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Sleeping Dogs

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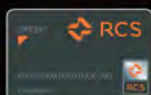
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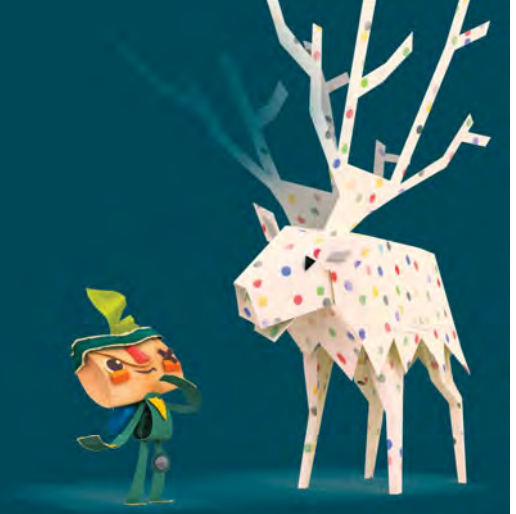
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You know what's better than paying for cool stuff? Not paying for cool stuff. Especially when you don't get arrested for it. We take a look at the various free-to-play gaming models and provide some tips on getting into F2P gaming.

32 TABLETOP ESSENTIALS

Gaming isn't all polygons and derivative military shooters – sometimes, gaming is friends crowded around a table covered in scattered Magic cards and days-old spilt coffee, role-playing imaginary happenings and demanding decisive dice rolls.

52 MEDAL OF HONOR: WARFIGHTER

We covered Miklós in camo gear and sent him off into war-torn lands to get his hands covered in all things *Medal of Honor: Warfighter*. He dared ask a couple questions of a retired military professional. We've not heard from him since.





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**Need For Speed
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Also on: PC, Xbox360 & PS Vita



FIFA 13
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Resident Evil 6
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Banana: a new banana

Seven twin moon cycles ago on the great banana there lived three bananas; they suffered greatly in the shadow of the evil banana. No matter how well they hid or how far they ran the evil banana would find them and send his bananas to hunt them down. Then one day a banana came to the great banana and told the bananas he would save them from the evil banana and his bananas. At first the three bananas didn't believe the banana but eventually he gained their trust and they let him in to their banana. But good things never come to bananas and one night the three bananas were betrayed by the banana who was really working for the evil banana all along. The three bananas now live out their days in the evil banana's dungeon and swear that when they escape they're going to find that banana and make him pay. End.

What we mean when we say a game has a good story is really in how it's told. The only time a story really makes you sit up and pay attention is when it engages, when it makes you feel something for the characters. It's a tough sell because gamers always end up playing one of the characters in the story they're being told; they run, jump and shoot while the developer tries to make them care about what's going on.

Giant alien squids are attacking Earth, billions will die – it's humanity's final hour – cool story but I just need to backtrack through this cave part to find more bullets for my gun, see – then I'll be all over those squids. So how do you make people care? It has nothing to do with graphics, polygons or 3D cards. It has everything to do with creating a believable world (even if that world is just a roughly drawn set of silhouettes) in the mind of the player. Some games get this right and others have no clue and then there are a group in the middle that just pass. In this issue two games have a similar story. In *Resident Evil 6* the developers rely on historic nostalgia to sell their reason to care... and fail. Did you know zombies can drive tanks? In *Borderlands 2* players feel part of a world and are made to care because the bad guy is such a dick you can't help but initially laugh at him and then eventually hate him. In both games the story is simple – defeat evil. *Diablo III* is another good example of how not to do it, the game is well designed and looks amazing but you just don't care about what happens – you only care about when the next legendary item will drop. So here's the thing when you're playing your games. Forget that you've heard it all before, there are always going to be a million bad guys threatening something someone loves and expecting you to care. Look past the silliness of it all and focus on how well the developers pull you into the game, make you care and entertain you all the way through.

MEDAL OF DUTY RETURNS: FIELD OF WAR HERO

Yes. It's another man shooter on the cover. I believe if you were to take NAG to a country that doesn't read English and show them a whole year's worth of magazine covers they'd think we're a guns and ammunitions publication. We do sway to the will of what's popular and expensive to make, and military shooters seem to be the in thing this decade. You can probably blame all of this on id Software and *Wolfenstein 3D*. Back in



1992 they made killing things real enough for people to get hooked. *DOOM* added the ability to kill other players in that environment and the rest is pretty much history. Gamers are bloodthirsty and must be fed. Enjoy the feature and thanks to EA and Miklós for making it happen.

