game of the Year Edition* for PS3 from Apex Interactive. Send your captions to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line "September caption".



NAG's lame attempt at humour

We've watched enough Hentai to know where this is going...



Last months winner

Charlie Sheen would have a tough time deciding between a woman, a sweet ride and a whole lot of snow - Laurence Merry

VIRTUAL INSANITY

Virtual reality: the pipe-dream of the '80s, '90s, '00s and, soon, the '10s as well. id Software overlord and resident genius John Carmack has stuck his name and his brains behind a new project called Oculus Rift, which is designed from the ground up for video games. The system, which is in development by California-based Oculus, has been kicking around Kickstarter for a few weeks now, and has already blown past its goal of \$250,000, with pledges totalling over \$1.5 million at the time of writing.

Just like every other VR set in history, Rift promises to be special, and the demo shown at this year's QuakeCon and E3 managed to impress the show's guests enough to scoop together a few interested parties, despite the demo unit being held together with duct tape.

Sure, we're sceptical – VR is one of those technologies that has been hanging around so long that finding anyone who actually cares any more is going to be tough, but John Carmack is the kind of person who can change our minds. For now, though, we'll adopt a cautiously amused "wait and see" approach.

PRE-ORDER

AUTO-UPGRADE TO THE PREMIERE CLUB!

Get the Gearbox Gunpack, Golden Key, Vault Hunter's Relic & a new character class!



+PLUS+
GET CREATURE SLAUGHTER DOME ACCESS! GAIN XP, GET MOXXI'S ROCKET LAUNCHER & MORE!



Release list

Dates subject to change without notice

September: week 1

Air Conflicts: Pacific Carriers	360 / PC / PS3
Batman: Arkham City: Game of the Year Edition	360 / PC / PS3
The Lord of the Rings Online: Riders of Rohan	PC
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	360 / PC / PS3
The Sims 3: Supernatural	PC

September: week 2

NHL 13	360 / PS3
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	360 / PS3

September: week 3

Borderlands 2	360 / PC / PS3
F1 2012	360 / PC / PS3
Kinect Sports Ultimate Collection	360
One Piece	Vita
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	PS3

September: week 4

World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria	PC
Gran Turismo 5 Academy Edition	PS3
LittleBigPlanet Vita	Vita
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	Vita
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception: Game of the Year Edition	PS3
FIFA 13	360 / 3DS / PC / PS2 / PS3 / PSP / Vita / Wii
Battlefield 3: Armored Kill	PC

"Moral decisions that give different in-game rewards disconnect the player by giving them motivations within the game; it's a tactical or strategic decision. **We intentionally did not add any rewards to the player choice** – we wanted players to decide for personal reasons."

- Jorg Friedrich, lead designer on Spec Ops: The Line



DayZ to grow up

The ultra-popular *Arma II* zombie apocalypse mod *DayZ* is going solo. Project lead Dean "Rocket" Hall announced recently on the official *DayZ* tumblr that he'd secured the go-ahead from Bohemia Interactive (developers of the *Arma* series, and the studio at which Hall works full-time) to commission a few developers and dedicate the necessary time to transfer the project to a standalone format.

In his post, Hall says that the project "will follow the *Minecraft*

development model; fast iterations with the community alpha available for a heavily discounted price."

If the rate at which the mod is updated currently, we'll bet that "fast iterations" is no joke. Speaking of the mod – development will continue, so those folks who purchased *Arma II: Combined Ops* purely for the sake of playing *DayZ* (which consequently propelled *Arma II* to the number two spot on Steam's top sellers list for a period) won't feel too shafted. More details will come soon, and we'll let you know as soon as we have them.

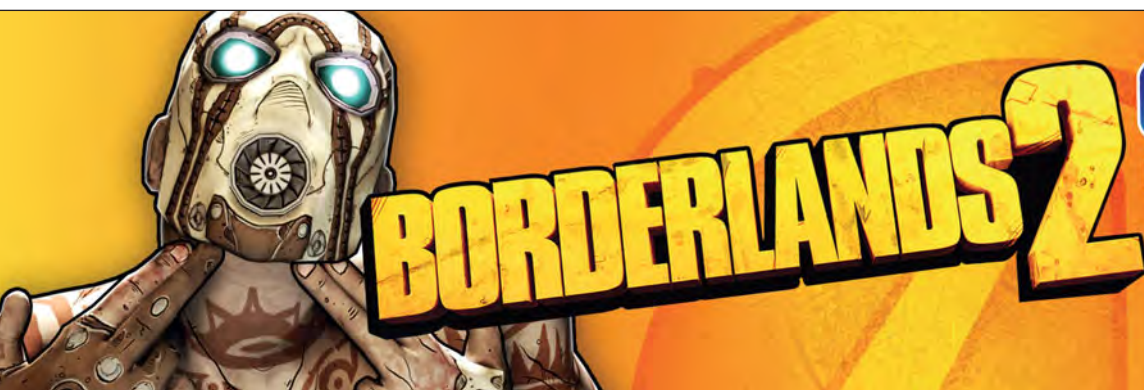
Sony struggling to attract third-party Vita support

Speaking with *PlayStation: The Official Magazine*, Sony Computer Entertainment Worldwide Studios president Shuhei Yoshida admitted that Sony is having a tougher time than they expected with attracting third-party development for their portable powerhouse, the PlayStation Vita. "We're having a more difficult time than we had anticipated in terms of getting support from third-party publishers, but that's our job," said Yoshida.

This news follows shortly after Sony unveiled its Q1 2012 fiscal results, in which their gaming division reported a \$45 million loss. Even though the handheld has already drawn in really big names (like specially developed versions of *Assassin's Creed III* and

Call of Duty: Black Ops II) to take advantage of the potent technology nestled within it and the unique control mechanisms it boasts, other major publishers aren't dedicating themselves to developing games for the device.

However, on a more positive note, Yoshida has pointed out that Vita is managing to draw in some excellent independent developers – like Queasy Games (*Sound Shapes*) and Niffias (*Knytt Underground*). "We will continue to talk to development communities and publishing partners and tell them why Vita can provide a great experience for the IPs they have and I hope the *Assassin's Creed* game will prove that," he added.



Now 46 stores Nationwide

For contact information go to www.btgames.co.za

The top 8 holy sh*t moments in gaming

Every so often, a game comes along that simply floors you. Your jaw drops as soon as you start the game; maybe it's the visuals or the music or something so small that nobody else would notice it, but when a game is so stunning that all you can do is utter the words "holy sh*t", you know it's a keeper. Here's our little list of games that managed to do just that. If you'd like to add any suggestions to our list please send mail to ed@nag.co.za.

8

POWERSLIDE – INDEPENDENT WHEEL PHYSICS

Proving that it's the little things in life that can bring the most joy (or maybe that other thing about small things, but whatever), *Powerslide's* independent wheel physics said "Hey, bro, look at this car – it's being simulated, with *science*. You're *driving* it. Also, you might want to watch out for that wa..."



6

QUAKE III – ANIMATED TEXTURES

Too many a rocket to the nethers was taken while we excitedly shouted at LANs "Look at the walls! Look at them! They're, like, moving! Guys! ... Guys?"

7

BLACK & WHITE – ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Do you see those little people running around in zealous service to you? No? Is it because your giant tiger threw them all into the ocean and pooped on their homes? Yeah, that'll teach you. *Black & White's* AI wasn't just incredible from a techie geek point of view, it was incredibly reflective of who you were as a player. Are you a scumbag god of death and violence? Well then, so is your pet.

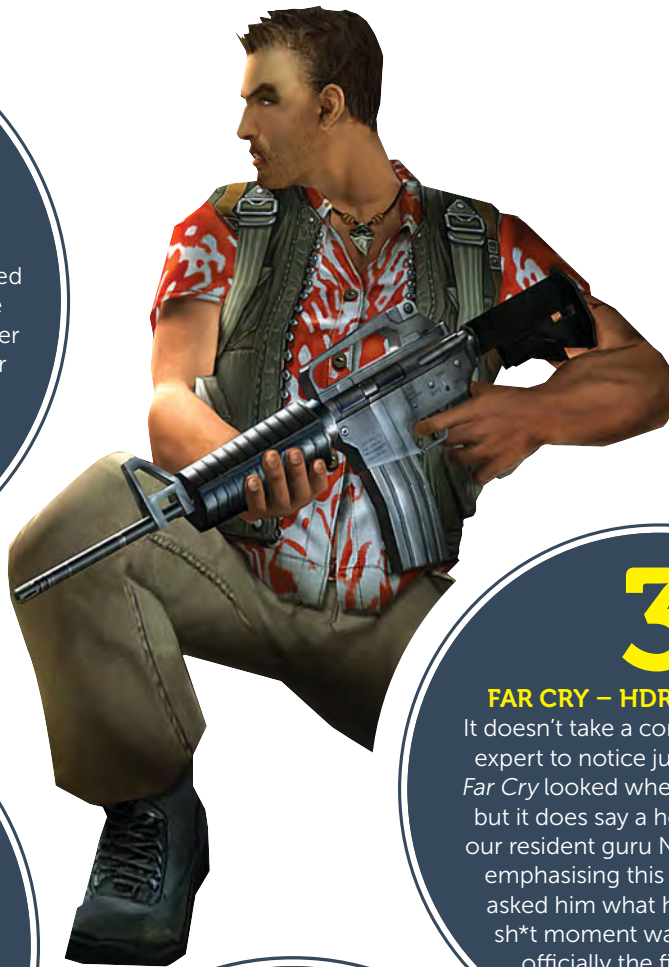


5

HARDWARE

ACCELERATED GRAPHICS

We're keeping this one open because everyone has a different game that triggered their holy sh*t moment, but the principle remains the same: that moment when, after installing your sparkly new 3D accelerator and fiddling with drivers, you boot up a game and enable hardware mode. Suddenly that dreary game of yours is the closest thing to realism you've ever seen.



3

FAR CRY – HDR RENDERING

It doesn't take a computer hardware expert to notice just how fantastic *Far Cry* looked when it was released, but it does say a hell of a lot when our resident guru Neo couldn't stop emphasising this point when we asked him what his biggest holy sh*t moment was. *Far Cry* was officially the first game of this generation.

4

DOOM – MULTIPLAYER

Sure, *Doom* wasn't the first game ever to have multiplayer, but it was that one game for almost all of us here that let us, for the first time, frag our mates and insult the way they were dressed by their moms. It gave birth to the LAN party – late nights, bleary eyes, and a sense of "this is where I belong" unparalleled by any other experience before it.

2

C&C – REAL-TIME STRATEGY

Yes, we acknowledge that *Dune II* pioneered the genre, and technically *Warcraft* launched a couple of months before, but *Command & Conquer* was the first game to perfectly capture our childhood memories of playing with little army guys and put them on a computer screen. Hundreds of units battling for domination; tanks riding over men; bombers soaring through the air. It filled us with elation.

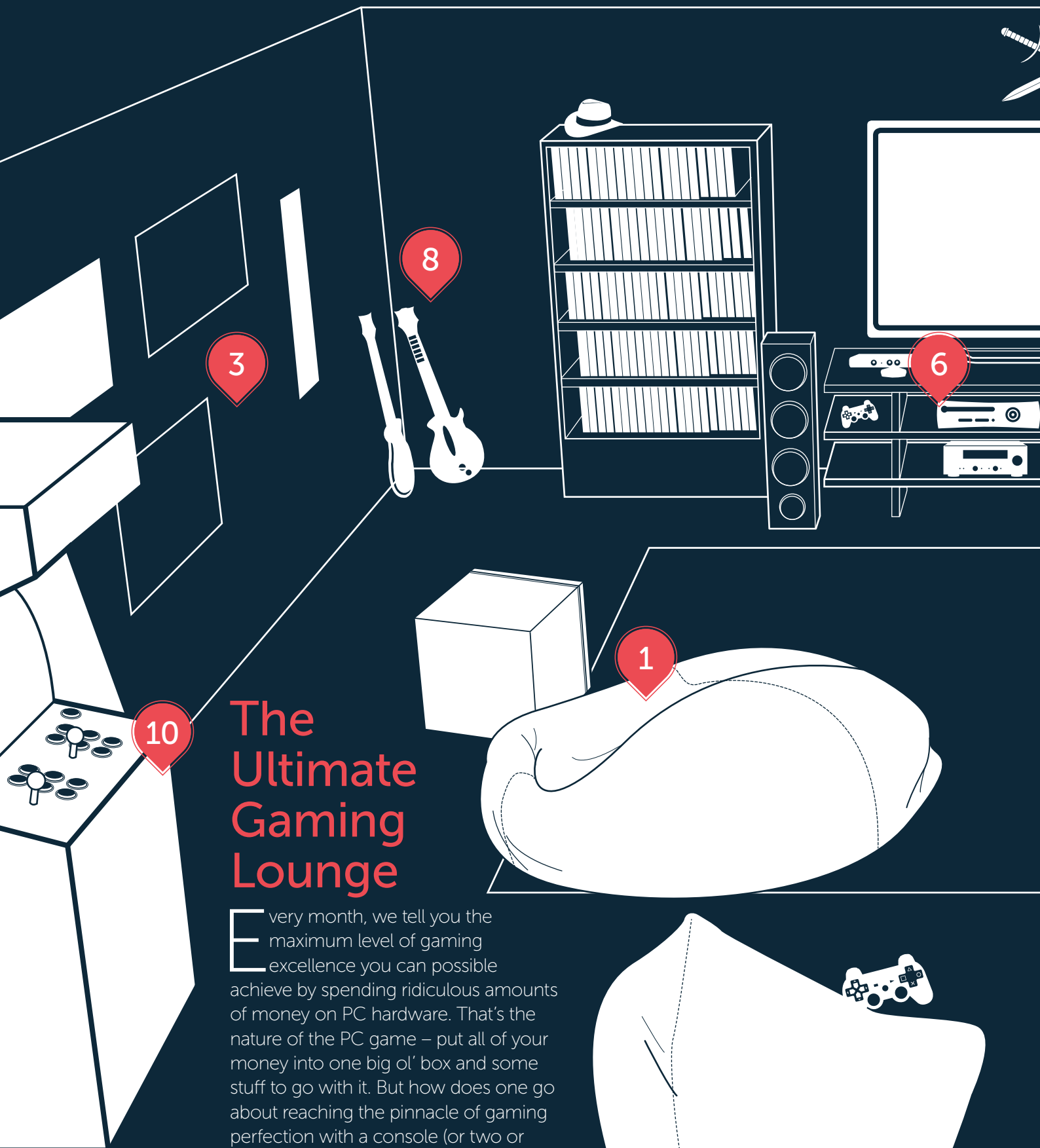


1

QUAKE – MOUSE LOOK


The young 'uns among you might not remember this, but when the first *Quake* launched, mouse look (as in, using your mouse to rotate your view in a 3D environment) was disabled by default. To enable it, one had to bring down the console with the tilde key and type in "+mlook". Everything about first-person shooters changed from that day.

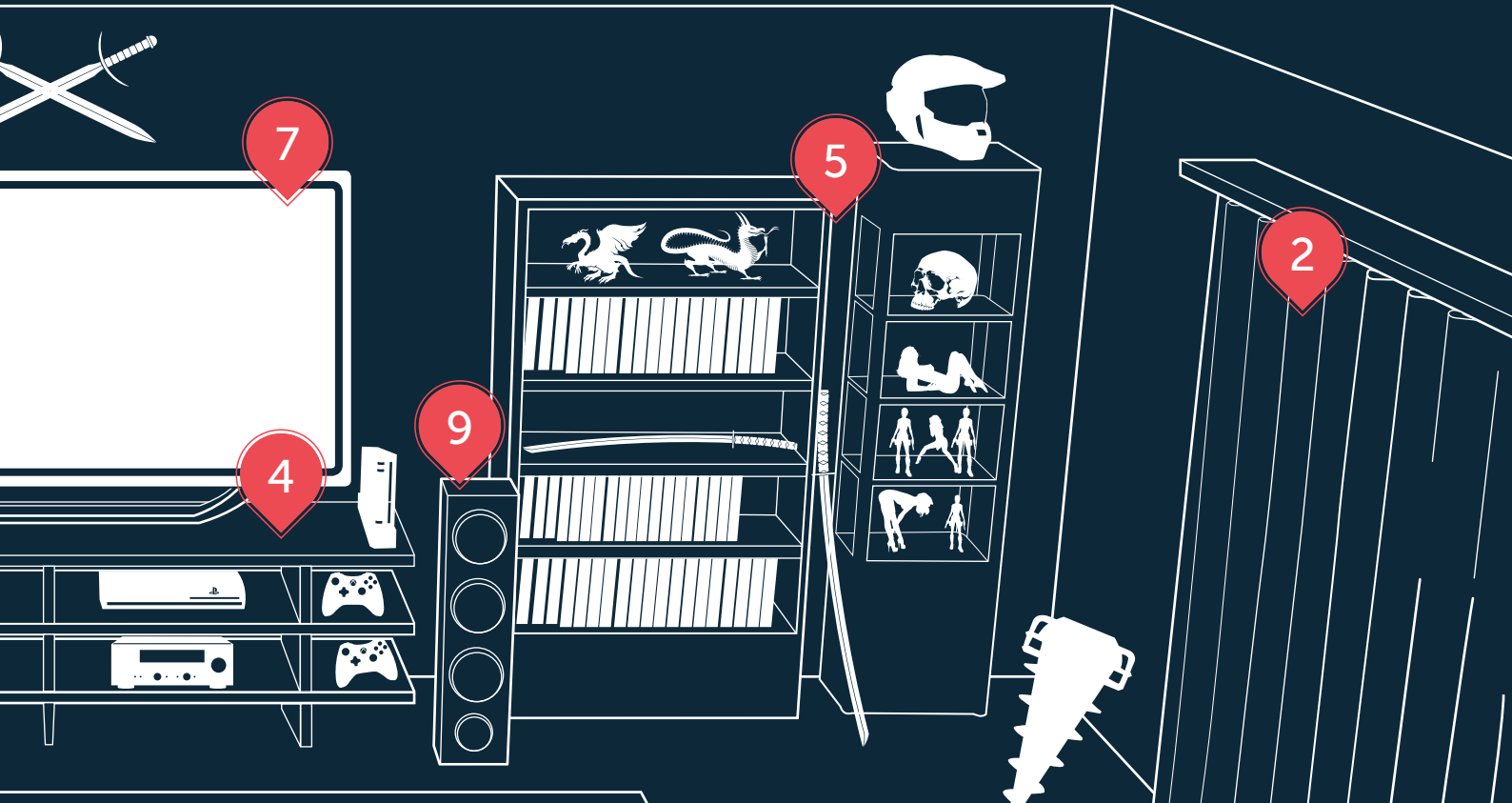




The Ultimate Gaming Lounge

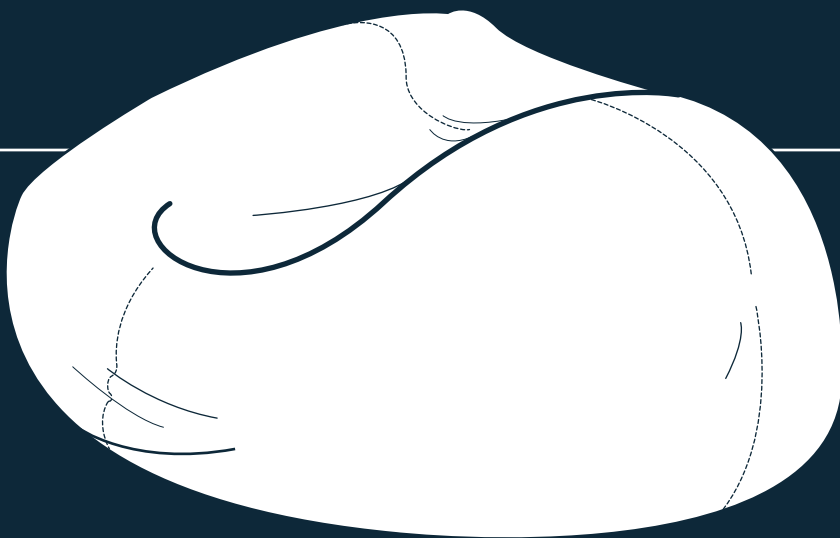
Every month, we tell you the maximum level of gaming excellence you can possibly achieve by spending ridiculous amounts of money on PC hardware. That's the nature of the PC game – put all of your money into one big ol' box and some stuff to go with it. But how does one go about reaching the pinnacle of gaming perfection with a console (or two or three) and the bits and pieces that go with it? Well, it's easy, because you have an entire room to fill with said bits and pieces. That's exactly what we're up to here. This is how to kit out...

The Ultimate Gaming Lounge. 



FLOORING

Sure, you could get some boring old Persian rug that probably costs more than everything else in this room (and it would be a classier choice), but it'd be an ill fit. Instead, grab some high-res artwork of your favourite game, and have a printing company like Graffiti put together a durable vinyl mat. However, having said that, a rugged Persian rug can be passed off as "authentic" *Prince of Persian* (the original) merchandise.



TABLES

What does this look like, a dining room? With all your Kinect/Move/Wii action there won't even be space for a coffee table, but you'll need somewhere to put your snacks. Here's a killer suggestion: replace your side-tables with mini-bar fridges so there's always an ice-cold drink within arm's reach.

FEATURE The Ultimate Gaming Lounge

1 SEATING

If you're going to dedicate an entire room in your house to gaming, then you better make damn sure that you're not using any regular old couches. What you need are Sumo bean bags. We've mentioned Sumo's Omni in the magazine before, but to fit into the profile of Ultimate Gaming Lounge, you're going to need the Sumo Gamer as well. You can order them from sumolounge.com. **Disclaimer: they are not actually filled with beans.**

2 CURTAINS

Blackout curtains or blinds will keep the glare and your neighbours' prying eyes off your screen. You can get these from any home or furniture store, or have a chat to a few office supply companies. Shop around, find a good deal, and make sure you test them before you commit to coughing up the dosh.

3 WALLS

You probably already have a ton of gaming posters lying around or clinging to your bedroom walls with bits of gunky old Prestik, so grab the ones that you really enjoy and get them framed. Or, better yet, repurpose some of your favourite old gaming boxes and manuals. For the more dedicated of you, perhaps a set of *Mario*, *Pac-Man* or *Donkey Kong* stick-on wall decals from whatisblik.com is in order.

4 TV CABINET

NAG is about the furthest thing from a home decor magazine you can possibly get, so we're going to keep the cabinet simple: just get a free-standing job with lots of space for all your consoles, controllers and a few current games. Make sure you get something without enclosed spaces so your hardware doesn't overheat.

5 STORAGE

Put a bookshelf on either side of your TV cabinet/stand so that you're never too far from your precious game collection. For all of those action figures or vintage consoles, don't just chuck them in among your game boxes; get a couple of purpose-built display cabinets from shopequip.co.za to give them a place to shine.

6 GAMING CONSOLES

All of them, of course! Don't forget your PC, too; with a wireless keyboard and mouse it's just as

welcome in The Ultimate Gaming Lounge as any other machine.

7 DISPLAY

You've got two options: TV or projector. If you're going to go for a TV, make sure it's big, 3D enabled, and capable of doing all the media centre tricks your variety of consoles will inevitably struggle with. For that reason, we suggest you go large with Samsung's new Smart TV Series 8 range, from 46" and up. With included 3D glasses, built-in wireless and impressive performance, you can't really go wrong.

But what if Samsung's maximum size of 55" isn't enough for you? Then you need to buy yourself a projector, bolt it to the ceiling and find the biggest white screen you can (or make your own; thick white linen stapled to a wooden frame will do the trick). The Epson PowerLite 5010 can output a 3D display at 1080p on a screen size up to 140". If that's not big enough, then you have issues that technology alone won't solve.

8 GAMING PERIPHERALS

Nothing says Ultimate Gaming Lounge quite like a pile of gaming peripherals – Wii Balance Boards, PS Move controllers, arcade sticks, steering wheels, extra gamepads and all those addons you get with Activision games need a place to relax (or hide, depending on how much of a neat freak you are) when you're not using them. If you're a little OCD you can mount a spray-painted wooden board on a wall with neat outlines of everything you own so you know where they go when you're done.

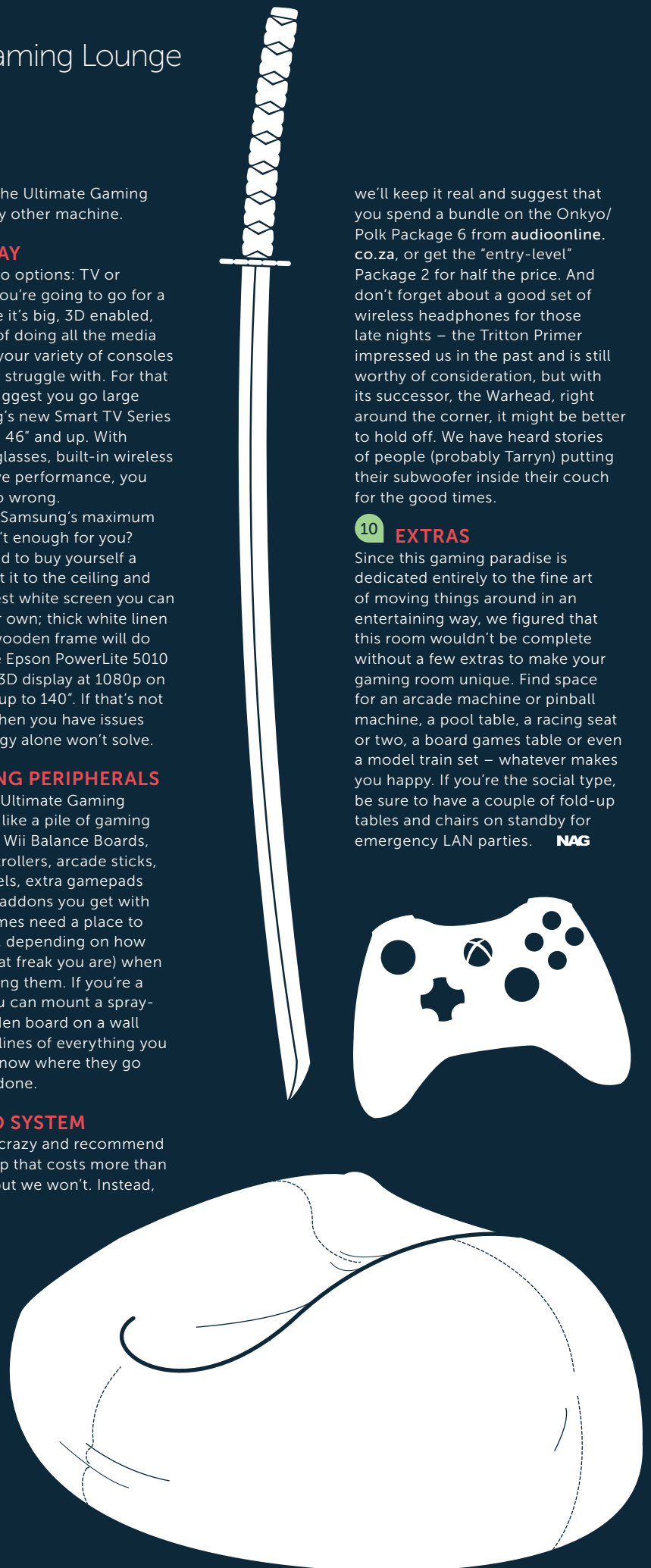
9 AUDIO SYSTEM

We could go crazy and recommend an audio setup that costs more than your house, but we won't. Instead,

we'll keep it real and suggest that you spend a bundle on the Onkyo/Polk Package 6 from audioonline.co.za, or get the "entry-level" Package 2 for half the price. And don't forget about a good set of wireless headphones for those late nights – the Tritton Primer impressed us in the past and is still worthy of consideration, but with its successor, the Warhead, right around the corner, it might be better to hold off. We have heard stories of people (probably Tarryn) putting their subwoofer inside their couch for the good times.

10 EXTRAS

Since this gaming paradise is dedicated entirely to the fine art of moving things around in an entertaining way, we figured that this room wouldn't be complete without a few extras to make your gaming room unique. Find space for an arcade machine or pinball machine, a pool table, a racing seat or two, a board games table or even a model train set – whatever makes you happy. If you're the social type, be sure to have a couple of fold-up tables and chairs on standby for emergency LAN parties. **NAG**



CELEBRATING FIVE DECADES OF

BOND 007™

BOND 50



All 22 classic films on Blu-ray together for the first time ever, neatly packaged into one cool, sleek collectable box-set.

Normal price: **R1399.99**
Pre-order price: **R1259.99**
save **R140**

Look & Listen is NAG's preferred Blu-ray & DVD Retailer

Available on Blu-ray™ end of September 2012

DVD • CD • GAMES • DIGITAL • ACCESSORIES

Shop online at lookandlisten.co.za or visit a Look & Listen store near you.

While stocks last. Availability, prices and release date subject to change at the discretion of the supplier. Not all items are available in all stores - please call your local store to enquire on availability.

Look & Listen
For the Fans

Preorder Survey results

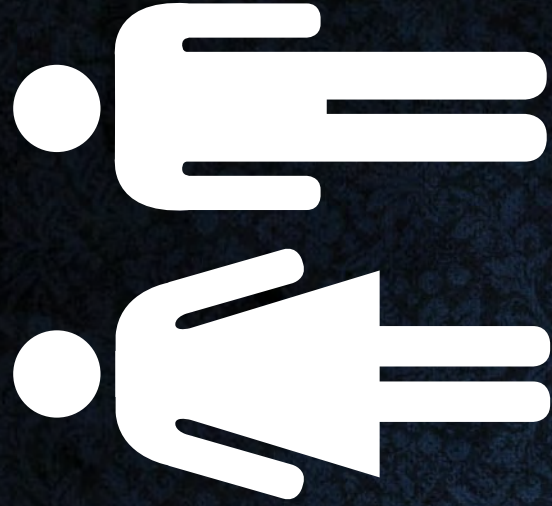
1 Mars, religious scripture stuff happened long ago, we evolved from amino acids hit by lightning, were put here by aliens, we aren't really here at all.

2 No reason it's all just chaos, part of an elaborate experiment by aliens, part of an entertainment system made by our future selves, part of a universal "bigger" brain, religious scripture stuff, for someone's amusement.

3 We turn to worm food and dust, we go to <insert religious scripture stuff>, we return as something different, we wake up, we really never die, zombies!

Who are we? This question is right up there with where did we come¹ from, why are we here² and what happens to us when we die³? While we don't profess having all the answers we can certainly tell you who you are – our readers. In March 2012 we carefully inserted a survey into each and every copy of NAG and asked you to fill it in and send it back to us. There were prizes on offer and everyone had a good time. In total we received 1,350 eligible surveys back (21% less than the survey we ran in 2009 – better prizes, poorer mail

systems, laziness, who knows), and this is what we found out about you and your gaming habits. Remember, don't judge because this represents the typical gamer in South Africa, or at least the gamers that read NAG. Before we forget the most important thing – thank you for sending us your surveys those that did. It's a pain to use ink and actually write stuff and then send it to us. We know and we really appreciate it. Love you guys. :) Also, we scanned some of the craziness we found in the comments block on the survey. Check out the survey gallery on the last page.



GENDER

Wouldn't it be great if we (humans) had more than two genders? We know Mother Nature scoffs at complication, but still, sections like this would be infinitely more interesting, right? Regardless, as it stands we're stuck with the same old boring two we've always had. Something to note, in 2009 we had a 5% female readership and now it's 4%. Nobody knows where they went and we're too scared to ask. Oddly, we see an increase in female attendance at events like **Age** year on year.

96%

MALE **FEMALE**

HOURS A WEEK SPENT PLAYING GAMES**

11-20 hours a week seems to be the majority of you lot (47%). So if you call it 15 hours a week average you get to around 780 hours a year and 31,200 total hours in an average productive lifetime (15 hours x 52 weeks x 40 years). So, three and a half years of your average lives are spent playing games. Not too bad, we're sure you can do a little better than that. Of course those at the freakish end of the scale are spending around seven total years gaming. It helps not to think of all the skills you could master if you used that time differently. Oh well.

Up to 10 hours: **25%**
 11-15 hours: **23%**
 16-20 hours: **24%**
 21-29 hours: **14%**
 30+: **16%**

** Phew, good news everyone! The mathematics is good: they don't add up to 100% because of decimal places and other such inconsistencies.

AGE

This result never changes much as the typical age of an active gamer remains the same no matter which year we sample from. If you look back 20 years or so there wouldn't be many gamers over 30 and ten years further back from that very few over 20. Anyway, over 62% of you are eligible to play violent games (18+); this is at odds with how many whiny letters we get about games and high age restrictions and mommy won't let me play them. **Just remember:** don't complain, if you wait you'll eventually get there. One area that has shown growth is the 30+ demographic. This one is easy, some gamers still game no matter how old they get and the more people that play games when they're younger the more will keep on playing games as they get older (fact). It helps that games these days are rather realistic and artistic and meaningful. Well some of them anyway.

10%
 UNDER 12 YEARS

42%
 19-29 YEARS

38%
 12-18 YEARS

6%

14%
 30-39 YEARS

40+
 YEARS

Yes, we know it adds up to 101%; this is due to mathematics and our lack of understanding numbers.

PLATFORMS YOU HAVE AT HOME

Before you read the result it's important to know that most of you have a PC (90% back in 2009) at home but also have a console and probably a handheld. This result is a little skewed because of this but it's interesting nonetheless. Back in 2009 the PS3 had just been launched and showed up in the survey then at just 11% with the PS2 at 37%. The Xbox was at 24% back then. The Wii was on 10%. As for the handhelds it was PSP at 18% and the DS at 5%. Now for 2012: The PC is steady as always with nice growth for the consoles (we didn't bother asking about the PS2). The big surprise is Nintendo (almost double) and Sony's portable. Overall, more of you now own more gaming platforms than three years ago. Nice work people, nice work.



PC: **86%**
 360: **37%**
 PS3: **36%**
 PSP: **25%**
 Wii: **17%**
 DS/3DS: **11%**

THIS WAS A MULTIPLE ENTRY QUESTION

TYPE OF GAMING PC YOU OWN

This is subjective of course, it's curious to see that 60% of you think you have a mid- to basic PC set up for gaming. This leaves plenty of room for improvement so we'll keep on putting hardware in MAG to provide you with the best possible choice for your money. The extreme crowd have obviously been shopping in our Dream Machine section and we don't need to tell you anything, clearly. :) The "none" group is a clear indication of how many readers are not PC gamers showing us that NAG is read by mostly a multiplatform gaming audience with small deviations in the extremes on both ends.

40%

MID-RANGE

27%
HIGH-END

5%
EXTREME

20%
BASIC

10%
NONE

AMOUNT SPENT ON HARDWARE IN THE LAST YEAR



OKAY, KNOCK OFF A BIT HERE AND THERE FOR BRAGGING AND ADJUST FLUX CAPACITORS FOR EGO INFLATION. THIS IS REALLY HERE TO SHOW OUR ADVERTISERS THE VALUE OF TALKING TO OUR READERS. BOTTOM LINE THUMB SUCK FROM NAG; AVERAGE HARDWARE SALES ARE IN THE HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS A YEAR. AGAIN, WELL DONE AND THANKS FOR YOUR PATIENCE.

Less than R1000: **24%**
R1000-R5000: **37%**
R5000-R10,000: **21%**
R10,000-R15,000: **10%**
R15,000-R20,000: **4%**
More than R20,000: **3%**

"NAG is probably the best magazine of all time. I always buy the newest addition when it comes out. Stay Awesome!"

- Reader comment

"I like chocolate milk."

- Reader comment

Upgraded YOUR PC FOR A GAME

HAVE YOU SPENT MONEY ON UPGRADES BEFORE BUYING SOME HOT NEW GAME? MOST OF YOU SAY YES. WELL, THAT'S JUST MADNESS. SO, WHAT YOU'RE SAYING HERE IS THAT IN A YEAR WHERE A NEW CRYISIS COMES OUT PC HARDWARE SALES ROCKET. CRAZY STUFF, NOT THAT WE CAN SAY WE HAVEN'T DONE THE VERY SAME THING.

6800
YES

3200
NO

"I travel a lot internationally and purchase a lot of foreign gaming mags. And i can say without a doubt that your mag is the best. Keep up the good work."
- Jet setting Reader comment

Is Diablo 3 real?
- Reader comment

NUMBER OF GAMES YOU BUY A YEAR

This is the important one and shows that the NAG readership buys a great many games in a 12 month stretch. Surprisingly (considering the global economic slowdown) not much has changed from 2009 except for the higher end of the scale. More of you are buying more games in a year than ever before. In 2009 the 15+ option was 13%. Where it dropped was the 1-5

option with 36% back in 2009. What this really means is more games are being bought overall, but then we are talking to more of you than we were in 2009. If you do the middle of the middle averaging out game we're talking hundreds of thousands of game titles bought each year by NAG readers. Thanks for supporting and growing our beloved industry.

34%
6-10 A YEAR

31%
1-5 A YEAR

1%
NONE

19%
15+ A YEAR

15%
11-15 A YEAR

The PEANUT gallery

Some of your artwork and comments submitted with the reader survey. We laughed, we cried, we were creeped out. We love our readers.



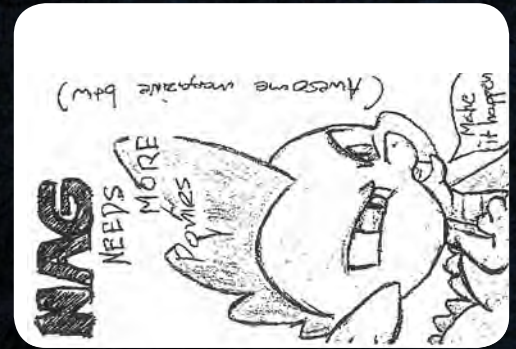
Great Job!
Love the mag's layout,
Love the dream-machine and hardware sections
GIVES me something to dream about!
!)



NAG RULES!!!
Keep up the Awesome work!!!
p.s. I could really use that gaming bundle.

NAG is awesome

N - NEVER DISAPPOINTED
A - ALWAYS AMAZING
G - GREAT MAGAZINE



No Job
No Money
Crap Computer
God bless

PLACE YOU BUY GAMES

THIS IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING QUESTIONS IN THE WHOLE SURVEY BECAUSE IT HAS A BEARING ON EVERYONE UP AND DOWN THE CHANNEL. LAST YEAR IT LOOKED LIKE THIS: RETAIL STORE: 92%, ONLINE RETAILER: 25% AND DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION: 4%. IT'S INTERESTING TO SEE THAT NO MATTER HOW BIG DIGITAL GROWS PEOPLE STILL ENJOY SHOPPING THE OLD FASHIONED WAY. WE'LL LEAVE IT AT THAT.

95%
RETAIL STORE

41%
ONLINE RETAILER

20%
DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION

FREQUENCY OF PURCHASING DLC

THE PROS AND CONS OF DLC ARE USUALLY SPLIT DOWN THE MIDDLE – JUST LIKE THESE SURVEY RESULTS. DLC HAS COME A LONG WAY AND CLEARLY STILL HAS A LONG WAY TO GO.

ALL THE TIME: 8%
INFREQUENTLY: 50%
NEVER: 42%

PLACE YOU PLAY MULTIPLAYER GAMES

Who said the LAN is dead? Shoot that fool. What is surprising is the low online number (should be the LAN plus the online amount really). Is this because no cheap and fast Internet exists or something else we haven't figured out yet? The couch co-op is definitely underrated but growing fast. It looks like social interaction (people sitting in the same room with others) is alive and well. There is still hope for humanity. Phew.

LAN: 8%
ONLINE: 50%
COUCH CO-OP: 42%
I DON'T: 42%

COLSING

We only have so much space here and naturally, because there are dirty spies everywhere we're not going to reveal the results about what you want in NAG itself. We'll just make the right kind of changes and before you know it NAG will feel just perfect in your hands each month. So, other interesting numbers look like this: 90% of you say magazine reviews help you choose your next game, on the bottom end of that scale only 11% ask for advice from store sales people. This is a clear sign for retailers to work on hiring the right people in the games section. 46% of you have bought a second-hand game so let's hope publishers stop trying to prevent this high demand category. In terms of purchasing behaviour 44% of you pre-order your games and 23% buy it on launch day. There are a lot (50%) that wait until they have the money but because this can mean anytime it really means nothing at all. Here's a list of type of games you enjoy:

FPS: 89%, **RPG:** 77%, **Adventure:** 72%,
RTS: 55%, **Racing:** 47%, **Arcade/Platform:** 36%,
MMO: 32%, **Simulation:** 30%, **Puzzle:** 29%, **Sports:** 23%,
Independent: 17%, **Management:** 14%, **Collectible card games:** 12%, **Board games/pen and paper:** 10%, **Music & Rhythm:** 10%.

Some clear winners and favourites but nothing we didn't expect. Again, thanks for helping us make NAG a better magazine and for helping the whole gaming industry in South Africa.

BORDERLANDS 2

Win actual stuff from Pandora!

- SMSes charged at R1 (no free/bundled SMSes apply).
- Winners will be notified by SMS.
- Judges decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Competition closes 30 September 2012.

To enter, SMS the word **Claptrap** to **32541**

First prize

1x Loot chest* (360, PC or PS3)

*The Loot chest is sold out in South Africa, so the only way to get your hands on this exclusive edition is right here.

1x Collectible framed and signed by the NAG staff

Borderlands 2 Quad Damage NAG cover set

1x Duffle bag

1x Shirt

1x Cap

1x Button



3x second-place prizes

each consisting of:

1x Vault Edition
(360, PC or PS3. Includes day 1 DLC)

1x Shirt

1x Cap

1x Button



6x third-place prizes

each consisting of:

1x Borderlands 2 (360, PC or PS3)



Prizes proudly sponsored by

megarom
interactive



DETAILS

Release date

August 2012

Platforms

360 / PC / PS3

Genre

Action adventure

Developer

United Front Games

Square Enix London

Studios

Website

www.sleepingdogs.net

Publisher

Square Enix

Sleeping Dogs

Open-world Asian fusion



HANDS ON

Originally titled *Black Lotus* but transformed into a *True Crime* reboot at the hands of Activision, *Sleeping Dogs* had its name changed a third time after it miraculously crawled out of gaming's sewers when Square Enix decided they'd love themselves a smattering of *GTA*-style sandbox action once Activision had left it to rot in a filthy gutter somewhere. Which essentially means that Square Enix bought developer United Front Games after Activision enjoyed a dash of daily studio pruning.

In it, you are Wei Shen, undercover cop working for the Hong Kong Police Force to infiltrate the city's deadly triads and dish out some Hong Kong action cinema justice without blowing your cover. Your character bio says you're hot-tempered and unpredictable, and you've got

some personal scores to settle with a few triad members who happen to be former childhood friends. What it means for the gameplay is typical open-world crime drama/action in the same vein as Rockstar's seminal series. You're free to explore a digital recreation of Hong Kong on foot or using vehicles, taking on missions, side-missions and odd jobs from various characters you'll meet throughout the game, and creating your own fun in between all that by manipulating the game's many sandbox elements.

Naturally, it's not a strict clone of past open-world titles: it's got a number of unique quirks and charming eccentricities that set it apart.

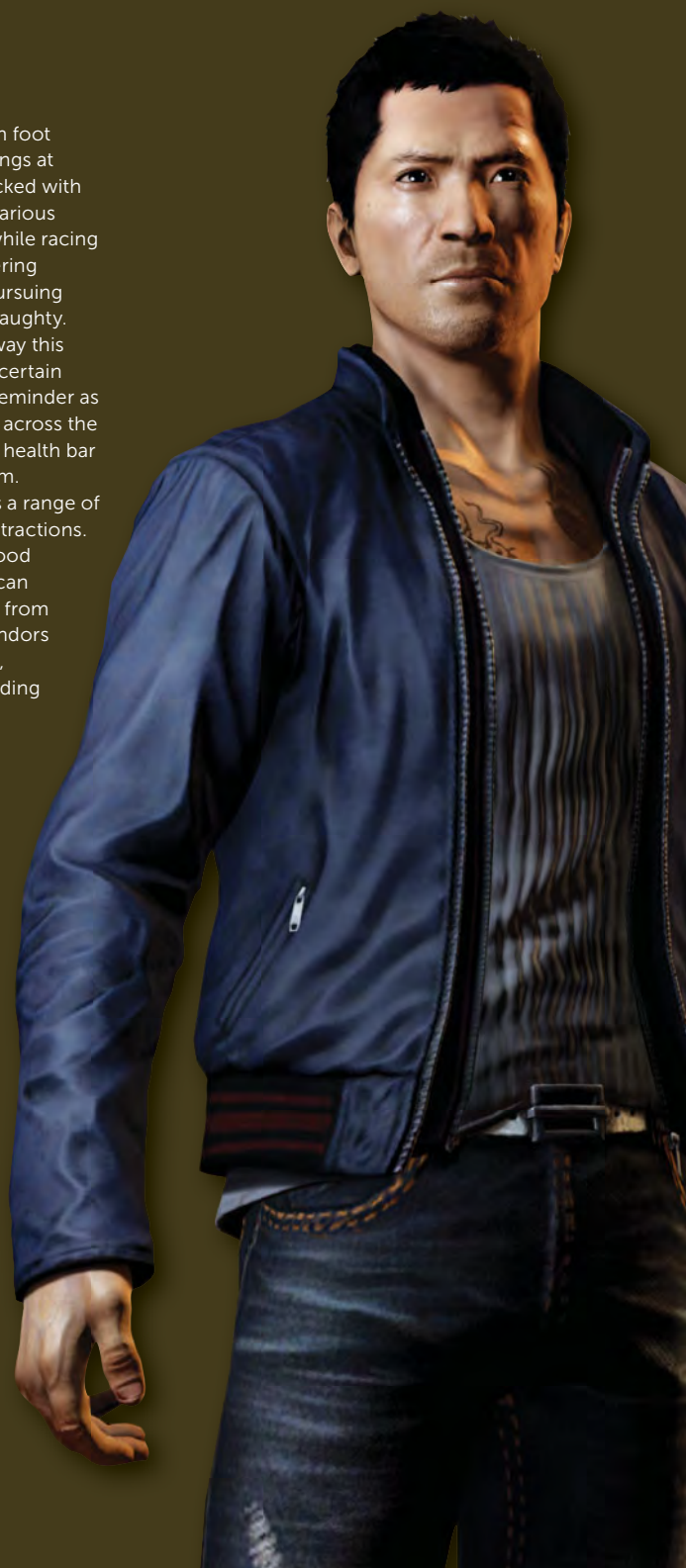
First is the location. The various districts of Hong Kong are inherently exciting to see and hear, and it's densely populated both in detail and city inhabitants, enough so that in most areas you won't question the illusion that this city is constantly alive with activity.

"Karaoke machines in nightclubs provide a silly escape from all the wanton destruction."

Crowded street markets bustle with foot traffic as hawkers shout their offerings at passers-by, and main roads are packed with neon-lit activity when night falls. Various back alleys allow quick shortcuts while racing to destinations, or act as a meandering bottleneck while trying to evade pursuing police when you're caught being naughty. Sights and sounds aren't the only way this game sells its choice of backdrop: certain gameplay features are a constant reminder as well, like the health shrines littered across the city that'll increase the size of your health bar when you've visited enough of them.

Travelling through the city offers a range of tertiary distractions. Stuff like food and drink can be bought from various vendors and stores, each providing a different

temporary buff (eating food, for example, provides health regeneration for a time, while drinking herbal tea temporarily lessens damage dealt to you). Various NPCs around the city request favours of you, quick missions that involve objectives like smashing a cheating racer's car with a tire iron found in its boot, or chasing down pickpockets on foot using an impressively fluid free-running system. Drug busts see you hacking into an area's surveillance cameras, heading back to one of your multiple apartments in the city, and busting contraband-peddling criminals remotely by sending in uniformed cops at the right time, presumably so you don't blow your cover. Buying cars for your personal collection (which can be accessed from numerous parking garages generously scattered across Hong Kong) lets you enter races divided across



different classes of car. Offshore gambling dens are but a quick powerboat ride away, nestled secretly within cargo ships away from prying eyes. Karaoke machines in nightclubs provide a silly escape from all the wanton destruction. Visiting clothing stores lets you customise Wei's appearance, and certain items of clothing will award useful bonuses when worn. Even your apartments can be kitted out with cosmetic additions (like coffee tables and pet birds) if you've got the cash and the patience to search for the people selling the upgrades.

The diversity in the momentary distractions that can be engaged in carries through to the meatier, story-centric missions, introducing a number of offbeat characters and tasking you with mission objectives that seem like they'll be varied enough to keep things interesting. Missions often employ a variety of different gameplay styles, organically evolving as missions progress: you'll go from tracing a target character's calls (via one of the game's puzzle-style micro-games, which are often controlled using your in-game mobile phone)

Sleeping Dogs features a noteworthy voice cast, with the likes of Will Yun Lee (who's appeared in such films as the recent *Total Recall* remake), Tom Wilkinson (*Batman Begins*, *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*), James Hong (*Kung Fu Panda*), Lucy Liu (*Kill Bill*) and Emma Stone (*The Amazing Spider-Man*) providing voices for the game's many peculiar characters.



to engaging in meaty melee combat and heated, cover system-driven gun battles, before finally ending off with a high-speed chase on busy highways, all in the space of a single mission. Melee combat is very obviously inspired by the Freeflow combat system seen in *Arkham Asylum* and its sequel, driven by flowing movement, fluidly dynamic animations and an easy-to-use system for countering enemy attacks. Different enemy types require different melee strategies: some will be more susceptible to grapples and throws, while the attacks of others can't be interrupted, for example. Ranged combat is more straightforward and instantly familiar, although there is a very nifty slow-motion mechanic that kicks in when vaulting over cover, allowing you time to carefully choose your shots. Kill an enemy and your slow-motion timer is extended, so quickly stringing together kills can enable you to finish entire ranged combat sequences in syrupy slow motion.

The driving model is solid and arcade-like, satisfyingly flashy and drifty in the handling department without feeling too slack. As you play, you earn three different types of experience points for use in unlocking new

abilities and improving Wei's existing ones. Triad XP is rewarded for being devoted to the vicious ways of the triads, so things like excelling at melee combat or using the environment against enemies in ever-more disturbing ways (like throwing them into tanks filled with electric eels) will net you more Triad XP to unlock deadly new abilities. Police XP is rewarded for keeping your dirty work as clean as possible: driving smart and not causing any property damage will keep your Police XP gain high, and will unlock abilities like quicker, quieter hijacking of cars. Face XP is a more general set of XP, gradually gained by doing favours for people and completing missions. Improving your Face XP level provides bonuses like increased health regeneration from food you eat.