RAGE

If you bought this copy of NAG early enough you've probably got about a week until rAge begins at the Dome in Northgate. The dates are 5-7 October and the website www.rageexpo.co.za has all the important information. Since the last time we looked the floor plan is almost full and many exciting companies are planning on bringing you many exciting things. I can't wait.

Good news... for all our subscribers – enjoy your free ticket to rAge. It will be included with your subscription copy. Please note. This is a gesture of good will. We can't be held over a fire pit if your issue is delivered late by the post office. We're also really sorry if you live too far away from JHB to attend. :(Also note that you can use that ticket on any day over the weekend (even though it'll probably say Saturday on it). Thanks for supporting us.

If you check the NAG DVD this month you're in for a bit of a surprise. Claptrap, that whacky robot from the *Borderlands* series has taken time out of his busy day to send all gamers in South Africa a message. Go on, have a listen. Huge thanks go out to Devon from Megarom for making this happen and of course Dave Eddings at Gearbox aka The Voice of Claptrap, secondly Adam Fletcher at Gearbox for organising the recording session during one of the busiest times of the development, and Richie Churchill for relentlessly nagging the PR Director. I don't have the right words to express how much this means to me.

Be good and see you next month. **NAG**
- RedTide
Editor



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INBOX

LETTER OF THE MONTH OCTOBER 2012

From: Nicholas

Subject: n00b sadness

I was playing Battlefield 3 yesterday and, as usual, was an unstoppable machine combination of speed and murder. I was so absorbed in my thirst for blood that I did something I would regret forever... There I was; I just parachuted behind an unsuspecting enemy. I licked my lips at the opportunity for murder. I moved closer... closer... I pressed R2. In a flash of steel, my knife was between his ribs, tasting flesh. I pulled it out, grabbing the fallen foe's dog tags as I did so. But then I realised it... I had killed a Level 1.

At that moment, I could just picture the face of that noob.

He had just gotten home from the game shop, Battlefield 3 still wrapped snugly in its plastic. He attacked it like a hungry man would a burger. After wrestling the disc out the cover, he shoved it into the mouth of his PS3, installed the necessary updates and clicked on "Multiplayer" expecting the most fun he has had in ages. His first

match... he sees the enemy. He aims down the sight of his assault rifle and was just about to experience his first taste of murder when some Level 20 abruptly slits his throat and claims his life. Tears in his eyes, he throws down the controller and flees to his room, crying. I am that Level 20.

I was also a noob once, oblivious to the joys of virtual war. I wonder; had I ruined the experience of Battlefield 3? Would he ever play again? Would he one day level up and become a bullet spewing god of war? I wonder.

But hey, on the other hand...

LOL! Noob u just got Trolled boy! That'll teach you to play on my map mother<swearword>!

You had me going there for a whole minute. I thought you to be a sensitive and caring gamer, concerned only with the feelings of others. But no... you're just a dirty scumbag like the rest of us. You know what. Have some free games for your trouble and let it never be said that NAG cares for the underdog. Ed.

From: Major

Subject: Multiplayer everything

Multiplayer and social gaming these days is starting to get out of hand. I like to approach multiplayer gaming in the same way that I approach a night out on the town, I gather a few friends together, we plan to do a little bit of everything and then we stay up all night having fun. Once it's over we move on with our lives until we feel the need to do it again in the distant future [wow, this is very different to my nights on the town. I usually travel alone, remembering to bring the essentials - handcuffs, chloroform and my sock-puppet Marvin, Ed] Now you get some people who insist on playing multiplayer every day with a bunch of strangers and in the same way that someone spending every night out partying alone it's sad for someone to spend all their gaming time playing multiplayer. This is starting to cause a problem because now developers make

multiplayer games where the single player is tacked on just as an extended tutorial rather than the meat of the game. Games these days get multiplayer of some sort and a social aspect whether you like it or not. Do you want to play Diablo 3 alone? Too bad, any person you played any Blizzard game with at any point is now free to wonder into your life whether you like it or not. Why do developers feel that every gamer is a voyeur in waiting? Why do developers insist on forcing players together in any way they can think of? Mass Effect, one of the best games of recent times suddenly develops multiplayer for the final game, it isn't just multiplayer because it influences single player as well. Why? What was wrong before? Why did it have to change? I like multiplayer, I really do, I think that it can add a new dimension to a game, but I would never want it to become the core of every game or for every game to have multiplayer just because all other

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

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games have multiplayer. I don't want every game to turn into Call of Battle: Duty Field. I mean I became a gamer because I don't want to have to socialise for entertainment.