There's definitely potential for *Sleeping Dogs* to become a hit in the world of gaming sandboxes. There's enough depth and diversity in its open-world adventuring to keep players occupied, and the strength of its melee, shooting and driving components makes diving into the world of *Sleeping Dogs* mighty enticing.

NAG

- Barkskin



DETAILS

Release date
2013
Platforms
360 / PS3 / Wii U
Genre
Fighting
Developer
NetherRealm Studios
Website
www.injustice.com
Publisher
WB Games

Injustice: Gods Among Us

Never before have punches sent people flying this far

Good ideas are often simple. Take the DC Comics universe, quintessential western super heroes and villains, and place them in a context they've yet to enjoy: a finely crafted, AAA quality fighting game with glamour for the masses and technique for the pros. Perhaps the reason this hasn't happened before is simply that there aren't a lot of studios capable of making world-beating fighting games, either in the East or West. Enter NetherRealm, Ed Boon's crack squad of *Mortal Kombat* alumni. While at Midway, Boon had previously overseen the sleeper hit *Mortal Kombat vs. DC*, a game that – while not without issues of polish and completeness – held the seeds of greatness.

Which brings us to *Injustice: Gods Among Us*. Right off the bat you know something is different, starting with the title itself. Rather than a bold, cartoony moniker along the lines of "DC Super Heroes Slam Fest!" we have an indirect allusion to the power of DC's literally godlike pantheon, and it sounds rather dark. Powered by the technology behind 2011's ball-busting, sales-ripping *Mortal Kombat* revival title, *Injustice* presents a bleak, colourless world in which DC's most famous characters, from Superman to the Flash, appear with an attitude you haven't quite seen before. They are determined and dangerous looking, clad in original versions of iconic uniforms that look

"Superman punches his rival and sends them into low orbit, flying up only to slam them back down to the surface."

Ed Boon, head of NetherRealm Studios, was the co-creator of *Mortal Kombat* alongside John Tobias. He provided the voice of Scorpion in all the games and both movies.



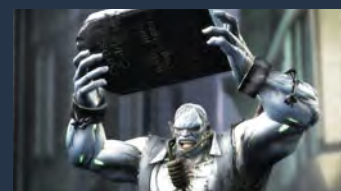
more future battlefield soldier than spandex adventurer.

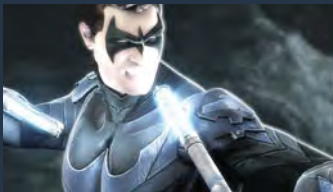
NetherRealm has hinted that they were given great creative freedom in crafting a unique take on DC's property, allowed

to design the costumes, and write a wholly original story. What exactly that is, remains under wraps (but promotional art of grim and dark DC heroes striding through a broken world probably suggests it's not exactly *The Superfriends*). We do however know far more about *Injustice's* play mechanics.

Firstly, as far as play mechanics go, this isn't *Mortal Kombat*. Gone is the block button, in favour of a more conventional hold-back-to-block system. Also different is the command set. *Injustice* takes several cues from particular Japanese fighting games such as *Blazblue* with a four button system that revolves around Light, Medium, and Heavy attack buttons plus a "Special" button tied to each character's unique powers or attributes. What Special does depends on the hero or villain; it manipulates Flash's speed, causes Wonder Woman to switch fighting styles, and Nightwing to break apart his staff into twin clubs. This brand new set of mechanics compliments a faster, more bouncy style of fighting compared to *Mortal Kombat*, and it hinges in large part on stage design.

Stages in *Injustice* are multi-tiered and full of





Ed Boon also did all of the voice work for the excellent *Total Carnage* (1992).

interactive hazards. While this would normally send up warning flags to fighting game purists, NetherRealm claims they are determined to balance these concepts for competitive play. While using the Special button in the right section of a level may cause a character to kick a barrel towards the enemy, it's surprisingly strategic and doesn't rely on button mashing. This isn't *Smash Bros*.

The feeling of all-out war with one's opponent and the environment likely befits a super heroic theme better than one of martial arts. Still, there is tweaking yet to be done. While stage transitions open up possibilities for combining them with extra damage, the cut scenes involved go on for a little too long, even though they're fabulously animated and cool. Boon has stated that several elements of the game's early demonstrations were only designed to show off the technology and some aspects have yet to be reined in. An incongruous scene of Batman (in powered armour) kicking a giant foe through several buildings in a row has already been axed.

Something hinted to be making the transition from *Mortal Kombat* (2011) is a sprawling, elaborate story mode and plenty of extra content. Being that those things were some of

MK's greatest selling points, it would only make sense for *Injustice* to strive for not just equalling but exceeding its bloody brother.

Two scenes so far have managed to instantly sell most people on it: a pair of special-meter-powered super moves. In one, Flash takes off at the speed of sound, running over the ocean and circling the Earth to end up back where he started, delivering a supersonic slam in his opponent's face. In another, Superman punches his rival and sends them into low orbit, flying up only to slam them back down to the surface. Each scene is executed with fluid transitions and detail normally reserved for pre-rendered cut scenes, and don't seem to get old.

Fighting games are a tough genre: the competition is fierce and usually decades-refined and the audience exacting in their expectations. NetherRealm has proven, at least once, that a Western team can take on famed Japanese developers and earn respect from fans. Next up: their sophomore effort married to a challenging license. Can the combined one-two punch of fan-favourite superheroes brawling in a real-deal tournament-level fighting system expand the fighting game market even more? **NAG**

- Miktar



DETAILS

Release date
Q1 2013
Platforms
PS3
Genre
Interactive drama
Developer
Quantic Dream
Website
www.beyondps3.com
Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment

Beyond: Two Souls

Psychological action thriller / interactive drama

"I want to provoke and explore emotions", says David De Gruttola, better known as David Cage, head of Quantic Dream. "I want to explore things that you don't usually find in video games."

Mr. Cage makes a very particular style of game. As with *Omikron: The Nomad Soul* (1999), *Fahrenheit / Indigo Prophecy* (2005) and *Heavy Rain* (2010), perhaps the more accurate appraisal would be that he's in the business of *interactive drama*. And there's a market for it. *Heavy Rain* sold well, over two million units. *Indigo Prophecy* is considered one of the most overlooked games of 2005 (for its story anyway). *Omikron* had a digital David Bowie, so that's... something. According to Cage, over 75% of players completed *Heavy Rain*. For contrast, recent studies indicate only 25% of gamers actually finish what they own. We blame Steam sales, and crappy games [Steam sales is shoe shopping for men, Ed]

Granted, *Heavy Rain* isn't very hard to complete. The story is compelling, the visuals outstanding, but let's not kid ourselves: it's a glorified *Choose Your Own Adventure* with very few meaningful choices beyond the quick-time event *minutiae* that make up the



Heavy Rain's nameless city was heavily influenced by Philadelphia

"I was interested in showing how someone changes through the years. How we grow, how we evolve, where our wounds or our strengths come from; in short, how our personal history shapes our personality."
– David Cage

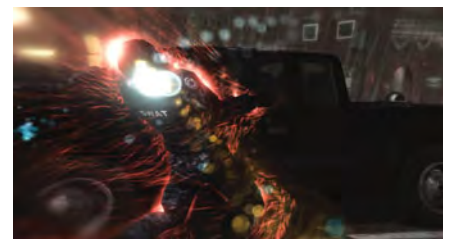


Warner Bros. will be releasing a film based on *Heavy Rain*, written by David Milch. The movie will be titled *Rain*.

bulk of its "interaction". But that's fine: one sign of a maturing medium is the need for better categorisation. Not everything has to be called a "game". *Interactive drama* is acceptable.

Beyond: Two Souls is *interactive drama*. You play as Jodie Holmes, a girl saddled with a peculiar problem: a spirit called Aiden, with whom she shares her existence and communicates. Aiden isn't quite human, nor is it entirely feral. It seems to have a mind. The game takes place over a 15 year period, showing Jodie as a child, teenager and adult. The story won't play out in chronological order, and the choices Jodie makes in one part of her life, echo forward.

Players will be able to control Aiden at certain points: it can travel a fixed distance, phase through solid objects and, when indicated by certain coloured auras, possess humans. There will be scenarios with multiple choices: possess a cop that's about to shoot Jodie, or take out the lights so she can sneak by the cop, and so on. It's not a true sandbox, but rather, a host of well-designed choices that trigger scripted



events. Interaction is indicated by onscreen controller prompts and motion-sensitive actions, very much like *Heavy Rain*. But unlike its predecessor, *Beyond* never breaks "cinematic frame", meaning the action is always viewed from a movie-like angle, never the traditional over-the-shoulder camera. You control Jodie's movements directly when moving her around, so it's a little less "on the rails" than *Heavy Rain*.

But you don't play a Quantic Dream game for the gameplay. "*Beyond* is about growing, accepting yourself as you are, being different," says Cage. "It's also about death, mourning, and separation."

NAG

- Miktar

TRANSFORMERS FALL OF CYBERTRON

DOWNLOAD
THE DEMO ON
XBOX LIVE™ OR
PLAYSTATION NETWORK
AVAILABLE FROM 01.08.2012



"THERE IS SIMPLY NO DENYING
THE GAME'S RAW POTENTIAL"

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE



FIGHT ON AN EPIC SCALE DURING THE DARKEST HOURS
OF THE WAR ON CYBERTRON

USE THE MASSIVE CHARACTER CREATOR TO TAKE YOUR OWN
TRANSFORMERS INTO BRUTAL ONLINE HEAD-TO-HEAD MULTIPLAYER

PLAY AS NEW CHARACTERS INCLUDING
THE LEGENDARY DINOBOT GRIMLOCK

AVAILABLE IN-STORE OR
DOWNLOAD PS3™ DIGITAL GAME
ON PLAYSTATION NETWORK

24.08.2012

WWW.TRANSFORMERSGAME.COM

 /TRANSFORMERSGAME





ACTIVISION
activision.com

HASBRO and its logo, TRANSFORMERS and all related characters are trademarks of Hasbro and used with permission. © 2012 Hasbro. All Rights Reserved. Game © 2012 Activision Publishing, Inc. Activision is a registered trademark of Activision Publishing, Inc. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners. 'PS3' and 'Xbox' are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. 'P3' is a trademark of the same company. All Rights Reserved. KINECT, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies and are used under license from Microsoft. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners. All rights reserved.



DETAILS

Release date
Q4 2012
Platforms
Wii U
Genre
Real-time strategy
Developer
Nintendo EAD
Website
www.Nintendo.com
Publisher
Nintendo

Pikmin 3

Better gardening through war

Behind its veneer of cute, the gardens of *Pikmin* contain micro-scale genocides. Hundreds of tiny, carrot-like creatures eaten alive by birds and beetles, drowned in puddles of water, squashed under belly-flopping frogs.

"Survival-horror real-time strategy" is not an inaccurate way to describe the first *Pikmin* game. Captain Olimar, stranded on a strange planet after a crash landing, has only 30 days of oxygen. Each day lasts 13 minutes, putting a strict time limit on how much you can accomplish on a map before the setting sun forces you to evacuate the area to escape nocturnal creatures. The pressure makes you careless with the lives of the little creatures that fight for you, carry the broken pieces of your ship, build bridges and take down barriers. Your Pikmin are brave, but their tiny bodies are frail and delicious.

Pikmin 2 removed the oxygen time limit (days still last only 13 minutes), added a second captain for more agency on the playfield, and introduced two new colours of Pikmin to the Red, Yellow and Blue variety from the first game. Each colour of Pikmin has its own traits and abilities: the Reds are fire-resistant, the Blues can go underwater, and Yellows can be thrown higher, and so on. Focusing more on exploration and puzzle-like mini-dungeons, *Pikmin 2* reduced the pressure but added much-needed refinement to the controls and overall strategy system, something that *Overlord* (a spiritual clone of *Pikmin*) benefitted from.

According to designer Shigeru Miyamoto, *Pikmin 3* will be a combination of the first two games, though he's not elaborated on how. In fact, Nintendo has shown remarkably little of *Pikmin 3* even though it's a launch title for



The first *Pikmin* has three endings depending on how successful you are. The "bad" ending is quite grim for a Nintendo game.



"Survival-horror real-time strategy" is not an inaccurate way to describe the first *Pikmin* game.

the Wii U, which is just around the corner. The fruit-collecting challenge map shown at E3 did highlight a few key features: much

improved visuals thanks to the Wii U's high-definition resolution, clever use of depth-of-field to heighten the feeling of peering into a tiny universe among the grass, a map screen on the tablet controller, and overall refinement to the control scheme. You can now lock-on to enemies and shake the Nunchuck to send your entire army charging. There is a dodge-roll

for avoiding enemy attacks, your Pikmin army rolling at the same time, like a choreographed dance troupe. There will be four pilots on the ground to swap between, though none of them Olimar and Louie, for reasons Miyamoto wants to stay secret.

One new type of Pikmin shown is the Rock Pikmin, capable of breaking glass when thrown. The boss fight at the end of the challenge map required its carapace to be broken apart by Rock Pikmin before your regular Pikmin could tear it apart. A pink flying Pikmin was hinted at, but not shown explicitly. There will be no online multiplayer, unfortunately. **NAG**
- Miktar



rage expo

COMPUTERS | GAMING | TECHNOLOGY

When:

5 October – 7 October 2012

Where:

The Coca-Cola dome, Northgate

Show times:

Friday: 10:00-18:00

Saturday: 09:00-18:00

Sunday: 10:00-16:00

How much:

Day ticket:

R60 per person

Weekend ticket:

R100 per person

Family pass:

R180 *[two adults and two children]*

Kids under 6:

Free

www.rageexpo.co.za

NAG





DETAILS

Release date
Q1 2013
Platforms
360 / PC / PS3
Genre
Platform / adventure
Developer
Double Fine
Productions
Website
thecavegame.com
Publisher
SEGA

Tim Schafer is best known for *Full Throttle* (1995), *Grim Fandango* (1998) and *Psychonauts* (2005).

The Cave

Exploring sentient geologic structures for fun, profit, and the meaning of life!

Seven silent adventurers are searching for something important. The Monk seeks his master. The Scientist aims to help the world. The Hillbilly wants love. The Twins are looking for their parents. The Knight quests for a mystic blade. And the Time Traveller is trying to undo a mistake over a million years in the making. All of them must brave the sentient talking Cave to find what they seek.

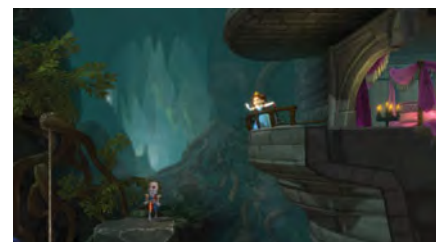
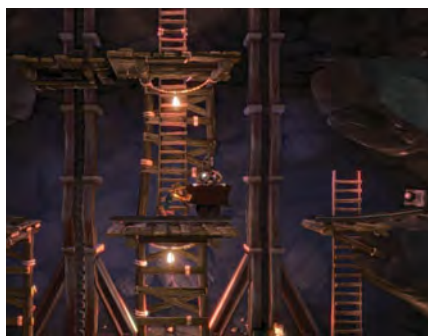
Ron Gilbert is no stranger to adventure games, having been responsible for some of the most lauded jaunts in gaming history. *The Cave* contains all his trademark knick-knacks: quirky characters, a charming setting and lateral puzzles that are enjoyable to solve.

The Cave's multiple characters, from which you form a troupe of three at the start of the game, is a tip of the hat to his first critical success: *Maniac Mansion*. Each character has a unique ability for solving puzzles, and for navigating the cave tunnels. The Hillbilly can breathe underwater; the Knight has a shield, and so on.

A character's ability also grants them access to specific areas of the game. The Scientist has a skill needed to enter a discovered laboratory; the Knight is the only one who can unlock the gate to the castle. You'll have to play through multiple times with different groupings of characters to see all the

"You'll have to play through multiple times with different groupings of characters to see all the game has to offer."

Ron Gilbert is best known for *Maniac Mansion* (1987) and *The Secret of Monkey Island* (1990).



game has to offer. Each of the unique character-locked areas holds a key as to why they entered the Cave in the first place, snatches of narrative and plot

strung together across multiple sessions. It's a little like *Trine*, or *Lost Vikings*, in how it plays. You switch between the three characters at will, using their abilities to overcome goofy puzzle situations that are all about timing, placement and positioning. The Knight might distract a dragon, his invulnerable shield able to withstand the dragon's fire breath, while another character sneaks in from behind to steal an item you need. Characters can only carry one item at a time, so no inventory management. Traversal through the caverns is like a 2D platform game, but gentle. Missing a jump only sets you back a few seconds. It supports local co-op play for three players, which is always nice.

Even though the main protagonists are silent, other characters you meet will be fully voiced. The cave itself contains many

structures and locations, even a subterranean amusement park, and a ready-to-launch nuclear-tipped ICBM. Everything is tied together by a wonderful storybook aesthetic, the tiniest of details meticulously crafted by the established artisans at Double Fine Productions. *The Cave* may not directly resemble the adventure games of yore, but it's overflowing with the creativity and energy once associated with the genre. **NAG**

- Miktar

Check out Snoop Dogg's track and video 'Knocc 'em Down' recorded exclusively for the game at www.tekken.com

TEKKEN™

TAG TOURNAMENT 2

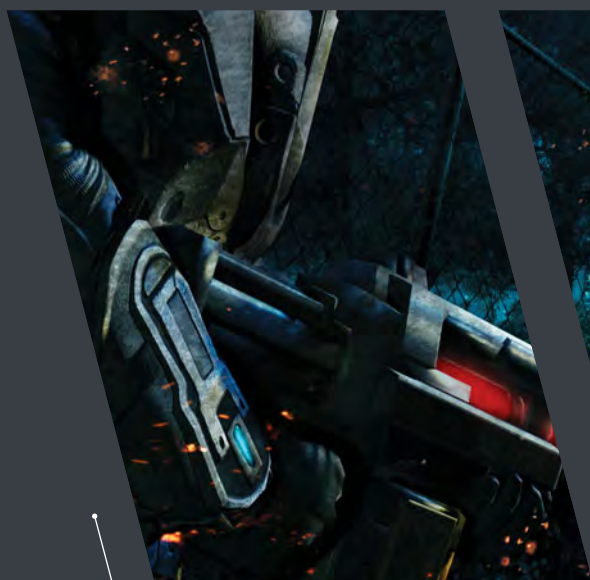
Available 14th September



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT™ 2 & ©2012 NAMCO BANDAI Games Inc
KINECT, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies and are used under license from Microsoft. "B", "PlayStation", "PS3", "PS3" and "PS" are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.

XCOM

ENEMY UNKNOWN



You want to do what with that probe?



HANDS ON

Release date

October 2012

Platforms

360 / PC / PS3

Genre

Turn-based tactical strategy

Developer

Firaxis Games

Website

www.xcom.com

Publisher

2K Games

Tucked away in the tiny and impossibly picturesque town of Sparks, Maryland – 20 miles north of the biker gang capital of Baltimore – lies Firaxis. Better known as the home of Sid Meier and the studio that makes games about trying to avoid war with Napoleon, Firaxis is working on something new. Or something very old, as it were, but remade, and gently coerced into modern times instead of being dragged in kicking and screaming like so many remakes. Firaxis is developing *XCOM: Enemy Unknown*, a turn-based, science-fiction themed, tactical strategy game based on the first title in a series that half of today's gamers probably haven't heard of, but that the studio is absolutely bloody sure everyone will fall in love with with they're done with it.

In its simplest form, *XCOM* is about

saving the Earth from alien invasion. You play as the leader of XCOM – a privately-funded organisation of elite soldiers, scientists and engineers who are commissioned to fight the invaders and provide a feeling of security during a time of panic and chaos. It's been important for Firaxis to keep that main goal pretty straight-forward – save the Earth – but there are layers upon layers of depth, many of them optional, that make this game feel like one of the most compelling tactical experiences I've played in years.

Some of the game's depth comes in quite a literal form: XCOM's HQ is buried deep below the planet's surface (in a country of your choosing). From there you'll manage your resources, allocate research or manufacturing projects, train existing or hire new soldiers, and order the excavation of



INTERVIEW with lead designer Jake Solomon & producer Garth DeAngelis

NAG: What was your thought process at the beginning of development, or, perhaps more bluntly, why make *XCOM*?

Jake Solomon: We were younger. I don't know what I was thinking *laughs*. For me, this was years in the making. Ever since I've been at Firaxis, I've wanted to make *XCOM*. We never had the tech to match our dreams in terms of what we thought a real *XCOM* should be, with environmental destruction and all the things we wanted to do technology-wise. When the industry shifted from 2D to 3D, *XCOM* became a very challenging game to make. And so, when the tech finally caught up with us, everything just sort-of aligned and we knew that we wanted to make an *XCOM*.

NAG: This *XCOM* is clearly based on the gameplay of the first game in the series; did you consider implementing gameplay from the other *X-COM* titles?

Jake: For me, nothing matches the original game, and most of that comes from the setting. And I think that's why the original can't be replicated, even within the sequels. The setting of Earth – of places that the player recognises – creates such a strong emotional resonance with the players that I think you can't match with anything else. That's why, for me, the original was just far above the others in the series. I like the mechanics of *Terror from the Deep*, and *Apocalypse*, I actually found very interesting. Even the real-time stuff was very interesting. But for me the original is the touchstone.

NAG: Much of what we've seen so far is very familiar, albeit tweaked. How do you balance the idea of staying true to the original game while still including concepts that you want to have in the game?

Jake: There are certainly a lot of things in there that are new, like new aliens and whatnot, but you're right – it's variations on a theme. ▶



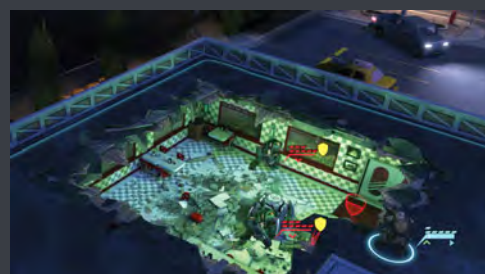
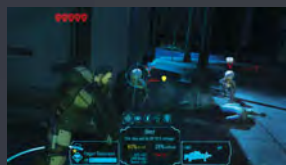
"Knowing where to spend your meagre resources will be important: the developers want to ensure that the consequences of your choices are still very much a factor in today's *XCOM*."

room space or the construction of new rooms (not quite like *Dungeon Keeper* – it's far simpler, but room positioning is important). Your performance in this sector of the game will have a direct impact on the tactical part, so knowing where to spend your meagre resources will be important: the developers want to ensure that the consequences of your choices are still very much a factor in today's *XCOM*. And decisions will have ripple effects. Sure, you could flog that captured alien technology on the black market for a quick cash injection now (allowing you to produce more low-tech weaponry right away, which might be necessary for your next mission), but that tech could've been better used in the research labs to develop new weapons or equipment. The trick is that you can play however you want, but don't expect the game to take a smoke break while you toy with the lives of billions: *XCOM*'s alien invasion AI cruises along at its own blissfully-ignorant pace, and if you don't have the equipment to deal with the situation because you made a bad decision, well, you'll know better next time. Where some games practically

beg to be completed, *XCOM* likes to play hard-to-get.

But this is a game about tactical combat above all else; no amount of preparation in the safe confines of your headquarters will beat back the alien threat alone. When the warning bells sound, you'll have to go to battle, and where you choose to deploy your troops will have lasting implications on both your funding and regional panic ratings. *XCOM* includes a few mission types in addition to the classic Terror and UFO crash investigations from the original. One such mission had us assault an entrenched alien position with a time bomb loaded up inside; we had to diffuse several devices throughout the map (while engaging the aliens) to buy a little extra time, and then eventually disarm the bomb directly.

Missions play out in a turn-based fashion, with each unit granted two actions per turn. Typically, the first action is spent moving (ideally to cover, unless you enjoy painting the environment with your insides), and the second is used to attack, although there are dozens of other actions that you can take which are unlocked



IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM...

...then you're playing too fair. A vital element in both the classic and this *XCOM* is the ability to gather up alien technology, hand it to your research team and turn the invaders' weapons against them. Projectiles weapons soon give way to laser-powered devices, which in turn give way to

plasma weapons and so on. Powerful grenades, med-kits, upgraded laser sights and deployable drones are soon added to your arsenal. Your soldiers' armour, which often conveys additional combat abilities, also benefits from this cycle. Your units

begin with conventional Kevlar protection, but before too long you'll have access to hardened Carapace armour, Skeleton suits (with a neat Batman-style grapple), powerful Titan armour, and eventually flying Archangel suits and even Psionic armour.



“Positioning is key, and very often an engagement that you were convinced would be a cakewalk turns into a bloodbath because you didn’t notice the Muton Berserker flanking your sniper.”

through soldier progression or their equipment. Some abilities, like firing a sniper rifle, consume both actions, but there are numerous skills that can change these factors. Positioning is key, and very often an engagement that you were convinced would be a cakewalk turns into a bloodbath because you didn’t notice the Muton Berserker flanking your sniper. Much like your soldier classes, each alien type (there are ten in total) is vastly different in their abilities, weapons and even AI, and they’ll often surprise you with their bravado or apparent cowardice. It’s up to you to figure out how to react and take advantage of their combat styles.

Soldiers are more than just grunts on the field, though. The developers are adamant that the individual player story – the internal narrative, as they call it – is the one thing that, above all else, will make this XCOM really feel like the old games. Your soldiers begin as lowly rookies – relatively unskilled beyond the training provided by their home country’s most elite military divisions (yes, South Africa is included), and equipped with an assault rifle plus basic armour. If they manage

to survive through their first couple of operations, they’ll eventually be assigned a random class, which lets them use more diverse weaponry and provides them with new skills as they gain XP and rank. They’ll also be given a nickname which is customisable along with their full name and appearance, and it’s at this point that they start to become “yours”. Rookies are a dime a dozen, but your squad’s primary heavy is the lynchpin of your entire strategy: he lays down suppressing fire while your sniper moves into position and your assault prepares to rain down grenade death. Support is waiting in the wings with med-kit in hand. Every soldier lost is devastating, but once HQ starts to churn out high-end weaponry (and even some armour to raise rookie survivability ratings into double-digits), you’ll be able to get back up and running soon enough. Expect lots of deaths on your hands, especially for your first play-through. And if you think you can handle the heat, the game’s highest level of difficulty – the mocking “Impossible” – has only been completed once between the entire development and testing team.

And that’s because we felt a pretty strong obligation to fans of the original game – and to that original game – that you have to be so careful to not think that you know better than a classic. If you’re going to replace something – and there are things we have replaced – you have to be very respectful of the fact that 20 years later, people still want this game, and there’s a reason why it’s stood the test of time when other games from that era have completely fallen away and nobody even remembers them.

Garth DeAngelis: But you wisely haven’t designed from an Ivory Tower. You can almost say that you tried everything from the original, and when a big decision was made like taking out time units or scaling back the number of units, we tried it and tested it internally extensively with other designers or other people within the company that are big XCOM fans.

Jake: But always going back to the question “is this XCOM?” And there were times when I had ideas and could just feel that this is not the game I grew up loving, so, even if that was a good idea – that’s not the game we’re making right now. We’re really trying to remake the original.

NAG: Obviously you hope that the console players are going to react positively to this, but it’s pretty new territory for many of them. How do you plan to usher them gently into this kind of gameplay?

Garth: That drove a lot of the decisions for the tutorial – the “Controlled Experience”. Accessibility is a very dirty word, but we wanted to create an experience that was integrated into the narrative of the game and helps you get accustomed to the universe, and have it be fun, but at the same time learn the many systems from XCOM one at a time.

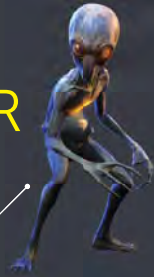
Jake: You’re right, accessibility is a dirty word, but as much as we’ve revealed now, surely we can use that word and people won’t think less of the game?

Garth: Yeah, we still have everything in there!

Jake: It’s there – it’s as deep as the original. In fact, it has a lot more than the original. So hopefully we can say that word isn’t so dirty. ▶

ALIEN ENCOUNTER

There are ten alien types that we know are in the game, here's a quick look at each of them.



SECTOID COMMANDER:

Leader of the little grey dudes and capable of mind-controlling any living creature. Oh that's your 6,000 point soldier? No, no I think that'll be mine now, thanks.

SECTOID

The "Greys" – big eyes and heads, small bodies. They're sneaky little bastards who don't do much damage, but can enhance the capabilities of nearby allies and pin you behind cover.

DRONE

They might look harmless, but these robotic tattletales make sneaking up on your enemies just that much more difficult.

CYBERDISC

The biggest of the lot. These flying machines are highly resilient in their enclosed disc form, and massively troublesome when they've unpacked all the hardware. Where the hell did they fit all of that, anyway?

MUTONS

Big guys with big guns. Not too good in the brains department. They're pretty tough to take down but easy enough to outmanoeuvre.

MUTON BERZERKER

Like the regular Muton but much bigger, and as crazy as Ted Bundy (about as good a flatmate, too). Shooting them just pisses them off. Not shooting them encourages them to trample you to death. Good luck!



"And if you think you can handle the heat, the game's highest level of difficulty – the mocking 'Impossible' – has only been completed once between the entire development and testing team."



**CHRYSSALID**

These spindly creatures move fast, do lots of damage at close range, and can transform any slain enemy into a walking zombie if it's left unchecked.

**FLOATER**

Nasty, ugly cyborg aliens with jetpacks where you'd expect to find a lower body. They're brittle but they move quickly.

HEAVY FLOATER

Bigger, meaner, heavier-armed versions of the Floater. They have a diabolical laugh and a penchant for shooting rockets straight down on your head from their position high above.

**THIN MEN**

The unsettling result of alien genetic manipulation, Thin Men are tall and highly mobile. When they die, a cloud of poison gas fills the area.

MULTIPLAYER

Our trip to Firaxis was enlightening – meeting Sid Meier, spending hours in the studio's vast gaming lounge with a game controller in hand, spotting the Northern Cardinal the team has nicknamed "that devil bird" that pecks at the boardroom window every day – but the most astonishing part of our visit was when we were sat down in front of an Xbox dev unit and introduced to XCOM's all-new multiplayer component.

There's just one game mode in XCOM's multiplayer: 1v1 deathmatch. This might sound like an ill fit for a game with such a deep single-player experience, but after a good few hours of play, I began to think otherwise. Players face off against each other with a squad of up to six units that they customise before the game begins. You can choose from any of the units in the game – aliens included – and can fully customise the human soldiers just as you would in the single-player campaign. The difference here is that you're restricted by a pre-determined point limit for your entire squad, and each new unit you include adds to the total points of your squad. Add a measly Sectoid and it's just 400, but

a Cyberdisc costs a whopping 4,500 points. The aliens can't be customised, but as you add weapons, skill packages and equipment to your soldiers (should you choose to include humans in your squad), each new item brings with it its own point cost. If you've ever played the tabletop strategy game Warhammer, it's just like that, but on a smaller scale. And you won't know your opponent's squad selection until you actually see on the battlefield. This creates a very interesting, and honestly unexpected, meta-game in which you try to size up your opponent before each match, considering what they used in the last game and maybe attempt to adapt to that at the risk of creating new weaknesses in your army. And then there's what your opponent can actually see in battle. A soldier wearing Ghost armour is a soldier your enemy doesn't know exists – keeping her out of sight until the right moment, maybe even faking pending defeat to lure your opponent into a false sense of security – is a great way to get your rival to tip his hand.

The multiplayer battles themselves tend to range from just a few turns to up to an hour's play, and turns are limited to two minutes each. While this side of XCOM certainly feels quite different from the single-player part, its almost arcade-like approach is a refreshing and surprisingly well-implemented addition to the game. And, even though it initially appears to be "tacked-on", it doesn't feel like it: if you learnt to get smart with your unit control and positioning in the single-player, you can use those skills in multiplayer. **NAG**
– GeometriX

Garth: I hope that XCOM can go against that whole stigma. Accessibility is no longer dirty. We're keeping all of the depth there. We're keeping the challenge there, but we want people to be able to drive this jet, you know? We want anyone – whether they're using a mouse and keyboard or gamepad – to be able to pick this up and enjoy it. And that's why you have the Controlled Experience, and the action cameras – things that are very familiar in first-person shooters or action games. If somebody just sees that sniper firing on a Sectoid with a dramatic, cinematic camera, they'll be like "that's a tactical, turn-based game? What? No! I want to go play that!" And then they get to the good stuff and discover the depth of the game, and that's really what we're banking on. We're such believers of the gameplay in this that we just have to get people to try it out.

NAG: You've mentioned before that the internal, personal narrative is very important to players. How do you balance that with the idea of a prescribed story?

Jake: Our external narrative with the big set pieces is important, and we're very proud of it, but the internal narrative of the player with their soldiers is even more important. Those soldiers could die at any time – we don't want to take that off the table. We knew that we couldn't tell a story to which that soldier was a set-piece. Although we do some things where the soldiers factor into the story at some point, so we've had to do some pretty interesting things story-wise.

Garth: As I play through this game, I told Jake that it just enabled imagination more so than any game I've played in the past few years. I found myself coming up with these back stories for my guys – I thought I was crazy!

Jake: I do it too, and I'm the lead designer! I had this guy who was Australian; he has this very thin moustache and he was tanned and very clean-cut, and I was like... this guy is a former male stripper. *Mass laughter* His squad mates didn't know. I seriously started thinking this dude – and his nickname was Bishop – who was so clean-cut and big looking – that's his story. **NAG**



REVIEWS INTRO

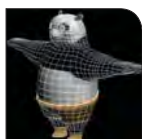
When you open the oven too soon you sometimes get a flop. The oven was opened too soon with the NAG review team.. Meet your reviewers.

Question: If you weren't into gaming as a profession, what else would it be or, when you were growing up what did you also want to be.



RedTide

A Palaeontologist, when I was like eight or nine or maybe even seven I knew all the dinosaurs and how to pronounce their names. My parents were so proud – then I got a Commodore 64. I still love dinosaurs as friends.



Miktar

If NAG hadn't rescued me from the pits of hell known as "3D Modelling and Animation for Virtual Reality Solutions", I'd probably still be doing that. Don't make me go back. I promise I won't miss deadlines anymore.



Azimuth

Han Solo. But, like, a female version obviously. I bet I could make the Kessel run in less than 12 parsecs, and still find time to do my hair.



Mikit0707

I'd still be an English teacher satiating my gaming needs by setting game review writing assignments for my students. I wanted to be a marine biologist thanks to *EcoQuest*.



GeometriX

When I was a kid I wanted to be a lawyer, but law is hard, so I just played games instead. I think I was always going to be in this industry one way or the other.



Barkskin

Batman. I feel I've no need to justify this.

MINIREVIEWS

Kinda like regular reviews, only bite-sized and with less of those pesky words.

DEATH RALLY

Weeeeeeeee! *Death Rally* is a remake of the classic top-down arcade racer, and it's so filled with nostalgic joy you'll feel like you're being massaged in your special place by the '90s. Even so, this remake manages to get away with doing quite a lot that's new and different while retaining that quick fix of blood-curdling screams and screeching tyres provided by the original. There's even a "story" (something about a criminal working for the cops), but who cares, right?

Races generally last no longer than a few minutes, during which you compete against up to five opponents. You can choose to race clean if that's what you're into, but the idea is to balance utter carnage with snappy *Micro Machines*-inspired racing. Your cars can be upgraded to be more resilient, faster or handle better, and there's a decent selection of weaponry you can mount on your roof in addition to the classic machine gun.

Death Rally is as lowbrow as you get, but it's immensely satisfying and sometimes even tactical. Get it, play it, love it for a week or two and then move on; it's well worth the R70 asking price.

75

DEADLIGHT

Exclusively for XBLA, *Deadlight* is a ZAPS (Zombie Action Puzzle Survival) romp that takes more than a few visual cues from indie sensation *Limbo*. Seeing that zombies are the popular go-to baddie for aspiring developers, you have to ask, what is better or different with this offering to make it raise nastier dead than the rest?

Deadlight looks amazing, it has plenty depth and colour and is animated by a real master of the art. The zombies have their own personalities based on how they look and go about their gruesome day-to-day business until disturbed. The game is packed with dramatic music, a proper "short story" of a plot that actually works very well at the twisty end and more secrets than is reasonable for a game this size. For the more observant player there are three playable Game & Watch mini-games to be found each with their own achievements. The leading man, Randall Wayne runs, leaps and climbs through competently put together levels that require a mixture of timing, accurate leaping and sometimes a well-placed bullet. This is still a classy game and well worth a look.

84



“We keep getting put up against these diamond f**ks, how even we hope to win!?”

- RedTide



Ramjet

A photographer. Or a sculptor. Maybe a Kung-Fu master.



SAVAGE

Comic artist or movie director.



ShockG

A banana plantation supervisor.

WEBScores

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

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

NAG: 75
Metacritic: 69
Gamerankings: 71

GAME OF THRONES

NAG: 70
Metacritic: 52
Gamerankings: 53

PROJECT ZERO 2: WII EDITION

NAG: 80
Metacritic: 77
Gamerankings: 76

SPIRIT CAMERA: THE CURSED MEMOIR

NAG: 55
Metacritic: 54
Gamerankings: 58

HARVEST MOON: THE TALE OF TWO TOWNS

NAG: 60
Metacritic: 65
Gamerankings: 67

JAGGED ALLIANCE: BACK IN ACTION

NAG: 80
Metacritic: 62
Gamerankings: 60

LEGO BATMAN 2: DC SUPER HEROES

NAG: 80
Metacritic: 80
Gamerankings: 80

LONDON 2012: THE OFFICIAL VIDEO GAME

NAG: 70
Metacritic: 64
Gamerankings: 65

PINBALL ARCADE

NAG: 87
Metacritic: 82
Gamerankings: 85

THE SECRET WORLD

NAG: 70
Metacritic: 72
Gamerankings: 71

SPELUNKY

NAG: 85
Metacritic: 87
Gamerankings: 87

REVIEW SCORES GUIDELINE

Here at NAG, our reviewers are gamers first, and, while we strive to be as objective as possible with our reviews, each reviewer has their own preferences, opinion and style that will come through in their reviews. It's not an exact science – anyone telling you otherwise is fibbing. We love playing games and, sometimes, certain genres and series will stand out for an individual reviewer; it's not uncommon for those preferences to reflect in their review score. Having said that, we've put together this little guide to help you understand how we rate our games – more or less.

1-39 This game is broken, both technically and in terms of gameplay. Even if you get it to run, playing it is a painful experience that you wouldn't wish upon your worst enemy.

40-49 It barely functions, but there's little real game here. Maybe if you got it for free you'd spend a few hours with it, but it's not something you'd recommend to friends.

50-59 Acceptable, but nothing special. It's generic in every conceivable way, but it's solid enough and might be worth spending some time hunting for achievements.

60-69 Now we're getting somewhere. This game is good; it has something interesting about it, and fans of the genre or series should enjoy it, but something significant holds it back from greatness and might prevent newcomers from latching on.

70-79 This game is solid. Anyone who enjoys this type of genre will have a great time and could finish it without too much aggravation. It shows care and polish, but falls short in a number of areas.

80-89 Excellence has been achieved; a game that you'd happily play through multiple times and recommend to friends. It adds interesting, if imperfect, advancements to the genre or series, or ticks all the expected boxes with flair and polish. It's technically superior to many other games but perhaps misses an opportunity or two, or doesn't innovate enough.

90-100 As close to perfection as possible. This game is highly innovative; it has incredible visuals; it plays like a dream and you can't get enough of it. You have to look for faults just to avoid giving it a perfect score. You'll go back and play this in ten years and shed a tear of joy when you do.

The Secret World

Free-to-play in 3...

In a time where MMORPGs are as common as mismatched socks, it's a daunting task to introduce a new title to the market, especially one without an existing IP to lean against. But that's what Funcom has done, and they've been more than brave with a number of elements in *The Secret World*, but oddly unimaginative about others.

In *The Secret World*, players commit themselves to one of three factions locked in a secret war for world domination during a time of invasion by dark forces, and engage in missions ranging from seemingly inconsequential fetch quests to all-out warfare against their rival cabals. Each faction has a home base in one of three major cities around the world: The Dragon, who practise the art of chaos in Seoul; The Illuminati, who rule with power and wealth, have taken hold of New York; and The Templars, who believe in order and structure above all else, sit in London.

"Story is a big part of *The Secret World*, and both the overarching narrative and menial stuff in-between are intriguing and well told..."



Which side you choose to ally yourself with is largely down to personal preference, as all factions will be able to access common areas without fear of attack, and, aside from a few short introductory quests, you'll end up doing the same stuff for quite a while. There are unique faction quests (and certain NPC dialogue is altered based on who you represent) that come in later, and even a few player choices to make that could have a large impact on your personal storyline, as well as a barebones PVP system that lets you jump into battle anytime you wish.

Story is a big part of *The Secret World*, and both the overarching narrative and menial stuff in-between are intriguing and well told, but the game suffers from an unfortunate attachment to one of the bastions of MMORPGs – repetitive, dull "kill 17 zombies" sort of quests (that's an actual example, by the way). These quests do lead down some interesting roads, thankfully, but this is a difficult game to get into. There's so much to be interested in but at almost every turn there's a pile of boring stuff to get through before you're allowed to dig at the juicy centre. To help shake up the repetition, *TSW* includes some of the most interesting quests you'll encounter in any sort of RPG: investigations. These require you to use your actual brain (yes!) and Internet research to work out clues, solve riddles and find your next quest waypoint. Hooray! Pity they're so far between.

The character customisation and progression system in *TSW* is wide open, and encourages you to keep your character build flexible if you desire, but also provides you with preset "Decks" that you can follow if you so wish. Ultimately, there are the standard archetypes of healer, DPS (ranged or melee) and tank, and you'll do well to stick



DETAILS

Platforms

PC

Genre

Massively multiplayer online role-playing game

Age restriction

16

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

Lots

Developer

Funcom

Website

www.thesecretworld.com

Publisher

Electronic Arts

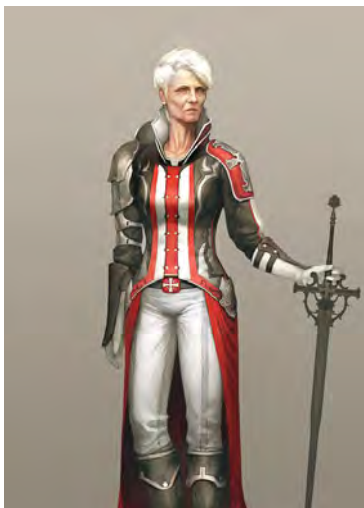
Distributor

EA South Africa

PAY UP

As is rapidly becoming a popular model, *TSW* includes both a monthly subscription and additional real-money transactions. Since equipment customisation focuses on aesthetic appearance rather than stat boosting,

most of the items you can buy only change the look of your character. While you can spend in-game currency at a number of stores to buy new outfits, the best stuff is kept for the real-money store.



COME GET SOME

Combat in *The Secret World* is a little different to the norm. There is no auto-attacking, and players are forced to keep bashing those buttons if they want their characters to die less often than all the time. To accompany this approach, all classes make use of combo points that are used to unleash certain attacks. This means that combat is often frenetic, and as you move through to higher-level areas you had better make sure that you're geared right or you'll find yourself spending more time at the nearest respawn point than you'd like.



to those and figure out the ideal builds if you plan on surviving. Hybrid classes that straddle too many lines will struggle; *The Secret World* is a challenging game if you go in alone and unprepared. Figuring out those builds will take a bit of effort, however; despite Funcom's attempt to familiarise the player with the game's many nuances of character development, it's a somewhat shambolic system that demands you spend some time wading through.

For all its promise and allure, there's just something off about *The Secret World*. It's filled with interesting stuff, but I can't help but feel that it would've been much better off as a regular RPG. Its focus on story-driven exploration and linear progression feels like an ill fit with all the MMO content that's been lumped on top. It's an odd mix coming from the team that spent so many years building up *Anarchy Online* and *Age of Conan* to what they are today – one would expect them to hit the ground running with *TSW*, but sadly that hasn't been the case. The game has tons of bugs from visuals to controls to quests, with more rolling out with each new feature that's added. A month after release, the game finally had auction house support added but it's impossible to use the damn thing unless a third-party mod is added to the game. It's also rather demanding on your PC's hardware for, frankly, an average looking game. **NAG**

- GeometriX

70

The Secret World sets out with some lofty goals but doesn't quite meet them. There's too much poorly-implemented fluff impeding its way and hampering player enjoyment, but what's at the heart is a rich and exciting world. It needs some time to mature, though, and perhaps its inevitable move to free-to-play will arrive when it does just that.

PLUS

Intriguing world / Well-written dialogue / Plenty of character customisation / Investigations

MINUS

Buggy / Unimpressive visuals / MMO "stuff" feels like an ill fit / Repetitive quests

Jagged Alliance 2: Back in Action

Like a fine wine

Here at castle NAG, we sometimes get around to reviewing games a little later than you'd expect. There are a lot of reasons for this that are all totally valid (promise), but when this does happen, we're left with the situation of reviewing a game on which many people have already made up their minds. Then again, we also get a chance to review the game once it's had a few much-needed patches applied. *Jagged Alliance: Back in Action* is a remake of the highly-praised 1999 tactical strategy-cum-RPG *Jagged Alliance 2*, and, as such, carries a hell of a burden on its shoulders to live up to everyone's expectations. The game also carries a metascore of just 62 (and an even lower user score) – clearly it let down a lot of people, but not everyone.

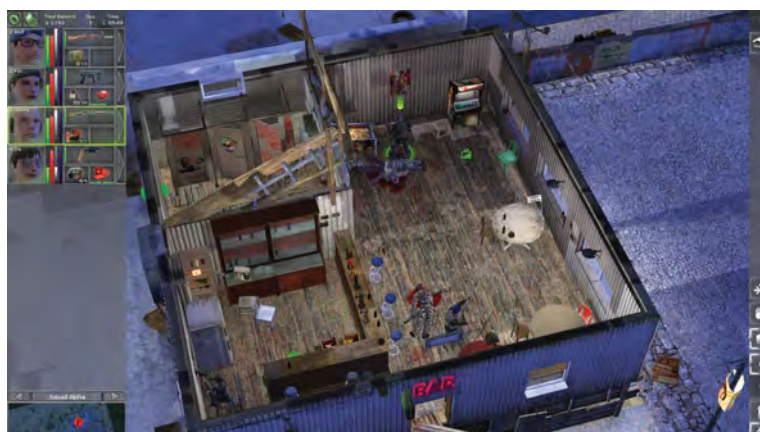
If you're a stoic console gamer or some sort of anti-'90s-gaming activist, you might not be familiar with the title on which this remake is based. Simply put, *Jagged Alliance 2* is a game in which you lead a group of mercenaries on their turn-based quest to free the island nation of Arulco from its tyrannical ruler Deidranna Reitman and her army of highly-trained killers, and make a packet in the process. *Back in Action* takes place in that same setting, and, while there's always been an underlying narrative to give *JAG2* a sense of place, that was mostly unimportant. What became important was the unique narrative that developed as one played. Your mercenaries had their own personalities and quirks, and got on better or worse with other mercs which allowed for secret dream teams to be assembled if you could afford it. *Back in Action* retains the concept of mercenary hiring (it includes most of the original A.I.M. roster, plus a few extra), but instead of requiring that you dish out paycheques on a regular basis, a single (rather high) once-off payment is made and the merc



in question is your little soldier boy/girl for life.

The biggest gameplay difference between the two games is that the combat sequences in *Back in Action* take place in real-time. To accommodate the lack of precision lent by turn-based combat, players can (and should, at any level of difficulty above easy) use Command Mode coupled with the customisable auto-pause function. Command Mode allows you to plot individual troop actions on a timeline, ordering them to move, change position, fire, reload, switch weapons, change direction, and so on. When you're done, hit unpause and watch your perfectly-planned manoeuvre unfold in real-time. Admittedly, it does take a little getting used to, but once you've done so, you may even find that the Command Mode is an improvement on the clunky turn-based system of the past. I know I did. Once the adjustment to the control system has been made, there's a deep, rich tactical game waiting to be explored. Enemy AI is a mix of brain-dead and superhuman, with the full range in-between. You'll need to have adaptable tactics when you plan to take a position of strategic importance, and will seamlessly shift your mercs between ambushes, decoys, stealthy approaches (waiting for nightfall is a smart move if you've got the tools to make it work to your advantage), guns blazing bravado, suicide runs, cover fire, flank attacks, and just about any sort of scheme you could imagine. This is *Back in Action*'s shiniest point.

Something that's a little less shiny is the game's camera. While you now have the opportunity to rotate and zoom around each battle in "glorious" 3D, the result isn't entirely satisfactory. The camera angle sucks and perspective sucks: it's often difficult to find the sweet spot when assigning multi-level movement orders, and you'll frequently struggle to



DETAILS

Platforms

PC

Genre

Tactical strategy game

Age restriction

16

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Coreplay

Website

www.

jaggedalliance.com

Publisher

Kalypso Media

bitComposer

Entertainment

Distributor

Apex Interactive

1 Changing any piece of mercenary equipment reflects directly on their character models. This makes for a high degree of character customisation, and it applies to the enemies as well: that shirtless, axe-wielding cannibal running straight at you is clearly not looking for directions.

2 The stealth elements in the game have been greatly improved upon. Now, each merc has a stealth rating, which, together with their clothing, equipment and immediate environment, will affect their individual noise and visibility rating. Night ops have become more tactical than ever, and will be the best way to take down that prison with 50+ deeply entrenched enemies.



“If you’re a stoic console gamer or some sort of anti-’90s-gaming activist, you might not be familiar with the title on which this remake is based.”



determine just how much cover certain pieces of terrain provide, or what line-of-sight you can expect an enemy to have. Taking a bullet to the crotch is an acceptable punishment for giving one of your mercs a stupid order, but doing so when you could’ve sworn that Keith “Blood” Hanson was out of enemy vision is quite another matter. Maybe if it’d happened to Ira you wouldn’t be so bothered.