I agree with you. Multiplayer gaming represents brand longevity for developers; this means DLC, map packs and their game top of mind for longer. All this translates to money making opportunities and gaming suffers for it. They added multiplayer to Dead Space 2 which was a joke, so the next step is making it a co-op game for Dead Space 3. They've also ruined Command & Conquer by forcing it online only. It's all about micro-transactions see (fancy a purple pimp hat for your tank? Please type in your credit card details thanks). It all sucks and the only way it'll stop is if people vote with their money. But people are like sheep and the cycle continues. Thankfully there are a few companies who innovate and dare to challenge conventional thinking. Guild Wars 2 is a good example of this, in the dying embers of the monthly subscription model along comes this work of wonder doing things a little differently and changing the way people play and think. So yes, hang in there, this ridiculous obsession with making everything social and co-op

and adding pointless multiplayer to everything will eventually die off. Ed

From: Tristan
Subject: Why Do People Still Make Those Rubbish Games That Look Cartoony?

I've always loved seeing a game with good graphics so I end up spending hours taking screenshots. I zoom in on the screenshots and admire the graphics. I spent three hours doing this on Crysis 2. I recently saw the trailer for Gravity Rush. I thought to myself, "Why would anybody play a game with those graphics. They are absolutely rubbish. They were too cartoony like those stupid Japanese games." What I'm trying to say is, why do people like that style of graphics and still use them. If the reason why their graphics are so bad is because the artists are bad I would hire an artist that helps make a game with good graphics like Crysis 2. Even the game Sleeping Dogs looks like a Japanese game but does it have bad graphics? No! Why can't the other Japanese games improve their graphics so they are like Sleeping Dogs? And another thing, I don't hate Japanese people I just hate their games with bad graphics.

Wow. I think you should maybe try looking past the graphics and rather at the game. There are so many games out there that are ten times better than Crysis that have "rubbish graphic". Come dude, grow some culture there – you're making gamers look bad. Ed

From: Eugene
Subject: NAG's age
When I got this month's NAG I stopped and wondered. When did NAG start? And was it always this awesome? And it is. Perhaps the magazine had a different look, different layout? Is there any way to see the older issues – maybe on the website?

The first issue came out in 1998. There is a plan to scan all those old issues in and stick them on the site but it would really take forever to do and we're lazy – maybe one day. Ed.

From: Devan
Subject: Digital or original
I have been surfing around on Steam buying a few digital copies here and a few there. I know the quality of games these days is good but you know purchasing those games on Steam just doesn't give me that buzz like the old days (before Steam). It's not that I hate buying the digital copies and it is more convenient... But, I always remember running into a store wanting to buy a specific game and almost gliding past all the isles as if Yoda was force pushing me to the games isle to go and grab the last copy of it and feeling like I just won the lotto. Just waiting in the queue buying

ON THE FORUMS

Can't remember why you even play games... Feeling down and sad? There are non-qualified people waiting to help you here: www.nag.co.za/forums

Q: Do your parents/elders/grandparents "get" gaming?

"Nope apparently I'm acting childishly because I'm 23 and still play games."

tarisma

"My stepdad plays more than I do. I promise you, you will not find anyone who has invested as much as he has into Gran Turismo, RDR, any of the GTA games, Just Cause or Darksiders. He does tend to play about 10 hours a day though. Not bad for a 65 year old geezer, in fact, I can't wait until I retire."

Azraphael

"I am the parent and I love gaming. My kids do too. The wife has something else to say though."

Ceven

"My Dad understands. I fondly remember when we would all crowd around the family PC with the lights off watching my dad play Tomb Raider 4 and 5. I also remember saving over the only save slot we ever used while I was falling into a pit laden with spikes. My dad was not impressed. He still plays some games sometimes, and he seems to enjoy watching me play Saints Row the Third. My mom is totally fine with it. She loves herself some "street walker" killing on GTA Vice City"

Stalker 103

the game already boggles your thoughts! It used to be one amazing experience to just go buy the game. But now it's just: click, download, play. Sadly as we look to the future most games will be bought digitally because of the extra costs of the packaging. Still what gamer wouldn't want to show off his whole collection – bragging rights deserved. One more thing, if I win don't send me a digital copy... no wait, you can't.