One of the strongest ties that *JA2* had to the heartstrings of its players wasn’t just in combat, but in the overland map view. There, players would orchestrate their squad movements around Arulco, carefully babysitting those squads by providing medical attention, and training one another and local militia. While these processes were collectively known as a ball ache (especially since those mercs were charging by the day), they did lend the game an air of urgency carefully balanced with care. Moving too soon into combat at the expense of a good day’s medical recuperation meant you were getting the most out of your troops, but they could potentially die in battle if they took too much heat. Here, the entire overland process has been vastly simplified, with the exception of militia management and town defence which have been made disproportionately complicated and time-consuming. It almost feels as though the developers realised at the last minute that players actually enjoyed some of the run-around of the previous game, and cobbled together a poor attempt to rectify the situation.

With all of the changes and improvements taken into account, *Back in Action* struggles to deliver the same sense of human drama that *JA2* did, but does quite handily deliver an improved tactical experience (there, I said it). It’s a modernised, trimmed-off-the-fat version of the original, but without the fuss and panic of the overland map management. Take that how you will; if such things matter dearly to you, *Back in Action* might make you weep inconsolably into your pillow at night. If you’re here for the combat, however, then you’re in for a treat. **NAG**
- GeometriX

80 *Back in Action* manages to surpass *JA2*’s tactical elements, but feels like it’s had just a little too much trimmed off the side. Thankfully, we’ve already seen a number of score-shattering omissions addressed with patches, so there’s hope for the future.

PLUS
Highly customisable mercs / Challenging, tactical combat
Great real-time adaptation

MINUS
Poor camera / Overland map sequences are both lacking and frustrating / Occasional pathfinding bugs

The Amazing Spider-Man

A new swing

Okay, so they rebooted the *Spider-Man* movies. But the concept that a game comes out to support the release of a movie of this nature hasn't changed, even though the guy playing Spider-Man has. However, there has been a change to the practice... see, whereas most movie-based games are generally pretty rotten, this new *Spider-Man* title manages to gain the lofty movie-game ideal of "not bad". In fact, it even goes beyond that in some areas, reaching "pretty good" from time to time.

The game's plot takes place after the events of the movie, so we'll avoid talking about it in case we give anything away. Suffice to say that the plot isn't great. It's passable, but not great. That's alright, though, because the game itself is rather fun.

Developed by *Spider-Man* veterans Beenox, this new title gives the player a lot to do. There are the main story plots, of course, which more often than not see players crawling through confined spaces varying from research labs to sewers. There are a few inventive boss battles as well. But the real joy here is the free-roaming in-game version of New York that the player gets to use as a playground.

While not exactly huge, the city does offer a lot for

Amazing. Simply amazing.



the player to do, from collecting comic book pages (that unlock classic *Spider-Man* comics which can be read in the extras menu) through to little pick-up missions that generally involve beating up muggers and other kinds of street criminals. The player can get absolutely lost in chasing after comic book pages for hours.

This is all tied together by a new set of controls that suit the game very nicely... particularly when it comes to movement. The game employs a system very similar to the free-running we saw in series like *Assassin's Creed* and *Prototype*, at least in the free-roaming areas. Other smart ideas include a first-person movement "aiming" system, and quick button presses to zoom to context-sensitive objects and areas. It's fast, fun and often chaotic stuff. The player will certainly feel the part.

In fact, this game borrows quite a lot from popular series we have seen before. To encapsulate the entire game dynamic – including combat and movement – you could very realistically compare it to *Batman: Arkham City*, although it does lack some of the polish and finesse of that title. Still, the flowing combat, fun movement and upgradable skills that actually make a difference do all add to a rather enjoyable experience. It is unlikely that this game will win any "Game of the Year" awards, unless they bring in a specific category for movie games, but it can be a lot of fun if you allow it to be. **NAG**

- Ramjet

75

If you're looking for an above-average movie-based game, here it is...

PLUS

A decent movie game / Lots of fun

MINUS

Weak plot / Not much depth

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / 3DS / DS
PC / PS3 / Wii

Genre

Action adventure

Age restriction

16

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Beenox

Website

www.theamazingspidermangame.com

Publisher

Activision

Distributor

Megarom



GIGABYTE™

Insist on an Ultra Durable™ Motherboard for your new PC

It's Worth the Upgrade

GIGABYTE 7 series Ultra Durable™ Motherboards

Ultra Durable™ 4

- High Temperature Protection
- Humidity Protection
- Electrostatic Protection
- Power Failure Protection

2X longer lifespan
New Game Ready PCB

Insist on **Ultra Durable™**



Integrated Intel HD Graphics Performance **up to 80%**

Z77 + 3rd Gen. Intel® Core™ processor

Z68 + 2nd Gen. Intel® Core™ processor 3DMark Vantage (Performance)

Discrete GPU Performance **up to 50%**

Z77 + Discrete GPU + 3rd Gen. Intel® Core™ processor + Virtu MVP

Z68 + Discrete GPU + 2nd Gen. Intel® Core™ processor 3DMark Vantage (Extreme)

Benchmarks for reference only. Results may differ according to system configuration.

Patent Pending
3D BIOS
Dual UEFI BIOS™

Patent Pending
3D POWER
All Digital Engine



*PCIe Gen. 3 is dependent on CPU and expansion card compatibility. Above features may vary by model. Models may vary by region.



NATIONAL SALES CALL CENTRE : 0860 582 835

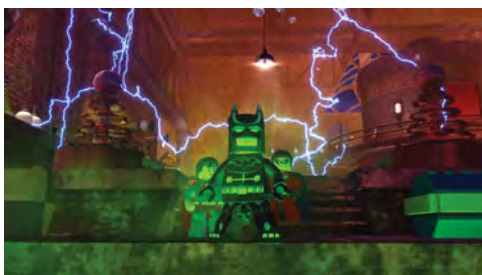
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes

New LEGO

If you haven't played a LEGO game yet, you should. Sure, they might not be the most hardcore of all the titles out there, but they're fun... and that's what gaming is supposed to be about, right? But *LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes* might not be the best place to start off, because it does things a bit differently. Fans of the LEGO franchise may well turn their noses up at some of the changes, but what Traveller's Tales have done with this particular title is up the ante for the series.

The first new aspect of the title that veterans will notice is that the grunts, sighs, shrugs and humorous gestures that told the story before have been replaced with actual dialogue. That's right; this is the first LEGO game in which the characters speak. The reason for this is that *LEGO Batman 2* has a more robust plot than previous games in the franchise. Where players could often make out what was going on in the games before because they tended to be spoofs of popular movie franchises, this one stands on its own. Sure, it coincides with a major movie release and there is doubtlessly a level of multiple media leverage going on, but the story that this game tells is its own. And so it requires dialogue. You'll get used to it.

Another change – and one that is extremely positive – is that the levels have a different structure in the way they tied together. In previous LEGO games the player could use a sort



of world hub to get to different levels, which was fine and well. But the hub was generally a bit boring, with limited exploration to be done. This time around, the developers have given the player an entire city to explore. Instead of a world hub, we now have a free-roaming, sandbox version of Gotham city (complete with brightly coloured building blocks, studs and collectables) to play around in.

This aspect of the game, in addition to the tons of locked characters which allow for levels to be replayed (thanks to new powers required to access certain areas of said levels), makes the game enjoyable for each new play through.

The levels themselves offer exactly what one would expect from a LEGO game... bad guys to fight, exploring to do and studs to collect. Although this part of the game is unchanged, the levels feel like they have been approached with much more care. Some of the silly difficulties that older games presented in levels have disappeared, making this a much more sensible and enjoyable LEGO outing.

So if you are a fan, or you are looking for some irreverent fun, *LEGO Batman 2* is a good option.

- Ramjet

80

A great new approach to the LEGO franchise, *LEGO Batman 2* will keep players busy exploring for ages.

PLUS

Nice new ideas / Tons to do

MINUS

Speech a bit unusual [Hrmm mrhppmh arhuh, AD]

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / 3DS / DS
PC / PS3 / PS
Vita / Wii

Genre

Action adventure

Age restriction

7

Multiplayer

Local

2 players

Online

None

Developer

Traveller's Tales

Website

videogames.
lego.com/en-us/
lego-batman-2-
dc-super-heroes

Publisher

Warner Bros

Interactive

Distributor

Ster Kinekor
Entertainment

msiTM
notebook

MSI recommends Windows® 7.



msiTM
notebook

Top Player - Top Choice



GT70

GT70 features the high-end nVIDIA GTX675M discrete graphics card (with GDDR5 2GB VRAM)



Super RAID with 2 SSD RAID0 gives you over 800MB/s storage speed!



Turbo Drive Engine Technology enhance the system performance easily



Killer Gaming Networking for priority online gaming



Keyboard by SteelSeries for gamers



Audio boost design for crystal clear audio fidelity

www.msi.com

MSI GT70 powered by 3rd Generation Intel® Core™ i7 Processor
Intel, the Intel logo, Centrino, Centrino Inside, Intel Core and Core Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and other countries.
For more information about the Intel processor feature rating, please refer to www.intel.com/go/rating.

Pinnacle
AFRICA

MSI GE60/70 powered by 3rd Generation Intel® Core™ i5 Processor are also available now, please check with your local retailer.

Inversion

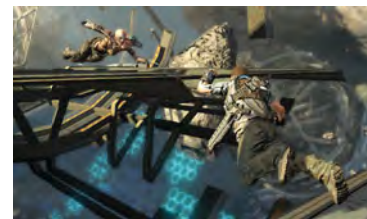
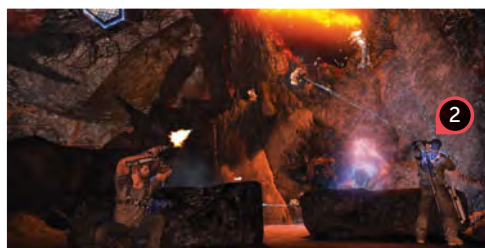
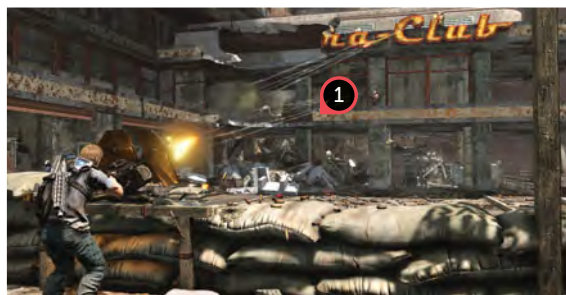
Gears of Gravity

Inversion's not going to win any awards for outstanding innovation. The moment you're first handed control of main character Davis Russel, you'll know this game isn't shy about borrowing the bits that comprise its core from Epic's lauded third-person shooting series involving burly, over-muscled men shooting humanoid invaders with guns outfitted with improbably sized blades. In it, fictional Vanguard City is besieged by said invaders (called the Lutadores) and strange gravitational glitches leave areas of the city devastated, chunks of cityscape trapped in zero-gravity. Your objective is to find Russel's daughter, who's presumably being held captive by the Lutadore invaders. Russel, a former police officer turned ominously proficient soldier (and member of the Burly, Over-Muscled Man Club), is joined by Leo Delgado, who'll be your burly, over-muscled man-partner for the duration of the game.

While the story ends up being nothing more than an unsurprisingly lame attempt at getting us to sympathise with two characters dripping with stereotypical pseudo-macho attitude, *Inversion's* gameplay actually manages to be satisfying for most of its campaign. The various weapons you're given access to are effective and the cover-shooter gameplay is polished enough to be enjoyable, while the game's lone innovation – the "Gravlink", which fires a gravity-altering beam with a few different uses – eventually becomes powerful and useful enough to give the action a modicum of tactical variety. Your Gravlink will be capable of lowering gravity within a small area, allowing you to grab floating enemies and bits of scenery and throw them at other enemies or bits of scenery, Gravity Gun style. As you improve your Gravlink, you'll be able to throw larger objects, and can later amplify the gravity in an area to make objects heavier (used mostly for progression

1 Environments are pleasingly destructible, gradually getting torn to pieces. Floating globules of flammable liquid can even be ignited to occasionally burn scenery and enemies caught within it.

2 The entire campaign can be played cooperatively with a friend, who'll control Leo. It's fun enough but, like the rest of the game, is nothing groundbreaking.



through areas via some very light environmental puzzling), and it'll even create a temporary shield around you.

You'll sporadically visit areas littered with pockets of differing gravitational forces, so up will become down, the walls will become the floor and enemies will approach from unknown angles at set points in your linear path through the narrative and its level design. Similarly, at other times you'll float behind cover in zero-gravity zones, propelling yourself between pieces of floating debris, all the while fending off waves of enemies. These scattered gameplay change-ups manage to keep things interesting, but they do little to alter the game's fundamentals enough to make it stand apart from the rest of the third-person shooter pack. Technically, the game holds its own – but un-textured environmental objects and other obvious visual shortcuts make it occasionally ugly.

There are some truly impressive moments in *Inversion*, moments where it flirts with greatness but is swiftly crushed under the weight of its own ambition. There's obvious potential here that's not been reached, for whatever reason, and it's disappointing that a game that often evokes momentary thrills ends up being nothing more than a fun, but ultimately forgettable action romp. **NAG**

- Barkskin

69

Inversion is mostly standard cover-shooting fare, borrowing heavily from *Gears of War* but adding its own unique flavouring to the formula with its gravity-manipulating mechanics. Much of it feels like wasted potential – but it's nevertheless decently entertaining for most of its campaign.

PLUS

Solid action / Gravity manipulation works

MINUS

Limp narrative / Visual anomalies / Nothing really new

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / PC / PS3

Genre

Third-person shooter

Age restriction
18

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

12 players

Developer

Saber Interactive

Website

www.inversion.com

Publisher

Namco Bandai Games

Distributor

Megarom

WIN

1 OF 5 PRIZES

To enter sms the keyword
Evetech to 32541

1 x NZXT Phantom 410 Gaming Case [RED]



1 x NZXT Phantom Full Tower [Black]



1 x NZXT Phantom Full Tower [White]



1 x NZXT NAVIK 140 CPU Cooler



1 x NZXT NUE RGB Case Lighting

Smses charged at R1 (no free smses/bundles apply) | Winners will be notified by sms | Judges decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into | Competition closes 30 September 2012

NZXT.TM
CRAFTED GAMING ARMOR

 **EVETECH**
YOU DREAM IT. WE BUILD IT
sales@evetech.co.za - 012 653 0033
www.evetech.co.za

London 2012: The Official Video Game

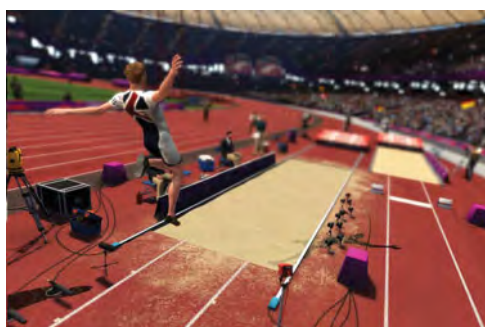
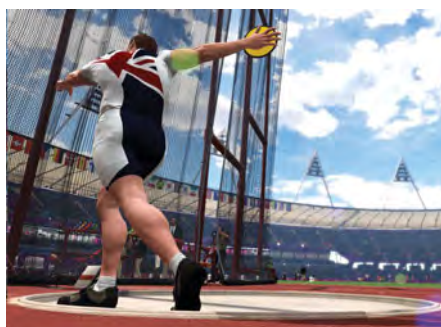
Going for gold

Most sports games are awesome in their detail, but whenever the Olympics roll around, titles supporting the event that feel more like crappy movie games hit the shelves. At least, they used to. This year's Olympics have been graced by a game that is a bit better than expected.

The biggest reason why this game manages to set itself apart from previous attempts at simulating the Olympics stems from the fact that you won't really be button mashing all that much for this title. The developers have managed to build in systems that keep the controls cleaner than that, relying rather on skill and timing, as opposed to thumb punishment. The developers put some clever ideas in to play in terms of control, resulting in a title that is much better than its predecessors.

Despite being a better attempt, though, *London 2012* still has a few problems. This stems largely from the fact that while other sports titles can concentrate on one discipline, this title – like every Olympics game before it – has to look at many. If the developers had paid full attention to just track and field events, for example, we would have been looking at a very different game here. But that would be a disservice to the Olympics as a whole.

As it stands, the game is enjoyable, if flawed. The player can select to either participate in single events, or can undertake something of an Olympic "campaign", selecting a handful of events to represent your chosen country in. There is no improvement of your in-game character, though, and you will



be limited to certain events (which you can add to a play list.) This isn't a career driven game... in fact, it really is as close as a sports game will come to being a party-game.

There are a wide variety of events, of course, ranging from track and field to swimming and even shooting, but none of them stands out as spectacular. Some are better than others, sure, but this is not about highlighting various sporting disciplines; it's more about celebrating this massive sporting calendar event, and it does so admirably. It remains accessible to almost anyone who can hold a controller, and while some of the events get pretty tricky, almost anyone will be able to celebrate the Olympic spirit with this title.

It probably won't keep you playing until the next Olympics, despite the large number of events. The likelihood of any player needing to work through everything and achieve gold in each event is pretty small when all is said and done. But the memorable part of this game comes from the multiplayer camaraderie, rather than from any form of depth or technical brilliance. **NAG**

- Ramjet

70

It does a good job in celebrating the Olympics, and is a better than expected title.

PLUS

Lots of events / Clever controls

MINUS

Not much depth / Forgettable

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / 3DS / PC
PS3 / Wii

Genre

Sports simulation

Age restriction

3

Multiplayer

Local

4 players

Online

None

Developer

Sega

Website

www.
olympic
videogames.
com/london2012

Publisher

SEGA

Distributor

Ster Kinekor
Entertainment

SUBSCRIBE NOW!



Offer 1	tick	Offer 2	tick	Offer 3	tick	Offer 4	tick
12 month subscription with cover DVD at R450		6 month subscription with cover DVD at R230		12 month subscription without cover DVD at R330		6 month subscription without cover DVD at R170	

SEND MY COPY OF NAG TO:

Full name: _____

Postal address: _____

E-mail: _____ Tel: _____

PAYMENT METHOD (PLEASE CIRCLE): Bank deposit / Cheque / Credit card / Postal order

Visa/Mastercard number: _____

Expiry date: _____ CVV number: _____

Signature: _____

- Order by fax: (011) 704-4120
- Order by e-mail: subs@nag.co.za
- Order by post: NAG, P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158

Bank account details for direct deposits: NAG, Nedbank Fourways,
Account number: 1684170850, Branch code: 168405

Once you have paid the money into our account, fax a copy of the subscription form plus the bank deposit slip to [011] 704-4120. No deposit slip = no subscription. Please make cheques and postal orders out to NAG and then post the completed form to NAG Subscription Department, P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

***Please note: No refunds will be issued for this subscription offer.**



Project Zero 2: Wii Edition

Resurrection

The original *Project Zero 2* was released for PS2 around ten years ago. So why, then, release it for Wii now... particularly when you consider that the Wii U will be released rather soon. Perhaps there is a hint at a version coming to the new platform soon after release. We hope so, because *Project Zero 2: Wii Edition* is good fun. The great thing about this title is that it goes back to traditional horror ideas; no guns, no ammo, no hunting zombies. Instead, twin girls need to investigate a village filled with hideous, dangerous ghosts. The only weapon at their disposal is the Camera Obscura, a device that captures ghosts by taking their photographs.

And it works so well on the Wii, thanks to the console's motion controls. The on-the-rails action is perfectly suited to the control system, with the game dynamic having players flailing to get those life-saving photographs. The mini-games are great, too, particularly the one that measures the movement of the Wii remote and Nunchuk to gauge how frightened you are.

When all is said and done, the conversion of this classic title onto a newer format is almost flawless. Seeing a game aimed at mature gamers appear on the Wii, released by Nintendo no less, is also a good thing. And the scares that *Project Zero 2* offers are awesome. **NAG**

- Ramjet

DETAILS

Platforms
Wii
Genre
Survival horror
Age restriction
16
Multiplayer
Local
2 players
Online
None
Developer
Tecmo Koei
Website
www.nintendo.com
Publisher
Nintendo
Distributor
Core Group



80 A revitalised classic, remade for the Wii, *Project Zero 2* features many traditional horror ideas.

PLUS
Very scary / Great control implementation

MINUS
Not exactly original

Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir

Bright Light!

Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir is a spin-off of *Project Zero 2: Wii Edition*, which was recently remade for the Wii system. Essentially, the game turns the player's 3DS into the Camera Obscura that is the main weapon in *Project Zero 2*. It is, on paper at least, a great idea, but the truth of the matter is that Nintendo missed an opportunity with this title.

First of all, it is a game that uses augmented reality. This is a great system, and adds a nice "reality" to games, but the problem is that, in terms of horror games, augmented reality scuppers things just a little. See, horror games need to be played in the dark. Augmented reality works best in well-lit areas. Considering that a lot of the game takes place in dark settings, a lot of the effect is lost when the player needs to squint at the dark visuals in a well-lit room.

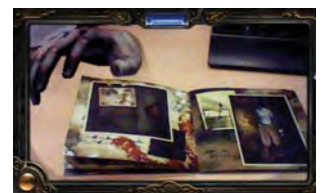
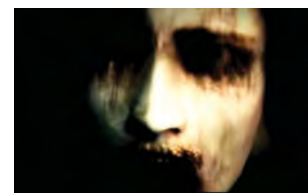
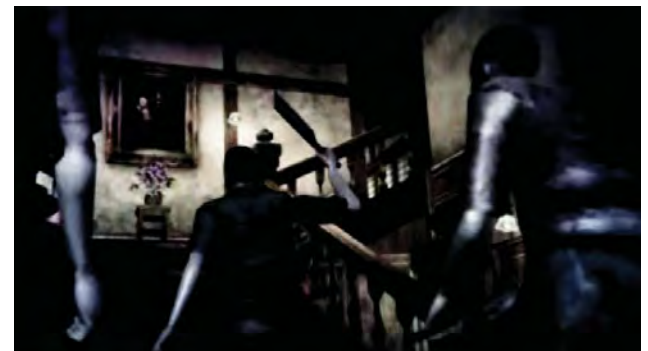
Accompanying the game is an AR book that helps unlock the story line. Another great idea and one that works rather well, but it is underexploited on the whole, leaving the game too short and feeling a little flat.

Even with a few mini-games and interesting ideas, *Spirit Camera* just doesn't make the grade as a horror game – a shame, really, considering that the title it is based on is a fantastic one. **NAG**

- Ramjet

DETAILS

Platforms
3DS
Genre
Survival horror
Age restriction
16
Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
None
Developer
Tecmo Koei
Website
spiritcamera.nintendo.com
Publisher
Nintendo
Distributor
Core Group



55 *Spirit Camera* is something of a missed opportunity – it feels more like tech demo than a full game.

PLUS
Great use of AR / Some scary bits

MINUS
Needs to be played in bright light / Too short

Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns



Kids of today

For those who have some history with the *Harvest Moon* series, a new title is an exciting thing, but for everyone else, the idea of a "JRPG farming simulator" is just a little too weird. We'll be the first to admit that it is weird, but there's loads of charm in this humble and long-running series, and *The Tale of Two Towns* sets out to pull in a few newcomers with its uncharacteristically linear progression and often all-too-cheery (even for a JRPG) attitude.

Harvest Moon is all about farming – producing animal and vegetable products and selling them, thereby enabling the purchase of better equipment and so on. It's simple stuff – the lifeblood of any good sim – and while it's been well executed in the past, *ToTT's* unwavering movement through the game's story (as superfluous as such a thing is) means that much of the free thought required to do well at these sorts of games becomes unnecessary, and for much of the game's early stages you'll simply go through the motions to move along the plot. It makes this title feel more like an intro to *Harvest Moon* than an addition to the series, but the non-elitist in me can recognise that there is a market for this title, maybe in a younger audience or one unfamiliar with the series. If you fit into that boat, then you'll probably find plenty of enjoyment with this quirky, bright, light-hearted title, but if you're expecting the full dose of *Harvest Moon* goodness, then you might find this game a little stifling. **NAG**

- GeometriX

DETAILS

Platforms
3DS / DS

Genre
Farming sim / Japanese role-playing game

Age restriction
3

Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
None

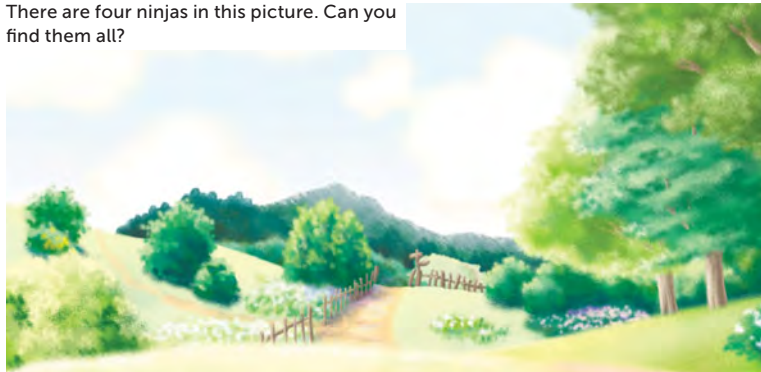
Developer
Marvelous Entertainment

Website
www.risingstargames.com

Publisher
Rising Star Games

Distributor
Silverscreen Trading

There are four ninjas in this picture. Can you find them all?



60

Bouncy and often excessively cute, *Tale of Two Towns* will suit a younger or uninitiated player but will likely frustrate those who are already familiar with the series.

PLUS

Good visuals / Lots of activities

MINUS

Not enough freedom / Very repetitive early game / Cheeriness can get a bit much

i7 GTX 680 Extreme Gamer



4.6 GHz
OVERCLOCK



Customize & Buy Online!

R17,499
Including VAT

- Intel Core i7 3770K 8x Core CPU
- Asus P8Z77-V Pro Z77 Motherboard
- GTX 680 2GB 256bit Overclocked Card
- Corsair Vengeance 8GB 1600MHz RAM
- Corsair HX750 80+ Modular PSU
- Noctua NH-D14 Extreme CPU Cooling



i5 GTX 670 Gamer

4.5 GHz
OVERCLOCK



R13,999 Inc. VAT

- Intel Core i5 3570K 4x Core CPU
- GIGABYTE Z77-UD3H Motherboard
- GTX 670 2GB 256bit Overclocked Card
- Corsair Vengeance 8GB 1600MHz RAM
- Corsair HX650 Modular PSU
- Noctua D14 Cooling ■ WD 750GB HDD



i5 GTX 660^{Ti} Gamer

4.5 GHz
OVERCLOCK



R12,999 Inc. VAT

- Intel Core i5 3570K 4x Core CPU
- GIGABYTE Z77-UD3H Motherboard
- GTX 660 ti 2GB 192bit Graphics Card
- Corsair 8GB 1600MHz RAM ■ WD 750GB HDD
- Corsair HX650 PSU ■ Noctua D14 Cooling



sales@evetech.co.za - 012 653 0033

www.evetech.co.za

Pinball Arcade

Accurate balls on the table

There's a nostalgic attraction to the concept of digital preservation – and the craft involved with an elaborate pinball table is an art. Leading the charge for commercial video pinball simulator, *Pinball Arcade* seeks to emulate authentic tables as closely as possible.

A digital platform, the base package includes (depending on version) either one or four real life tables of historical note. New tables are added in packs of two as they're recreated. FarSight has done a good job of mixing older tables with new; simple but ground-breaking boards such as *Black Hole* are represented along with relatively modern bombastic crowd pleasers such as *Medieval Madness*.

A strong aspect of the package is well-explained rule sheets with visual aids. If you thought pinball was sheer randomness, and never knew most tables have an intricate sequence of modes to activate for huge jackpots, FarSight's respect for the game is contagious.

The only downside is a fundamentals-first ethic, leaving the presentation with the look of a cheap iOS game even in the console versions. FarSight intends to update the front end, but it's a drag compared to the virtual arcade hangouts in the developer's earlier generation *Pinball Hall of Fame* collections. Still, the play is what matters here. When at the table it's the next best thing to owning a real machine. **NAG**

- Miktar



87

While *Zen Pinball* is keeping the art of designing new-generation pinball tables moving forward by updating conventions and adding new ideas, *Pinball Arcade* aims for and succeeds at accurate one-to-one recreations of the best the genre ever had. Note: if you buy the PS3 version, you get the Vita one for free with it, and vice-versa.

PLUS

Faithful recreations of tables / Detailed tutorial modes for each table
Each table includes scans of original promotional material.

MINUS

The portable versions lack visual flair / The Android version uses Facebook for leaderboards / Drab interface



Spelunky

Death becomes you

Indiana Jones, without the deus ex machina of luck that made his on-screen antics enjoyable to watch, would be dead. Dead, dead, and dead again. That giant rolling boulder would crush him. Those dart traps in the temple would perforate his face. Snakes would be nesting in his skull, having little snake babies [LOL, Ed].

Watching our fedora-wearing hero die over and over would be creepy as a film. But as a game, *Spelunky* is the perfect Indiana Jones simulator. Perilous traps, dangerous creatures, giant rolling boulders, spiders, snakes, treasure, gems, and mystical forces await you. You'll die, falling victim to many an instant-kill spike trap, very reminiscent of the chopping blade traps in the original *Prince of Persia* (1989).

Learn from your countless deaths, start actually *playing*, and delicious rewards will be yours. You'll get slightly further. You might unlock a shortcut. You'll find fabulously powerful weapons, and master the art of pug rescue (which gives you extra health). You might even get lucky and kill a shopkeeper, allowing you to plunder his wares instead of buying that shotgun, set of bombs, and life-saving parachute.

Those that master the game can attempt speed runs, starting on the first level, taking no shortcuts. *Spelunky* is an Olympic sport, only the noble rising to the challenge. Or you could just play deathmatch and throw your friends into the lava. **NAG**

- Miktar



85

The marriage of two genres: hardcore platform action, replete with advanced mechanics; and the majestic randomised level layouts of the "roguelike", which rewards the brave and punishes the weak. This is a game that puts hair on your chest, but requires direct injection into your patience gland.

PLUS

Play again and again / Rewarding to master / Charming visuals

MINUS

Loves to hate you / Local multiplayer only / Some music tracks get grating

Dyad

The melding of minds

Please choose your review comprehension difficulty.

> EASY

Thank you. This review autosaves. Please don't turn off the magazine when you see "SAVING..." on the screen.

Dyad is a tunnel racing game with some puzzle elements. As you fly into a colourful rotating neon tunnel, you "hook" onto enemies and pull yourself forward, gaining speed. Each level adds a new idea to the mix, such as hooking coloured pairs of enemies together, or speed boosts that bust through harmful enemies, or invincibility power-ups. The faster you go, the harder it becomes to see what you're doing, so you need to listen carefully to the sounds associated with your actions, power-ups and incoming enemies. Each level has a global high-score list, and a Trophy challenge variant. The game is fun; the techno-styled music is pretty rad.

> HARD

You asked for it.

Dyad is a rare ineffable neurosomatic experience, full of non-conceptual rapture. Most games deal with primal urges like dominant, aggressive behaviour or submissive, cooperative behaviour. Some encourage sociological exploration; others explore neurosemantic-dexterity, like invention, calculation and prediction. While *Dyad* does contain the customary virtual "operant conditioning chamber" for behavioural modification via reward/punishment systems, it's to encourage exploration of an all-encompassing aesthetic sensory space. It's a digital entheogen, a way to catalyse a spiritual non-physical experience. And it's not illegal, or a controlled substance. Not yet... **NAG**

- Miktar



81

You know that one song that you really love, because it speaks to you on a personal level and you find it emotionally powerful and deep, but your friends think it's "kind of lame"? *Dyad* is like that. You either get it, and are enriched by it, or you don't get it and think it's lame. Your call.

PLUS

Doles out concepts at an easy rate / Trophy Challenges for the hardcore / Mentally invigorating

MINUS

Unless you do the Trophy Challenges, it's all over very quickly / Requires a certain level of openness to new ideas

DETAILS

Platforms

PSN

Genre

Racing/puzzle shooter/rhythm

Age restriction

3

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Right Square Bracket Left Square Bracket

Website

www.dyadgame.com

Publisher

Right Square Bracket Left Square Bracket

Distributor

PSN

Rhythm Thief & The Emperor's Treasure

Rhythm Heaven X Professor Layton

Rhythm Thief steals a lot of ideas from other games. The result is a strange compilation that ends up working well together. As you explore Paris, talking to the locals, you uncover a strange plot involving magic and music. Sometimes you need to collect a sound to solve situations. An example is the case of the dog-shy cop. At one point, a policeman blocks your way. By talking to him, you discover he's afraid of dogs. There was a dog a few screens back (each location is represented by a single-screen). If you go and tap on the dog, you collect a barking sound. Play the sound while at the guard, and he runs away. It's simple, but not unpleasant. Occasionally, mild music-based puzzles act as door locks.

Rhythm-based mini-games that function as absurd action sequences are the meat of the game. One involves tapping the screen in time to the beat to make Raphael, super-secret thief, leap safely from rooftop to rooftop, fighting bad guys as he goes. Another involves sliding the stylus to match an incoming curve, which represents playing a violin.

It's all kept very light-hearted, tied together with an engaging plot if you're willing to give it the chance. There are hidden rhythm games to find, and medals to collect by scoring high in each, used to unlock movies. **NAG**

- Miktar



70

This one is really hit-or-miss depending on how much you enjoy the story and music. The characters are likeable enough, though sometimes the music isn't as fun as it could be. There's some inconsequential StreetPass stuff, and a two-player versus mode.

PLUS

Engaging setup / Keeps a good pace with the plot / Easy to play

MINUS

It's all over too quickly / The rhythm games can feel overly arbitrary

DETAILS

Platforms

3DS

Genre

Rhythm / Puzzle Adventure

Age restriction

10

Multiplayer

Local

2 players

Online

None

Developer

SEGA / Xeen

Website

www.sega.co.uk/games/rhythm-thief-and-the-emperor-s-treasure

Publisher

SEGA

Distributor

Core Group

Game of Thrones

Story rules here

This particular game is not to be confused with the strategy title of the same name that came out a few months back. Rather, this *Game of Thrones* is a third-person role-playing game that tends more towards George R. R. Martin's books than the popular TV series. Although *Game of Thrones* has its fair share of issues and problems, fans of the books will likely enjoy it because of its strong focus on plot. And that plot feels exactly as if it was plucked out of Martin's phenomenal series of novels.

The player gets to take on two very different characters in this game. While they cannot create their own characters, those presented are rather compelling, and this move also serves to drive the plot.

The game feels a little sluggish from time to time, and the combat system is somewhat anachronistic (with the player issuing commands "indirectly" before they are executed) and often exploitable. But the presentation is decent and the voice acting really rather good. Not everyone will take to this title, to be honest. It is a more pedantic, slower-paced game than many may like. But there is that all-important storyline that will thrill fans of the world of Westeros, without a doubt. It is one of those games that will be what you make of it. **NAG**

- Ramjet



70

Fans of George R. R. Martin's books will be able to geek out to the complex plot.

PLUS

Great story / Good voice acting

MINUS

Old fashioned / Slow

Civilization V: Gods & Kings

Spy sappin' mah tech tree!

As far as expansions go, *Civilization V: Gods & Kings* ticks all the right boxes: you'll find new civilizations (each with their own unique traits, of course), new buildings and wonders to construct, new stuff to research, new units to build, and more. You'll also find the obligatory improvements to existing gameplay systems from the base game – stuff like improved AI, reworked naval combat and better options for diplomacy.

The most important addition brought by this expansion is the return of religion and espionage mechanics. Religion in *Civ V* is built around accruing new resource Faith, eventually allowing you to found your own religion and assign traits and founder bonuses to it, then watch as it spreads across the map and your prophets deliver your religion to potential believers. Selectable bonuses include stuff like using Faith to buy military units – once you've chosen your bonus from the shared pool, no other religion-founding civilization can choose it and only five civs per game can found religions.

While religion is an excellently customisable and meaningful addition to the base game, espionage feels less so. Eventually in the game, you'll receive your first spy. However, unlike previous games in the series, spies are not units you can move around a map: instead, they exist solely within a menu, from which you dispatch them to do your bidding. Send them to rival cities and they'll steal technology, base them in one of your cities and they'll protect it from enemy espionage. It works, but it doesn't have a huge impact on the game. **NAG**

-Barkskin



85

The return of religion and espionage further enhances *Civilization V's* excellent series refinements, rounding out an expansion that's packed with loads of new stuff to tinker with. Pity the AI's still a bastard.

PLUS

New mechanics! / New civilizations! / New stuff!

MINUS

Espionage isn't worth much / AI still enjoys drunken fist-swinging

DETAILS

Platforms
360 / PC / PS3

Genre
Role-playing game

Age restriction
16

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Cyanide Studios

Website

www.
gameofthrones-
thegame.com

Publisher

Focus Home
Interactive

Distributor

Apex Interactive

DETAILS

Platforms

PC

Genre

Turn-based
strategy

Age restriction

12

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

12 players

Developer

Firaxis Games

Website

www.
civilization5.
com/
godsandkings

Publisher

2K Games

Distributor

Megarom

Mario Tennis Open

It's been a while since the red-capped wonder bust out a new tennis game and since the last handheld version was released nearly seven years ago on the GBA, the announcement that Mario and friends would once again be grabbing their rackets was met with much anticipation and high expectations. Expectations that could well have not been crushed, depending on what you were looking for.

If you wanted a straightforward, knock-down, arcade tennis experience then this is the handheld champion. No cheap gimmicks, just pure tennis fun. The only added element being the power panels on the courts to add some strategic elements. Also bowing for the first time is online multiplayer which, should you be lucky enough to find someone close enough to play with, is a great experience, no better way to test your true skills than against another human. There are also some challenging mini-games to work through but in the end it's the actual tennis matches that shine through, and with a healthy character roster and 16 cups to work through, the completionist will be busy for a while.

However, if you were expecting the same epic RPG/tennis crossover from the previous mobile outing then you will be disappointed. True, there is a world of customisation with a few hundred items to chop and change on your Mii and build a unique player, but without a whimsical plotline and varied challenges there is little chance this game will keep you



DETAILS

Platforms

3DS

Genre

Sports

Age restriction

3

Multiplayer

Local

4 players

Online

4 players

Developer

Camelot

Website

mariotennis.open.nintendo.com

Publisher

Nintendo

Distributor

Core Gaming Systems

SEND US YOUR REVIEW

If you'd like to take part in our Nintendo Reader Reviews competition, write a review of 300-350 words on any 3DS game you want, excluding the games we've already seen (*Mario Tennis Open*, *Kid Icarus: Uprising*, *Super Mario 3D Land*, *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D* and *Mario Kart 7*). Include a summary of your review (up to 40 words), a few short pros and cons, and a score out of 100. Write a few lines about yourself too. Check it twice and then send it through to nintendoreaderreviews@nag.co.za as a Word document (.doc or .docx) or RTF. You need to do this by 12:00 on Tuesday the

11th of September.

The best review will appear in the next issue of NAG and the entrant will receive from Nintendo South Africa three Nintendo 3DS games of your choice (limited to first-party titles), a Circle Pad Pro and *Mario Kart 7* wheel accessories. Two runners-up will also be chosen, and each will receive a 3DS game of their choice (limited to first-party titles). Please note that this competition is open to South African residents only. This competition does not constitute a job offer or entitle the winner to any benefits or rights of employment with NAG. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash.

occupied for as long as "Power Tour" did. No doubt Nintendo is banking on users playing the game online to give it extra replay value but with so few local players it's unlikely this will keep you hooked for too long.

Make no mistake, this is still the best mobile tennis experience out there. The graphics and audio are crisp, the movements and action feel very fluid and the controls responsive. There's plenty of variety in the gameplay to challenge a wide range of players and lots of things for the OCD types to collect, but if you played this game's direct predecessor it will feel like there's not enough here for this game to take a top 3 spot on the activity log. **NAG**
- Joshua Gardiner

READER SCORE

74

If you like tennis, buy the game, it is that good. Looking for more to do? That game is in another castle.

PLUS

Outstanding pure tennis action

MINUS

It is only tennis action

READER PROFILE

In a bad case of sibling influence, Joshua was introduced to Nintendo by his brother and force-fed a steady diet of *Mario* and *Smash Bros.* until he started growing a moustache and going "woohoo".



TECH NEWS

KNOW YOUR TECHNOLOGY

UEFI

The Unified Extensible Firmware Interface is a specification that defines a software interface between the operating system and the platform firmware. It is the successor to the BIOS firmware interface as used in all IBM PC-compatible computers until recently. UEFI ROMs have support for legacy BIOS services, but typically add more functionality, like mouse support, Internet access and such functionality.

xHCI

Extensible Host Controller Interface is the computer specification that defines register level descriptions of a Host controller for USB, capable of interfacing to USB 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 compatible devices. The spec is also referred to as the USB 3.0 Host controller specification. It is functionally different from the older interface standards such as OHCI, UHCI and EHCI in several advantageous ways and as such it's the host controller interface of choice on most new devices.

DDR4

The next generation replacement for DDR3 is an interface specification unlike previous standards. Its benefits over DDR3 is wider clock frequencies and data transfer rates, (2,133MHz to 4,266MHz and beyond) and has a lower operating voltage between 1.05 to 1.2V. DDR4 discards the multiple DIMM per channel topology in favour of a point-to-point link mechanism where each channel is directly connected to a single DIMM. DDR4 platforms are said to start appearing in 2013 commercially.

High-K

High-K refers to a material with a high dielectric constant compared to silicon dioxide s used in semiconductor manufacturing processes. The implementation of High-K gate dielectrics is one of several strategies developed to allow further miniaturization of microelectronic components and is in part responsible for the ever decreasing node lengths in our semiconductors today. The material can be used at various nodes and is not limited to a specific process but can instead be applied to various photolithographic processes.

SOX NETBOOK MAD FURR

A cute fluffy sleeve for your 10.2" netbook.
R249.99 | www.website.co.za



SAMSUNG 46" ES8000 SERIES 8 SMART INTERACTION 3D LED TV

This TV is so featured-packed that it's an instant must-buy. We're talking 3D glasses, built-in wireless, 3 HDMI ports, 3 USB ports, face recognition and motion control, 3D sound, and way much more than we can list here.
R24,999 | www.samsung.co.za



DID YOU KNOW?

No two people have the same sized hands, and everyone grips his or her mouse differently. When researching form factor preferences for ambidextrous mice, Razer's team of ergonomic scientists and engineers discovered three key factors in design: the length of the mouse, the back arch and the grip profile. With this in mind, the Razer Ouroboros has been designed for precision gaming, with an adjustable palm rest capable of moving up to 0.9 in. (20mm), suitable for people of varying hand sizes.

Mosh Pit

ASTRUM AHS402 BLUETOOTH HEADSET

A stylish-looking and lightweight Bluetooth headset that can be used with your PC, MP3 or MP4 player, Mobile phone, smartphone or tablet PC.

R499 | www.astrum.co.za



ADATA 500GB DASHDRIVE

A funky looking ultra-light 2.5" external hard drive that supports USB 3.0.

TBA | www.adata-group.com

"The 40 million gamers frequenting Steam are interested in more than playing games. They have told us they would like to have more of their software on Steam, so this expansion is in response to those customer requests."

Mark Richardson, Valve

Valve recently announced that they will be adding a range of Software titles to Steam, starting 5 September. From creativity to productivity, these titles will make use of Steamworks features.



1GB

BY THE NUMBERS

Sony has confirmed that their PlayStation Plus offering will be coming to PS Vita this year. In addition, they're upgrading Online Game Save Storage to 1GB.

DREAMMACHINE

This month we've reverted back to the HD 7970 as our graphics card of choice. Not because all HD 7970s are miraculously better than the GTX 680, but because this particular MSI HD 7970 is exceptional. It's not cheap not by any stretch of the imagination, but it's worth the price.



Cooler Master Silent Pro M2 1500Watt PSU
R3,300 / www.sonicinformed.co.za



MSI R7970 Lightning NEW
R6,799 / www.msi.com



Plextor M3 Pro 256GB SSD
R4,999 / www.goplextor.com



Seagate Barracuda 3TB
R1,799 / www.seagate.com



Cooler Master COSMOS II
R3,399 / www.coolermaster.com



ASUS VG278H 3D Monitor
R8,999 / za.asus.com



GIGABYTE Aivia Osmium Mechanical Gaming Keyboard NEW
R1,299 / www.gigabyte.com



Roccat Kone [+]
R899 / www.sonicinformed.com



Roccat Alumic
R319 / www.roccat.org



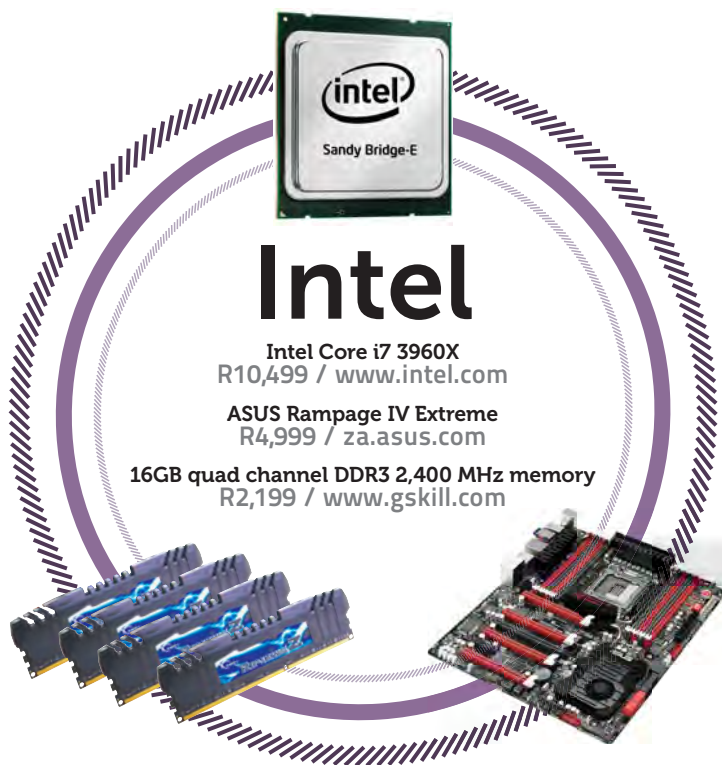
Asus Xonar Essence STX
R1,399 / za.asus.com



Logitech Z-5500 Digital
R3,699 / www.logitech.com



CMStorm SIRUS
R1,199 / www.sonicinformed.com



Intel

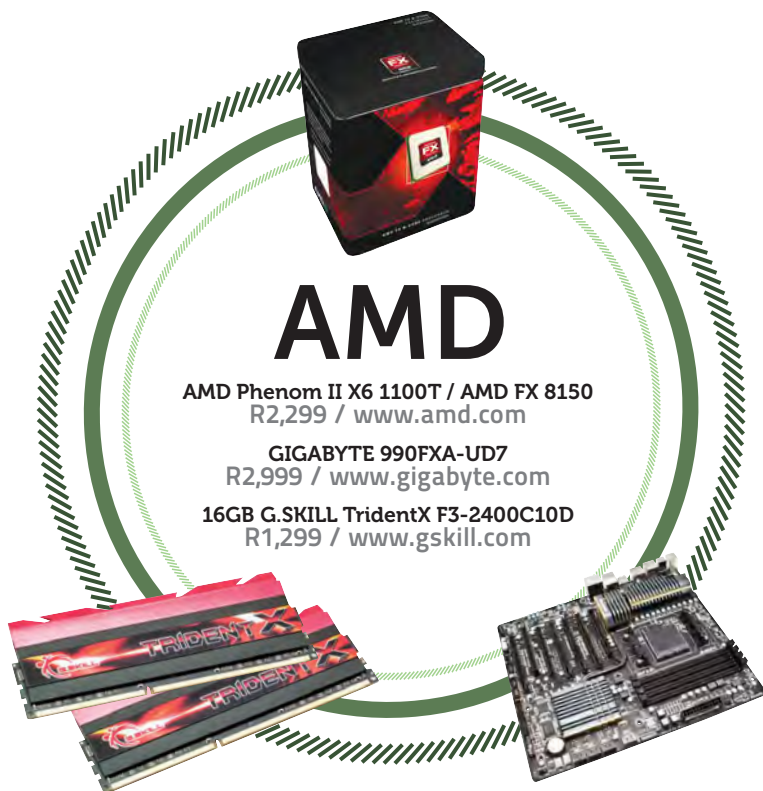
Intel Core i7 3960X
R10,499 / www.intel.com

ASUS Rampage IV Extreme
R4,999 / za.asus.com

16GB quad channel DDR3 2,400 MHz memory
R2,199 / www.gskill.com

Intel Dream Machine price:

R58,806



AMD

AMD Phenom II X6 1100T / AMD FX 8150
R2,299 / www.amd.com

GIGABYTE 990FXA-UD7
R2,999 / www.gigabyte.com

16GB G.SKILL TridentX F3-2400C10D
R1,299 / www.gskill.com

AMD Dream Machine price:

R41,707



Hardwired

Funny business

As I suggested I would in some of the hardware reviews this issue, I have a bone to pick; no actually, I have something to express regarding NVIDIA's policies when it comes to overclocking. The outfit states that their policy has not changed from previous GPUs but that is more PR than anything else really. The changes made to the clock domains, power targets, performance levels and such in the six series GPUs have, by definition, changed NVIDIA's policies regarding overclocking.

If you've not experienced it directly, well it works something like this: clock speeds on the NVIDIA six series cards cannot be directly manipulated. That is, you can't key in direct clock values as you could before, instead you are presented as the end-user with an offset. That offset will add said frequency to the base and boost clock in an almost linear manner provided there is no power gating taking place at said clocks. I say that because, depending on the board power limit and the NVIDIA GPU limit which is controlled within

"Months later not a single card has shown up from any of these vendors and I suspect it's because NVIDIA ended that party very quickly."

the GPU itself, you can't set the offset and be done with it. Should you reach the power draw threshold; the card will revert to a lower clock state, governed by various controls. NVIDIA claims it does this to protect the hardware, but it's not that simple.

What many of us didn't know for a long time, is that for every failed graphics card that is returned to the respective vendor for RMA, NVIDIA eventually picks up the tab for that particular GPU. I can't be sure but I have been told they cover a sizeable percentage of the entire cost, but whichever way it plays out, NVIDIA ends up paying for that damaged GPU, which obviously eats into the profit margins. I can't be sure how often or how large this problem was or what its effects were, but obviously NVIDIA felt that there was a need to protect themselves from this, and the result is the strange and somewhat backwards overclocking and clock gating you see. I suspect that NVIDIA needed a way to make this palatable to the end-user, hence the turbo, dynamic clocking and such. Sell a curse as a boon and none would be the wiser.