I believe the problem might actually be with you – perhaps, as you've grown older, you've become too lazy to get in your car and drive to this wondrous land of candy you speak of. You mentioned "convenient" and I think this is the issue. I'm picking on you because you represent Joe Public, people need to get out more and interact with the things that they buy and maybe even each other – not those 587 Facebook "friends". That emotional hook however derived is

the basic foundation for consumerism. Ironically as companies rush online to save money by not having a shop or staff they kill this hook/connection and that will eventually kill the whole urge to shop irresponsibly. I'm speaking broadly of course. Anyway, I do get what you're saying. I still remember walking into a computer store many years ago and spotting Red Alert 2 on the shelf (I didn't even know it was coming out back then). I remember buying that game with trembling hands and racing home to play it. I miss those days. Click, download and play – it's just not the same. Ed.

From: Dylan
Subject: Professional gaming
What would it take to be a professional gamer like Fatal1ty or Tsquared in South Africa? My friend and I have been a little bit above casual gamers, ever since our IT teacher brought up the idea of starting a LAN team. Sadly,

that idea was swiftly shut down by the principal who tends to shrug of new ideas, but ever since then we would like to take a shot at going pro, we took the time to read online articles and found that a considerable amount of time is needed for practice and a lot of background information is required in order to know the games we play and a considerable amount of knowledge of multiplayer strategies is needed to make it in a renowned clan. However, online gameplay is a luxury that we do not have and therefore cannot jump straight into online gaming, but my friend and I firmly believe that we make the cut in terms of the 'practice' that is required. But we find ourselves in the dark, what will it take for us to get into the professional gaming community in South Africa?

LOL... You guys are going to get so owned when you do finally break cover. I don't need to tell you anything you haven't already stated in your mail. You definitely need to practice (this includes learning strategies and gaining experience with the game). Bottom line here is you definitely need to be connected and online to play competitive gaming, and when you do end up online one day you're going to be in for a bit of a shock. Ed.

From: Morne

Subject: Where's gaming going to?

When you play a game, are you experiencing that fun feeling you did when you were young? If you watch a hardcore gamer playing Modern Warfare online, you're not going to see a happy face, enjoying himself every moment of the match, but rather an angry looking, hard concentrating, eyes glued to the screen type of face. My point being, it's becoming more of a competition, people are playing for rank and reputation, where's the fun in that? Gaming companies throw together a game that has everything a classic good modern game has, as long as it has that online killing each other for rank feature, they know they're going to make money. Too afraid of coming up with a unique new idea because they can't risk their game failing. I think companies should see this as an opportunity to create a new unique game that's fun to play, with an excellent story and all new exiting gameplay. If it has good fun gameplay, and they advertise is well people will buy it, especially if it's a big company that everybody knows and trusts. I mean just look at where technology is going, just imagine what they could create with a bit of thinking and creativity...



Chase Abrahams, "A really hardcore gamer's room. Complete with Pac-man bed sheets and a ghost bookcase. I modelled this using Autodesk Maya 2013."

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.

Fair enough, but you need to look past the current games you're playing because there are plenty games out there that have nothing to do with ranking up, killing other players or badges of honour. In fact there are more games that don't feature all the things you mention than games that do. Blinkers off, try new things and you'll find there's a whole world out there waiting to be explored. Ed.

From: Desmond

Subject: Gaming is it an Achilles Heel

Once again I find myself congratulating you guys on another successful edition of NAG. Just got my September issue and nearly walked my feet off for a copy ended up sending my big bro (because I was at work and where I work they don't sell) I have so much to talk about and yet everything I want to share was covered already but I'm still going to share because you guys let me. I just applied for two gangster qualifications and need all the time to study, I mean all the time. However for some reason whenever I want to hit the books my case of games call out to me. You have Elder Scrolls (Oblivion, Skyrim) Max Payne 3 (need to replay to get the golden guns), RE5, Darksiders 2, AC3 (coming soon but the others want me to replay them) and etc. I almost never study when I'm at home and don't even get through a chapter at work (night owl). I find myself saying to my GF that I want to study and leave her place early. So then I got to thinking can games really be and Achilles heel. On this thought I don't need to give my family and all others anymore ammunition against gaming but I think there are a lot of gamers out there that sit with this problem. I could be the only one but I doubt it. Some may say that I'm lazy or just not disciplined enough, how true this may be I don't know. One thing is for sure if I don't do