Sadly for the outfit, the overclocking crowd, especially the extreme overclocking crowd, is not so easily fooled by such platitudes. NVIDIA is doing us no favours, and it's evident in how they have effectively barred vendors from clocking their cards above the 1,100MHz mark or so. From the ASUS to the Zotac cards, they are all capped. The wonderful Zotac and Colorful cards presented months ago, which were going to do away with the annoying clock domains, turbo functionality and feature fixed clocks in the region of 1.2GHz are nowhere to be found. The press releases are all that's left. Months later not a single card has shown up from any of these vendors and I suspect it's because NVIDIA ended that party very quickly.

There's a lot more to this story, but I've run out of space as usual, so I'll continue this next month where I'll give real examples of cards ruined by such horseplay and why it's actually good for AMD.

- Neo Sibeko

Website www.gioteck.com

RRP PS3 Online Essentials Pack R399.95 | Xbox Elite Essentials Pack R499.95



You know what's nice? When people offer a helping hand to get you started with new endeavours you've no clue how to get started. That's kind of what Gioteck is up to here, offering all-in-one kits for getting the tertiary additions to your current-gen gaming career off the ground quickly and easily. To that end, we've got two products to introduce you to: the Elite Essentials Pack for Xbox 360, and the Online Essentials Pack for PS3. Let's all get better acquainted.

Elite Essentials Pack for Xbox 360

This here is an Xbox gamer's ticket to instant multiplayer *Gears of War* tactics discussion and *Forza* smacktalk. You'll also find everything you need in here to get your Xbox outputting on your expensive TV at glorious 1080p. Here's what you get in the box:

EX-03 NEXT-GEN INLINE HEADSET

This lightweight, over-the-

ear headset boasts an in-ear earpiece with rubber cushioning. The rubber cushion comes in different shapes and sizes to fit any ear comfortably. Its military motif is sure to instantly turn you into an actual, real-life soldier (naturally), and the ear hook and noise-cancelling microphone are flexible to allow you to customise the fit. In-line volume controls let you adjust the volume, or mute the headset.

RECHARGEABLE BATTERY PACK

The controller you got with your Xbox doesn't include one of these. Replace the controller's battery pack with this, and you'll never have to worry about rushing out to buy batteries in the middle of all your noob pwning extravaganzas.

2 METRE PLAY & CHARGE CABLE

One end of this plugs into a USB port on your Xbox, while

the other end plugs into the top of your controller to refill your rechargeable battery's juice. Can be connected even while you're playing. Convenience is amazing.

1.5 METRE HDMI CABLE

It's a high-end HDMI cable. You connect it to your Xbox's HDMI port, and then into your TV's, and it makes the pictures that it shoots at your eyes prettier. Also handles audio, all in one useful cable.



TECHNICAL

Included with Xbox Essentials:

- EX-03 Next-Gen Inline Headset
- Rechargeable battery pack
- 1.5 metre HDMI cable
- 2 metre Play & Charge cable

Included with PS3 Essentials:

- EX-01 Bluetooth Headset
- XC3-HQ High Speed HDMI cable
- RealTriggers non-slip trigger enhancement

PROS

- A variety of useful gadgets

CONS

- Nothing really

ALTERNATIVES

- dreamGEAR Xbox 360 6-in-1 Starter Kit
- dreamGEAR 5-in-1 Essentials Kit for PS3

Online Essentials Pack for PS3

For PlayStation gamers eager to dive into *Uncharted's* multiplayer but experience occasional trigger-finger fail, or who fancy some voice chat when they're getting their *LittleBigPlanet* on, here's a possible solution. Again, you'll also find everything you need in here to get your PS3 running at maximum resolution on your 1080p-supporting screen. Here's what you'll find:

EX-01 BLUETOOTH HEADSET

The EX-01 boasts a rechargeable battery, powered via micro USB for more than four hours of wireless use. An LED status indicator tells you at a glance the battery's power status, and the ear hook is flexible and can be reversed to allow use on either your right or left ear. The external speaker promises comfort during extended use, while the volume and mute controls rest on the outside of the earpiece.

XC3-HQ HIGH SPEED HDMI CABLE

This high-end, 1.8 meter HDMI cable enjoys boasting about its gold contacts, shielded cable and washboard abs, but really it's just a cable, much like that of the Xbox kit.

REALTRIGGERS NON-SLIP TRIGGER ENHANCEMENT

Just in case, for whatever reason, your fingers are perpetually covered in bacon grease and tend to slip off R2 and L2, these rugged pads are clipped onto your controller's triggers to create more grip. **NAG**



GIGABYTE Aivia Osmium Mechanical Gaming Keyboard



Supplier Rectron **Website** www.gigabyte.com **RRP** R1,299

GIGABYTE's last gaming keyboard, the K8100, was a valiant attempt at a gaming keyboard – not bad for a first attempt (we'll ignore the older lamentable offerings for now). Not the worst start to their Aivia line, but again not anything worth writing home about.

Happily the Osmium, a successor, is worthy of detailed investigation, and it's not because it's yet another mechanical keyboard, as these are a dime a dozen, but the Osmium is genuinely good. True enough, just about any self-respecting vendor making their foray into gaming peripherals has a mechanical keyboard, so it's not unexpected that GIGABYTE should do the same, however this one stands out.

Unlike some other vendors who have been making gaming peripherals for a long time, the Osmium is unexpectedly thin on fluff and is rather purposefully designed. It's truly a keyboard that holds functionality above all else as its aesthetics are a far cry from the K8100. Not that it's unsightly but we'd not label it beautiful either. Still, that shouldn't deter you as the looks can grow on you. The elegant black against the deep blue backlit keys make for a serious keyboard that

should, for all intents and purposes, incentivise the veterans to up their game if only because GIGABYTE has managed to not only match them feature for feature, but beat them in quality, features and the simplicity of it all.

Don't expect tens of macro keys here, there are only five, but with the five macro keys are five different profiles, so in essence you can save up to 125 unique key combinations. The best part about it is that to switch between any of them you need not open up the Ghost software, you can do it all on the keyboard, as each profile is colour-coded. You'll have to remember which colour corresponds with each setting though as there's no LCD to indicate this, but we figure most people will make do with the five keys with no need to assign more.

N-key rollover is a big thing for gaming keyboard manufacturers and this is no different for GIGABYTE. Theirs is called Anti-Ghosting for some reason, but it's essentially the same thing, allowing up to 64 simultaneous key presses. The number is impressive for sure, but is nullified by the absence of any human with that many digits. Still it's understandable given just how hard it is for any manufacturer to differentiate

PLUS

- Ghost software
- USB 3.0 super-speed hub
- Build quality

MINUS

- Like all mechanical keyboards it's loud
- No option to illuminate WASD keys only

BOTTOM LINE

A fantastic keyboard that's just shy of being unmatched.

their offerings in this increasingly crowded market.

Build quality is one of the best-selling points of this keyboard. It's not just the weight, but the quality of the plastics and the palm rest. It's robust without seeming industrial like the Corsair K90. The CHERRY MX-Red switches may not be everyone's liking as they lack the tactile feedback of the Black switches, but then again not everyone likes that resistance. We do feel though that the MX-Blue and Clear switches would have been a better middle ground. Key travel is perfect though at 2mm.

GIGABYTE has included with Osmium a USB 3.0 SuperSpeed Hub, USB 2.0 hub and headphone (including microphone) mini jacks as well. So you need only the single thick braided cable from the keyboard running to the back of your PC, where the individual cables will plug into their respective ports. This scheme is simple but one that is immensely appreciated as it's very convenient and eliminates clutter.

The GIGABYTE Aivia Osmium is unexpectedly good, better than we could have ever hoped for from GIGABYTE's peripheral division. Definitely give this one serious consideration.

- Neo Sibeko

Uncapped ADSL INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

Pushing the limits of DSL



imaginet

086 111 1101
<http://www.imagnet.co.za>



SPECS

Core
1.034GHz
GK104-A300
(28nm)
Processors
1,344
Render outputs
24
Memory
2,048MB GDDR5
6GHz
(144.2GB/sec)
API
DirectX 11.1
OpenGL 4.x
OpenCL 1.X
PhysX



GIGABYTE GV-N66TOC-2GD

Supplier Rectron Website www.gigabyte.com RRP TBA

NVIDIA has been behaving rather erratically this year. We've covered the obvious re-naming and re-assignment of the GK104 GPU before from a GPU intended for use in a mid-range SKU to one that was bumped up to a high end SKU. This hasn't changed, but because of this adjustment, the mid-range parts were delayed, or at least showed up a lot later than usual.

Not a surprise then to see that the GTX 560 Ti successor, the GTX 660 Ti, is based on the same GK104 GPU as the GTX 680. For the first time ever, the \$499 halo product shares a GPU with a mid-range part. You could argue that the limited edition GTX 560 Ti 448 used a similar strategy adding the GF110 GPU to the 560 family; however that was simply getting rid of inventory and nothing else. This here is a new GPU, cut down from its full feature set or functional units appropriately to fit it snugly into the target price point which, at the time of writing, had yet to be announced.

As a result of this GPU sharing identical DNA with the GTX 670 and 680, it's better to compare similarities rather than difference. The list is shorter that way and it will illustrate to you why this GPU may, in many ways, be a better purchase than the more expensive parts its derived from, especially with the peculiar stance on overclocking NVIDIA has taken. It's well worth mentioning that while the same annoying turbo technology exists on the GTX 660 Ti, we've grown used to

it and, with the right software, you can pretty much negate it and make sure that you operate your GPU at maximum performance almost constantly.

The GTX 660 Ti has the same number of compute cores as the GTX 670; 1,344 to be exact. It seemed improbable when the rumours started circulating, but it's turned out to be true. How then does NVIDIA differentiate the 660 Ti from the 670? Well this is done primarily by way of the render or raster outputs if you will, where only 24 are enabled instead of the full complement of 32. If you weren't sure how the various GPU parts were grouped, you can be sure that the ROPs are not in any meaningful way tied to the compute cores. This extends to the memory sub-system as well.

NVIDIA has gone with an obscure 192-bit bus, however this we can conclude is tied to the ROP configuration, it follows that one unit is fused off with its corresponding 64-bit channel it leads us necessarily to the odd 192-bit bus. All would seem well, if it weren't for the memory configuration though. With a symmetrical distribution across the chips, it should be impossible to have a 2GB frame buffer, yet it is here right before our very eyes. What NVIDIA has done, or at least allowed, is the pairing of two DRAM chips per 64-bit channel (of which there are two) at regular densities (in this case 256MiB chips) to make up the first 1GB of frame buffer memory; the last 64-bit channel has two chips of double the density (512MiB) and as such you

PLUS

- Minimal power draw
- Virtually inaudible
- Dangerously close to GTX 670

MINUS

- Price is an unknown right now

BOTTOM LINE

A worthy successor to the celebrated GTX 560 Ti, the GTX 660 Ti cunningly redefines mid-range performance.

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: ASUS GEFORCE GTX680	
Hard Reset DX9 1,080p 4xAA	82.9 99.6
Just Cause 2 DX10 1,080p	142.22 155.72
3DMark11 Extreme	2,905 3,343
3DMark Vantage	319.58 39,722
Unigine Heaven Xtreme	1618.606 1871.607

end up with the 2GB we see here on the GIGABYTE card.

As for the GIGABYTE card itself, well it's the usual WINDFORCE II cooler and a slight factory overclock. All this comes together to make a card that is dangerously close to the performance of the GTX 670. With some overclocking, which this card does very well, it matches the GTX 670 and that is mighty impressive. If the GTX 660 Ti lands at the right price, particularly this one, then you should buy it.

– Neo Sibeko

**SPECS**

CPU
AMD A8-4500M
quad core @
1.9GHz
GPU
AMD Radeon HD
7640G + 7670M
RAM
6GB DDR3
Display
15.6" LCD @
1366x768
Storage
640GB HDD
5,400RPM
Optical drive
DVD/R

HP Pavilion G6 (AMD Trinity)

Supplier AMD South Africa **Website** www.amd.com **RRP** \$725

The last time we got our paws on an AMD CPU was with the release of the less-than-impressive Bulldozer octa-cores, but now it's time to dip our toes into AMD's next generation of processors – Piledriver. Just the toes, for now at least – Piledriver's desktop versions have been delayed until October but to keep us busy in the meantime, AMD has provided us with a Piledriver-based notebook that bundles everything into what's known as the Trinity APU – comprising a CPU and GPU in a single die. Obviously this doesn't represent the pinnacle of performance from the manufacturer, but it does give us a glimpse into the future, and, more immediately, it gives us a chance to play around with Trinity to see if it's possible to have a gaming notebook at a price that won't break your bank (and a weight that won't break your back).

Let's get one thing straight first: this is not a gaming notebook. This is a multi-purpose machine that can also handle a few games, but for the price, you'll be impressed. On that point, there are no Trinity-based notebooks

currently available locally yet, but the dollar price we've been supplied should give you a rough idea of the cost when it does eventually land on our shores.

Our first impressions in-game were a mixed bag. It took quite a bit of tweaking in *Hard Reset*'s settings to get an average frame rate above 30, but eventually we settled on the medium setting with just 4x AA. *Sniper Elite V2* gave us a similar challenge, requiring that we set the game's visuals to its lowest setting and then notch up just the textures and shadows to medium before we saw an average frame rate of 30. *Street Fighter IV* was a different story and impressed us right away; it put out a frame rate of 70 at its highest settings. Similarly, *Resident Evil 5* sailed along without a hitch at 48 FPS at full detail. Our synthetic benchmarks, 3DMark 11 and PCMark 7, gave us scores of X583 and 1,851 respectively; we're sure that the low 3DMark score is down to drivers, though, so don't let it bother you.

Trinity certainly delivers for a low/mid-range notebook, but we were

PLUS

- Good performance
- Price
- A step in the right direction for AMD

MINUS

- Radeon Dual Graphics is under-utilised

BOTTOM LINE

Surprisingly solid performance at this price, but Trinity should be capable of even more.

left with a feeling that it could be better. The system allows for what AMD calls Radeon Dual Graphics, but during our tests there was never any indication that the APU's built-in Radeon HD 7640G was working in tandem with the discrete 7670M. We ran a few tests with the 7670M enabled and then disabled, and every time the performance increase was only in the region of 30%. Given that the discrete card has nearly double the number of unified pipelines than the APU's GPU, we'd expect much greater performance if the two were indeed working together. Perhaps updated drivers and enough time is all it needs, though.

Trinity easily trumps the likes of Intel's integrated GPUs (which is what you'd expect to find at this price point), but it doesn't quite revolutionise the concept of an affordable gaming notebook. It's certainly a big step in the right direction, though, and it'll serve you sufficiently as a backup or LAN gaming machine.

- Geoff Burrows



MSI R7970 Lightning



Supplier **Corex** Website www.msi.com RRP **R6,799**

Last issue we reviewed the MSI R7870 Hawk graphics card. Even though it's newer than the R7970 Lightning, given its pricing and its performance segment, it was more time-sensitive than the R7970 Lightning.

High-end cards tend to stick around a lot longer. Even though this card was available at the end of April, to date there still isn't a better HD 7970. Add to which there hasn't been a better overclocking graphics card, it's as relevant today as it was many months ago. There does exist the 680 Lightning, an equally impressive graphics card, but because of NVIDIA's policies (more about that in Hardwired column) the only worthwhile graphics cards to overclock are AMD-powered. Great for AMD as NVIDIA's restrictions have made the competition's job a little easier.

With the recent announcement of the GHz edition GPUs and slightly older Catalyst 12.7 driver updates, AMD managed to just edge out the GTX 680 as the fastest GPU on the market. The title isn't real so much as it is academic, but that did allow AMD to discount the "regular" HD 7970, while adding a \$50 USD premium to the GHz cards. More of a business move than anything else and certainly not a move inspired by some profound change in yields

and overclocking headroom. AMD managed to charge more for the same thing.

Fortunately for us, who aren't convinced by the GHz edition, we'd rather spend our money on the R7970 Lightning, which is a fantastic graphics card. Besides the GPU-Reactor which you should be familiar with from the R7870 Hawk review, the R7970 is the only graphics card that once again requires no modifications to yield the best results.

From the factory it comes configured and ready for those blistering clock speeds above the 1.6GHz mark. In fact MSI's resident overclocking guru Elmor managed an incredible 1.8GHz on the core. Yes, this was done with some exotic cooling and binning of the cards, but there were no modifications to the PCB required and retail cards such as this one should be capable of speeds approaching those.

No other Radeon 7970 can claim this, as the reference cards require extensive and numerous modifications to circumvent several protection mechanisms. MSI does away with all the fuss by presenting you with a simple switch between normal operation and LN2 mode which is actually an unlocked mode. With that you'll need special software which unfortunately isn't publicly

SPECS

Core
1.07GHz Tahiti XT (28nm)
Processors
2,048
Render outputs
32
Memory
3,072MB GDDR5
4.8GHz
(268.8GB/sec)
API
DirectX 11.1
OpenGL 4.x
OpenCL 1.X

PLUS

- GPU-Reactor
- Component and build quality
- Performance

MINUS

- Jaw dropping price

BOTTOM LINE

MSI does it again, producing the best Radeon HD 7970 on the market.

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: **ASUS GEFORCE GTX 680**

Hard Reset DX9 1,080p 4xAA	87.9 99.6
Just Cause 2 DX10 1,080p	137.48 155.72
3DMark11 Extreme	3,104 3,343
3DMark Vantage	36,051 39,722
Unigine Heaven Xtreme	2027.796 1871.607

available unless you're on MSI's database as a serious and competitive overclocker. Even if you're not, the regular MSI Afterburner will take you a long way and farther than any other Radeon HD 7970 will with the same level of effort. So there's some fun to be had with this card, more so than with any other high-end graphics card right now.

Oddly enough, the two graphics cards worth owning right now in the competitive overclocking circles are both from MSI – last generation's GTX 580 Lightning before NVIDIA's shenanigans began, and this card, the R7970 Lightning. Between these two, overclocking stardom awaits.

For the gamers out there, if you're looking for the ultimate HD 7970, look to this card. Its eye-wateringly expensive, but then again the best will always cost you a pretty penny, and this one may just be worth the price.

– **Neo Sibeko**

CM Storm Quick Fire Pro



Supplier Sonic Informed
Website www.sonicinformed.co.za **RRP** R979



With keyboard manufacturers pumping out mechanical keyboards faster than we can review 'em, CM Storm's Quick Fire Pro arrives with a no-frills approach to go with its cheaper-than-average cost of admission. We previously reviewed the Quick Fire Rapid, the Pro's smaller, slightly cheaper sibling, and found it to be an excellent offering, although we lamented the lack of a num pad and dedicated gaming keys. The Pro's design is almost identical, but with a num pad added to eliminate the former issue.

Personally, I don't mind the lack of macro/gaming keys, since I hardly ever use them anyway and with the price of mechanical keyboards already so high, more keys just add to the price – but whether or not you'll miss these will come down to personal preference. No need for programmable functionality also means that first-time use of the keyboard is a no-fuss affair, since you won't need to install any software. The size and style of the keyboard might be offensive to some, as it's quite bulky and the board itself is very thick, which results in keys that rest quite high above whatever surface the keyboard is on, forcing your wrist to rest at a potentially uncomfortable angle. Once you become accustomed to it, however, the keyboard is brilliantly comfortable and the mechanical keys are a joy to use whether you're typing or gaming.

It's every bit as noisy as we expect mechanical keyboards to be, which could be a problem in certain situations, but some of you might like your gaming loud. Media keys are handled laptop style via a function key modifier. I like the variable backlighting, adjustable between three different modes depending on your preference. Overall, the Quick Fire Pro is a mechanical keyboard that may not boast all the high-end features we've come to expect, but is nevertheless a worthwhile choice.

NAG

- Dane Remendes

8

SPECS

Key switches
 Cherry MX Red
 mechanical
 Polling rate
 1,000Hz/1ms,
 adjustable
 Backlighting
 yes, partial
 Windows key lock
 Yes
 Cable length
 1.8 metres

PLUS

- Price
- Great for gaming and typing
- Variable backlighting

MINUS

- Quite bulky
- Loud, obviously

BOTTOM LINE

The Quick Fire Pro is an excellent, reasonably priced mechanical keyboard if you're on the hunt for one.



**DEATHTAKER
 BLACK GAMING MOUSE**



**IMPERATOR PRO
 GAMING KEYBOARD**



**MAURUS BLACK
 GAMING MOUSE**



1250G BLACK SPEAKER SET



**HS-6700V
 CAVIMANUS HEADSET**



**GX-SPEED
 DARKLIGHT MOUSE PAD**



**SP-1250G PORTABLE
 STEREO SPEAKERS**



**GX-CONTROL
 DARKLIGHT MOUSE PAD**



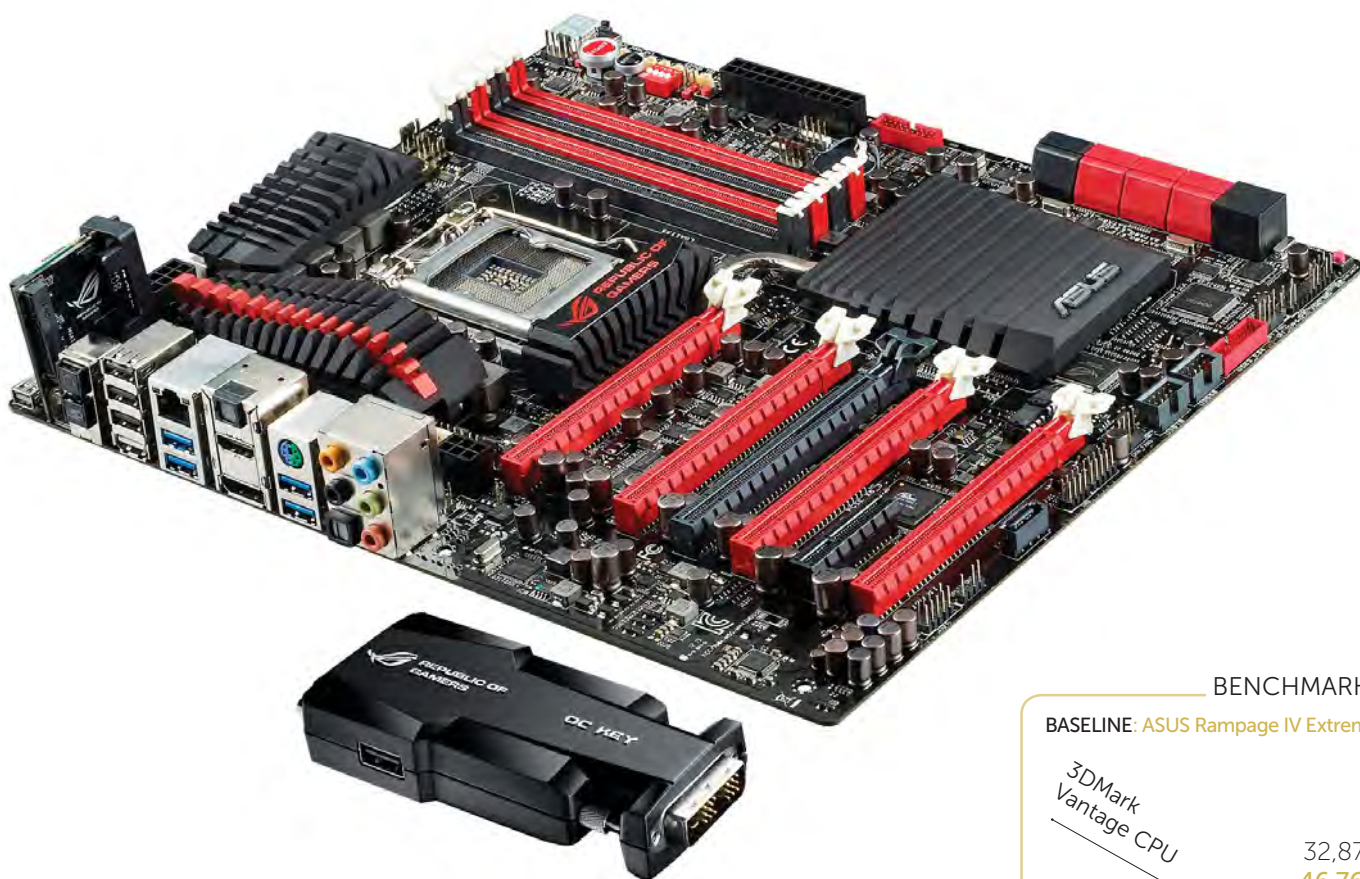
**GB-1750
 GAMING BACK PACK**

GX Gaming Series By Genius

MYKE SYSTEMS CORP.
 Tel: +886-2-2995-6645
 Fax: +886-2-2995-4751
 E-mail: sim@geniusnet.com.tw

TVR Computer CC
 +27 11 8071390
www.tvr.co.za





ASUS Maximus V Extreme

Supplier **ASUS** Website za.asus.com RRP R4,899

It's becoming increasingly redundant singing the praises of the ASUS ROG series of motherboards. With every successive motherboard, Peter Tan and team push the envelope further and traverse places that no other vendor would dare. They are, for the most part, manufacturing perfect motherboards for overclocking. The distinction between a gaming motherboard and overclocking board is very important here. You can game on just about any motherboard and this one in particular, as impressive as it is, is still bested by competitors in the market. In comparison to the G1 series motherboard from GIGABYTE, the Maximus V Extreme is lacking.

Regarding overclocking features though, once again ASUS has produced a motherboard that is not only peerless, but light years ahead of any other board available right now. ASUS has the gonads to set itself apart in a way no other vendor would dare with the inclusion of the OC-Key dongle, VGA-Hotwire and the Pause feature. You'll be familiar with the OC-Key from the Rampage V Extreme, our current dream machine motherboard. Not only does the Maximus V Extreme match the X79 alternative in the OC-key functions but adds a little more in the form of the Pause function. While this does sound impossible, we've

seen it in action and it indeed works exactly as advertised.

Essentially it allows you to stop a benchmark; more accurately it allows you to freeze the system in a stasis of sorts, where there is no load on any component. You simply resume the system from this stasis and the benchmark continues as if nothing happened. It's transparent to the system and all the system timer registers as it normally would.

The power of this feature cannot be understated and by the same token it can be used to detrimental effect in overclocking competitions and even competitive gaming. We'll leave it to you to imagine what you could do by effectively freezing a game or benchmark at your discretion with no consequence. The worst part about it is that it's completely undetectable. This can be circumvented in the overclocking database HWBOT in various ways but where gaming is concerned, there's no way we are aware that you could check for this. Controversial feature indeed, but nonetheless one that is there on the Maximus V Extreme.

On to the other features; well it's a Z77 motherboard that supports four-way multi-GPU configurations, mainly CrossFireX and SLI. Some differences though should be noted that, unlike

SPECS

Chipset:
Intel Z77
Memory:
4x240-pin DDR3
CPU support:
Intel Core i7 SNB
iB (LGA1155)
Slots:
4x PCIe 3.0 x16,
3x PCIe x1, PCI

PLUS

- Mind-boggling features
- Engineered for overclockers like nothing ever before

MINUS

- Will cost you a small fortune
- Controversial pause function

BOTTOM LINE

The Maximus V Extreme represents the pinnacle of overclocking boards from ASUS.

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: **ASUS Rampage IV Extreme**

3DMark Vantage CPU	32,876 46,760
Cinebench 11.5	9.41 13.43
AIDA 64 copy	30,300MB/s 20,396MB/s
3DMark03	113,981 127,025

other Z77 boards with multi-GPU configuration support, this board has the first PCIe slot directly wired to the CPU, with the subsequent lanes then multiplexed accordingly by the usual PLX switching chip. That means, if you only use a single graphics card, there is no performance penalty associated with the older boards that fed all PCIe lanes to the PEX switching chip first so they could be distributed equally amongst the allocated slots.

There's a lot more to this board than we could possibly cover here, but as stated in the beginning it's truly redundant to sing ever increasing praise of the ROG boards. For the ultimate overclocking board available today, there's no beating the Maximus V Extreme. The Pause feature should concern you greatly if you're a competitive overclocker, but if you don't care about such, this should be a simple and straightforward purchase that needs no motivation.

NAG

- Neo Sibeko

Sony Xperia S

Supplier Sony Mobile
Website www.sonymobile.com **RRP** R5,999

This seemingly ordinary phone from Sony represents the culmination of dozens of promises, years of work and a meeting of two technologies we've been waiting on for years. Yes, yes – we've already seen the SE Xperia Play; the concept of a "PlayStation phone" is nothing new, but that was a merely decent mobile phone with a bulky and unwieldy slide-out PlayStation controller strapped to its back. This is a regular smartphone in every sense, it just so happens to be a highly capable gaming device as well.

If you sit the Xperia S next to any other current smartphone, it looks a little bulky. The Xperia owes its extended length to that rather unconventional illuminated, transparent strip at the bottom – this will become a more common sight once Sony's derivative models start rolling out. In our giant ape hands, however, the device felt comfortable, and its curved edges mean it won't rip a hole in your jeans anytime soon.

The Xperia S functions perfectly well as an Android smartphone – it's nippy through the interface and only ever-so-slightly sluggish while browsing websites. Sony's Walkman app is a good replacement for the standard Android software, but it does borrow interface elements rather too liberally from Microsoft's Windows Phone 7 equivalent. It more than makes up for this transgression with its bright display and surprisingly capable camera – both video and stills.

As a gaming device, the Xperia S shines. The now huge selection of available games from both the PSone and PSP means you can stop playing *Angry bloody Birds* for a few seconds and spend some time with the classics. *Final Fantasy*, *Resident Evil*, *Crash Bandicoot*, *Abe's Odysee*, *Tomb Raider* – we could go on. Okay, we will: *God of War: Chains of Olympus*, *Gran Turismo*, *LittleBigPlanet*, *AC: Bloodlines*, *Burnout Legends*. And so many more games are available. The only downside is that (currently) there's no way to access any of these games you may have already purchased from the PlayStation Store for any other devices – you'll have to cough up the dosh again. Poo.

- Geoff Burrows

9



SPECS
 Chipset
 Snapdragon dual-core @ 1.5GHz
 GPU
 Andreno 220
 Storage
 32GB built-in
 RAM
 1GB
 Display
 4.3" LED

PLUS

- Huge selection of games
- Fantastic display
- Excellent camera

MINUS

- Re-purchase required for games

BOTTOM LINE
 A great mid/high-end smartphone with plenty of gaming capabilities.

ECS
 ELITEGROUP



ECS Golden Board
My Game My Rules



Z77H2-AX

- Intel® 2nd & 3rd Gen™ Core i7/ i5/ i3/ Pentium®/ Celeron® Processors
- 4 Dual-Channel DDR3 2800+ (OC)
- 3 PCIe Gen3 x16/ 4 SATA 6Gb/s/ 1 mSATA 3Gb/s/ 6 USB 3.0
- 1 HDMI/ 1 D-Sub
- 8-CH HD Audio / Wireless LAN/ Bluetooth/ EZ charger/ 15u Gold Contact/ Qooltech IV/ All Solid Capacitor/ Lucid Virtu/ NV SLI/ ATI CrossFireX



Gold Edition

GTX680

- Memory size: 2048 MB DDR5
- Memory Bus: 256-bit
- Bus Interface: PCI-E 3.0
- Core Clock: 1006 MHz
- Memory Clock: 6008 MHz
- Output: Dual-link DVI, HDMI+DP

Pinnacle
 AFRICA

TEL: +27-11-265-3000



GIGABYTE Z77X-UP5TH

Supplier Rectron Website www.gigabyte.com RRP R2,999

Before we delve further into the first Ultra Durable 5 motherboard we have for review, it's important that we let you know that the previous Z77X-UD5H review (essentially the precursor to this board) was a little misleading. There was nothing wrong with our benchmarks for that particular motherboard we tested, all findings hold true, but what we didn't know at the time was that not all UD5H boards were equal.

That is, depending on the particular sample, the experience varied slightly and in some unique cases, a lot. We experienced this upon testing a second sample and found it behaved nothing like the original board. Further investigation revealed that the UD5H was a hit and miss affair for many prolific overclockers, and in fact the UD3H (as reviewed in the previous issue) was more consistent. Note that the inconsistencies in the UD5H boards are unlikely to make a difference in everyday use, but in an overclocking context, the variation may have posed a problem as a review is supposed to represent the most common scenario or experience, not the exception, be it for or against a component.

The UP5TH remedies these differences with some changes under the hood, essentially presenting a more refined version of the Z77X-

UD5H with a few extras. Top of the list is the inclusion of the Thunderbolt controller from Intel. We have yet to see any devices that use this connection scheme, but on paper it looks great, offering all the benefits of USB 3.0 super speed but at double the bandwidth with an impressive 10GBps bit-rate. Not only that, Thunderbolt can be used as a display output standard and a viable alternative to HDMI, maybe even DisplayPort as it's run over the PCIe x4 bus.

That isn't what will impress you about the UP5TH though. It's the culmination of features that is most important with this board. It overclocks memory better than the UD3H but offers identical efficiency and as such it will yield better performance. Much like the UD5H it replaces, it is bundled with a Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 4.0 dongle. Add the already mentioned Thunderbolt to the feature list and it's a wonderfully featured platform. As with the Maximus V Extreme, its first PCIe slot is wired directly to the CPU so there's no switching chip performance penalty, but it remains fully capable of three way multi-GPU rendering.

The Z77X-UP5TH isn't flawless however. This could be called nit-picking but from the very impressive UD3H, we have to wonder how such a seemingly inconsequential but

SPECS

Chipset
Intel Z77
Memory
4x240-pin DDR3
CPU support
Intel Core i7 SNB/
iB (LGA1155)
Slots
3x PCIe 3.0 x16, 3x
PCIe x1, PCI

PLUS

- Solid performance
- Ultra-Durable 5 technologies
- Wi-Fi and Bluetooth dongle
- Dual Thunderbolt

MINUS

- PS2 port has been removed
- POST LED location

BOTTOM LINE

The Z77X-UP5TH is an amazing motherboard, only surpassed by the upcoming UP7.

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: ASUS Rampage IV Extreme

3DMark Vantage CPU	33,071 46,760
Cinebench 11.5	9.42 13.43
AIDA 64 copy	28508MB/s 20,396MB/s
3DMark03	116,799 127,025

annoying change slipped through the cracks. The POST LED is located in an inconvenient place. It's right between the first DIMM slot and the ATX power connector. That means it's almost always obscured by the ATX power cable and you actually have to look directly over the board to see what's going on, annoying indeed especially because the UD3H had it in an ideal position.

As far as flaws are concerned that is the only one we could find. It's not a deal breaker but it does serve as a detractor to an otherwise superb motherboard. Overall, given a choice between the UD5H and the UP5TH, definitely give the latter precedence as it's a better board in all respects, the Z77X-UP5TH is once again a great showing from GIGABYTE.

- Neo Sibeko

ZOTAC ZBOX Blu-ray AD03 mini-PC

Supplier Sonic Informed

Website www.sonicinformed.co.za **RRP** R4,999



The most impressive aspect of ZOTAC's ZBOX mini-PC is its small form factor. Sure, it'd be cheaper to buy a bunch o' hardware and custom-build your own perfectly functional media centre PC, but chances are it'll be a fair bit larger and more eyesore-ish than this. Unfortunately, it bears a price tag that might make you want to just take the route of the eyesore instead.

Bear in mind that the RRP of R4,999 does not include a hard drive or RAM module, both of which you'll have to purchase and install in this mini-PC yourself, assuming you don't have spares lying around. It functions as you'd expect any PC to out of the box, so look forward to spending some time installing an OS (Windows or Linux), fiddling with hardware and mucking about with driver installations before you can finally get around to enjoying whatever media you plan to enjoy. Still, with it being so small, you could set it up anywhere you have a TV: your bedroom, lounge, bathroom or garage are all game, and the ZBOX even ships with a bunch of wall-mounting gadgetry that'll let you get it all wall-mounted and stuff.

The Blu-ray drive is a welcome addition, and the ZBOX thoughtfully ships with software that'll get your Blu-ray movies up and running. The AMD hardware driving the machine's performance is more than adequate for general PC use, and for watching HD video. It'll work fine for playing less demanding games as well, but don't expect too much from it on the gaming front.

Ultimately, the ZBOX is a competent mini-PC that does exactly what it says it'll do. The price is quite steep, but if you're willing to spend the cash, you're getting a fully functioning, entertainment-centric PC that can be discreetly hidden wherever you'd like.

- Dane Remendes

7

SPECS

CPU
AMD E-350 APU
(dual core 1.6 GHz)
GPU
AMD Radeon HD
6310
RAM
2x 204-pin
SODIMM DDR3
1,066MHz slots,
expandable up to
8GB
Storage
Supports 2.5-inch
SATA HDD/SSD
Connectivity
2x USB 2.0 + 2 x
USB 3.0 / HDMI/
DVI out / 6-in-1
memory card
reader / Wi-Fi
802.11b/g/n

PLUS

- Blu-ray drive
- Capable performance

MINUS

- Expensive
- No RAM, HDD, or OS

BOTTOM LINE

It's a media centre PC that does exactly what it says it'll do, once you've added the missing bits.

TRITTON™

THE UNFAIR ADVANTAGE

Microsoft co-branded Headsets



TRITTON
Detonator

TRITTON
Devastator
Wireless



TRITTON
Primer
Wireless

TRITTON
Trigger



TRITTON
Warhead
Wireless

Licensed for
XBOX 360.



sales@cometcomputing.co.za
www.cometcomputing.co.za
+27 (011) 825 0048

ADATA XPG SX900 128GB SSD

Supplier ADATA **Website** www.adata-group.com **RRP** R1,599

Before we get into this review, it's worth noting that since we review so many SSDs here, it's time we made you, our readers, aware of a few things regarding how data capacities are measured and reported. Since this has a direct effect on the ADATA SX900 SSD, this is as good a time as any to set the record straight, at least for this review.

What we refer to as Gigabytes of storage (1024^23) is denoted as "GiB" mathematically and officially, not GB (10^9). This confusion stems from Microsoft operating systems reporting space as GB instead of GiB as they should. The reason for this is convenience more than anything else; alas it's beyond the scope of this review so we'll leave it at that, however it's information worth knowing especially when dealing with SSDs such as this one.

Most SF-2281 controlled SSDs such as this one have an overprovision scheme called RAISE. In essence RAISE and over-provisioning would allow

the use of cheaper NAND without compromising user data capacity because of the normal 7% spare area reserved on SSDs total capacity. The ADATA drive however has decreased the over-provisioning for wear level management and garbage collection, and what that means is that you now get additional space on your drive for a total of 119GiB instead of the usual 111GiB on other drives.

Take the additional space and the tried and tested SF-2281 controller performance and you have a drive that offers a little more value than your typical SSD. It's no record breaker but it certainly isn't slow either. For the asking price you could do a lot worse. So if you've been looking to buy an SSD without spending too much, but want descent performance, consider this drive; it's got a slightly larger capacity, offers competitive performance but remains keenly priced. **NAG**

– Neo Sibeko

8



SPECS

Controller SandForce SF-2281
NAND type 25nm MLC NAND
Cache None
Form factor 2.5"
Interface SATA 6Gbps

PLUS

- Extra capacity
- Price

MINUS

- Average performance for an SF-2281 drive

BOTTOM LINE

A truly affordable SSD with a little more space than competing drives.

Crucial M4 512GB SSD

Supplier Drive Control Corporation **Website** www.crucial.com **RRP** TBA

Do not be fooled by the high read and sequential write speeds of this drive. Those are a by-product of the chosen Marvell 9174 controller. The drive shows its true colours when tested thoroughly with non-sequential reads and un-optimized workloads courtesy of IOMETER.

We first suspected this when we recorded the 2nd lowest Total IOPs result on an SSD at 6,237.85 IO/s. The trend continued as we tested other workloads including an average IO response time of 1.2,823ms. Oddly enough the Max IO response time was not as bad as we'd have expected and it actually bested most of the drives we've ever tested at only 14.1,143ms. Those numbers along with the respectable sequential read and write performance stop this drive from being passable at best. Granted, this is an older drive from 2011 when such performance was not to be looked at so unkindly, so it hasn't aged well and for those concerned about performance above all,

perhaps look elsewhere.

It's not all doom and gloom though, as there is one redeeming aspect about this drive and that is its selling price. You'll not find a cheaper 512GB SSD anywhere. So do consider the performance penalty for going this route, but to offset that you'll get a large capacity SSD that will still run circles around any magnetic drive. That alone should make this SSD worthy of consideration, especially for those who wish to move away entirely from magnetic drives for their long term and volume storage purposes.

The bundle is a migration kit which means you'll get a SATA cable and software which will allow you to clone your primary drive onto this SSD. Useful indeed, which further increases the value of the Crucial M4 drive. We aren't fans of the performance, but it's undeniable that the pricing alone makes this SSD worth a look. **NAG**

– Neo Sibeko

7



SPECS

Controller SandForce SF-2281
NAND type 25nm MLC NAND
Cache None
Form factor 2.5"
Interface SATA 6Gbps

PLUS

- Pricing

MINUS

- Performance

BOTTOM LINE

This is the cheapest 512GB SSD you'll find on the market.

Acer P238HL

Supplier Acer Website www.acer.co.za RRP TBA

I'd hate to work in the field of computer monitor design. Sure, there's the techie stuff that makes it fun, but ultimately, consumers just want something that displays an image and does so well. But there'll always be that one engineer who wakes up in the morning and decides "let's do something different – let's give our next monitor a completely impractical stand." The stand in question is what tries so desperately to hold up this otherwise fine monitor, but doesn't do a very good job at it. Instead, this prop-style stand means that the screen is always at an angle (either 10° or 30° – the weight of the monitor pushes back on the stand if it's at anything in-between) and is not height-adjustable. It's also rather flighty on any sort of smooth desk surface. In practical terms, this monitor is unsuitable for regular desktop use which requires an eye-level, flat-facing



display to reduce viewing-angle discolouration and neck strain, but if you're using it as a second display for a laptop, you'll probably survive.

If the poor stand design wasn't enough, Acer decided to exclude DVI input from the back panel – replacing it with a second HDMI input. At least this screen has

speakers (of the tinny, poorly positioned-at-the-back variety, but nonetheless) so you can use this as a standalone display for your 360 or PS3, or output audio from your PC if your video card supports audio via HDMI.

The quality of this display almost makes up for its design transgressions. Colours are vivid

and bright (perhaps overly so), but its effective vertical viewing angle isn't wide enough, which means discolouration will occur during even regular use. Otherwise, this screen performs quite well with accurate colour reproduction across the spectrum, and a solid refresh rate.

NAG
- Geoff Burrows

5

SPECS

Resolution
1920x1080
Brightness
250 nits
Contrast ratio
100,000,000:1 (ACM)
Response time
5ms

PLUS

- Built-in speakers
- Vibrant display

MINUS

- Terrible stand design
- Narrow viewing angles

BOTTOM LINE

Should be suitable as a second monitor for a notebook, or for a backup console display, but that's about it.

Sapphire Vapor-X HD7770 GHz Edition

Supplier Sapphire Website www.sapphiretech.com RRP R1,899

Graphics cards are getting ever more expensive, despite that games can be played on just about any GPU these days, including integrated solutions. As a direct result of the need for a common feature set with ancient consoles, just about any and all discreet cards are good enough to play games at 720p with better visuals than you could hope to achieve on any console.

That may change next year, but for now that's the situation. As such, adapters like the Sapphire Vapor-X HD 7770 are more relevant than ever. For under R2,000 you can effectively play all current games at full 1080p. You may not be able to turn on all the bells and whistles, but you can at least produce a sharper image on your display than your console can.

With that said, be advised that this card is not to be confused with the previous Sapphire HD 7770 Vapor-X card with a single fan, as



this is the GHz edition. Besides making the name impossibly long, Sapphire have boosted the clock speed by 100MHz, allowing the HD 7770 to play games such as *Hard Reset* at full resolution with 4xAA enabled. It won't be the smoothest experience ever, but we were able to record 33fps at such a setting on a sub-R2,000 graphics card

is impressive. Other games fared better like *Just Cause 2* at 1080p in DX10 mode, scoring above 64fps, a frame rate high enough to play the game in stereoscopic mode.

More than the performance, Sapphire has changed their usual cooler to a much quieter, more effective and much better looking dual fan solution. It's barely audible,

even under load, perfect for quiet gaming and HTPCs. Given the low power draw, the pleasant performance and the near silent operation, we'd recommend it for those on a tight budget looking to upgrade from older graphics cards.

NAG
- Neo Sibeko

8

SPECS

Core
1.1GHz Cape Verde (28nm)
Processors
640
Render outputs
16
Memory
1,024MB GDDR5
5.2Hz (83.2GB/sec)
API
DirectX 11.1
OpenGL 4.x
OpenCL 1.X

PLUS

- Quiet
- Performs well for an HD7770
- Looks good

MINUS

- None

BOTTOM LINE

The best HD7770 you're likely to ever get.

GG



It's beyond a game

There's been a bunch of stories in the news recently about games, game violence, gamers, and the implications of how these things may or may not intersect in the context of real life¹. Predictably, there's also been a total lack of anything even remotely resembling intelligent, constructive debate on the topic, because the very instant somebody suggests that maybe there might be some sort of problem here, perhaps, everybody simply shuts out everybody else with arguments that amount, more or less, to some drab variation of "NO U".

I suppose nobody wants to acknowledge the possibility that they're some sort of mass murderer in training, but let's stop and think about this calmly and rationally for a moment – I mean, people becoming desensitised to gratuitous graphic violence is not exactly something that moral panic mongers made up for a big-hitter headline on some FOX News Special Edition. It's a thing that actually happens.

Real research backed up by real people who work with real science has shown that real repeated exposure to any real stimulus results in a real decrease in the real subject's real levels of response, real fact. It's the same reason that eating pizza every night would mean that, over time, pizza becomes increasingly less, you know, OMG PIZZA².

It's easy to say that "Oh, I grew up playing video games, and I didn't go on a sniper rampage at the local mall", but meanwhile, back in reality, video games today are not video games in 1986. When I was six, I played games like *Bouncing Babies* and *Asteroids*. Today, six year olds are playing *Call of Duty*. There's simply no comparison between now and then.

In terms of developmental psychology, human beings are in a near constant state of flux, which begins at infancy and continues until death, with periods of extreme egocentricity – corresponding with a demonstrable lack of empathy and meaningful regard



for others – occurring even in adolescence and into adulthood. In an interactive environment with zero consequences for the player except extra points for more kills, this is potentially risky territory.

Is it really such an untenable premise that violent video games are not only desensitising players to violence, but also promoting the same self-centred sense of purpose that's such an innate part of who we are as children and teenagers? Just look at the overwhelming number of people who bragged that they shot every innocent bystander in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*'s controversial "No Russian" mission, and I'll show you an overwhelming number of people who don't realise that things like that can and do actually happen, and were instead more concerned with a frag count. That's something worth thinking about. **NAG**

- Tarryn van der Byl

1 Stabbing and shooting, mostly, although it's interesting that nobody ever talks about games inspiring people to join the police force or the army. Then again, that's just stabbing and shooting on the right side of the legal system. If *Arkham Asylum* inspires you to be Batman, though, that's probably something else entirely. Batman never stabbed or shot anybody, but I'm sure somebody with a relevant degree has something to say about all that... bat stuff. It's borderline obsessive [we call him Savage at the NAG office, Ed].

2 Okay, so pizza isn't the best example. I could eat pizza every night. I would eat pizza every night except, you know, OMG MORBID OBESITY.

Extra Life

By Scott Johnson – ©2012 All rights reserved – Myextralife.com

#1 You shall not pass



#2 The Dark Knight Rinses



ALIENWARE
GAME VICTORIOUS™



M17x

Alienware recommends Windows® 7.

GET INSIDE THE GAME



EXPERIENCE TRIUMPH IN 3D* WITH THE ALIENWARE™ M17x.

- 3rd gen Intel® Core™ i7 processor for superb performance
- Genuine Windows® 7 Professional
- NVIDIA® GeForce Graphics with NVIDIA® 3D Vision for immersive visuals
- THX surround sound for enhanced audio

alienware.com/laptops

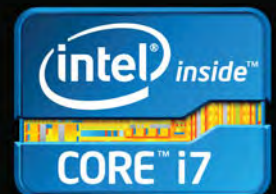
Buy a Windows 7 PC and get Windows 8 Pro for R125.00*.

* Offer valid June 2, 2012 through January 31, 2013, for complete details visit <http://windowsupgradeoffer.com>

Now available at selected Dell retailers.

*3D capability requires the optional 120Hz FHD display w/3D Bundle and NVIDIA® graphics card.

Specifications are correct at date of publication and may change without notice. Dell, the Dell logo, and Alienware are trademarks of Dell Inc Intel, the Intel Logo, Intel Inside, Intel Core, and Core Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. For more information about the Intel processor feature rating, please refer to www.intel.com/go/rating. Microsoft, Windows, Windows 7 and the Windows 7 logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. Dell disclaims proprietary interest in the trademarks or trade names of other entities used to refer to them or their products. Copyright 2010 Dell Inc. All rights reserved. Dell Computers (PTY) Ltd. P.O. Box 71170, Bryanston, 2021, South Africa. E&OE



msi™

POWER EDITION

GOT THE POWER



TRIPLE OVERVOLTAGE
ENHANCED PWM DESIGN



GeForce GTX660Ti Power Edition N660Ti PE 2GD5/OC

- nVidia GeForce GTX660Ti GPU
- 2GB 192-Bit GDDR5 Memory
- Twin Frozr IV Thermal Design
- Military Class III Components
- nVidia SLI Ready



Radeon HD7850 Power Edition
R7850 PE 2GD5/OC



Radeon HD7770 Power Edition
R7770 PE 1GD5/OC



GeForce GTX670 Power Edition
N670GTX PE 2GD5/OC



COREX

Corex IT Distribution Dynamics (PTY) LTD

Johannesburg

Tel: +27 11 700 7188

Fax: +27 11 700 7140

Cape Town

Tel: +27 21 528 8000

Fax: +27 21 528 8055

Durban

Tel: +27 31 537 4912

Fax: +27 31 537 4988