THE SHORTS

Extracts of n00b from NAG letters

"I recently bought a second-hand pretty much brand new Nintendo DS Lite."
– Patrick

"But all it was was you being someone's bitch. It just seemed like all you ever do is run into some field and kill a certain number of creatures."
– Dale

"No, no it can't. It can't right? Oh god, oh crap, oh shit..."
– Benjamin

"I am a student learning game development and I want to know to what email can I send the 7MB file that contains a game that I'm busy making?"
– Fanie

anything about it I may end up having to never be able to afford to buy games. Maybe I should look at it that way and that should motivate me. Okay, starting now: I'm doing it for the games.

There's nothing wrong with letting gaming consume you entirely. Just make sure that you keep buying NAG each month – we're a gateway. Our goal here at the magazine is to turn gaming into such an addictive hobby that once you start you can never stop. Just look at how rich those Columbian drug lords are. We want to be just like them with their pet tigers and swimming pools made out of gold. Ed.

ON FACEBOOK

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I can't wait for rAAAAAge!!!!!!
O_O
Michael Louw

If the September issue of NAG has a purple spine, together with the last 5 issues in order, they make up the colours of the gay pride flag in order. =)
(depending if for the August issue you picked Zero or Axton)
Daniel Centeio Schuleman

I just had a nerdgasm
Zelda Stols

You guys are epic without limits!
O_O Viva La NAG!
Jandre van Heerden

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I, Gamer

You are now a Level 3 Adult

In about four months' time my wife and I are in for a huge vomit, and poop-filled life adjustment. Sometime in early January 2013, we'll be having our first child – probably our only child because we hear they're expensive and require a little more effort than, say, a puppy.

Two years ago I wrote a column in which I moaned about how real life could learn a thing or two from video games. That column was prompted by another laborious (albeit more concise) task of moving homes. I longed for life to imitate *The Sims* wherein you can just pick up the phone and choose “move house” to instantly have your belongings transported to your new abode. It turns out that life actually does have some similarities to *The Sims* after all in that my wife's bump appeared almost overnight. She went from “oh hey, I'm pregnant” to “oh hey, I'm pregnant – check it out” while I was away at Gamescom. So it turns out that female

“One of the things I've noticed over the last couple of months is how much more attention I'm paying to kids' games.”

Sims' suddenly protruding pregnant bellies is a thing in real life. We're pretty sure that the whole birth and labour side of pregnancy has been slightly misrepresented in the game, but my wife is holding thumbs for a similar experience.

One of the things I've noticed over the last couple of months is how much more attention I'm paying to kids games. It's like a whole new area of vicarious gaming just opened up. I won't lie that I'm perhaps a little excited to have a legitimate excuse for buying *Skylanders* in the coming years, even though I'm pretty sure I could justify spending money on the game now. While I was recently giving *Skylanders: Giants* a test drive, I kept thinking to myself, “Oh man, we are going to have so much fun with this game.” The “we” bit was unintentional and fairly automatic; like my subconscious was linking my favourite activity with the life adjustment that's waiting around the corner. This is all assuming that he is (it's a boy) into video games. Let's hope he is because my sister has already distributed collection tins marked “Kid's First Gaming Console” among family members – yeah, I come from a pretty geeky family. If it turns out that he's not into gaming, then at least we'll have stockpiled some money to spend on nappies, because those things are really, really expensive; like at least three console games a month kind of expensive. It's a real pity the free-to-raise model of parenting doesn't kick in until they're at least 18.

And so it is that we've begun to batten down financial hatches and get ready for running on twenty minutes of sleep for the next few years. Perhaps gamers are better equipped to bring up kids? We regularly forsake sleep in order to progress through a title or level-up a character. Basically we put a lot of effort into some other thing because we get fulfillment out of it. Oh hey, I think that last bit was an epiphany.

To be honest, I don't think we have the slightest clue about what we're in for, which is probably normal for first time parents. There's going to be a learning curve, no doubt, but while I'm hoping for a gradual one, we're probably in for a *Dark Souls* or *Super Meat Boy* kind of learning curve – hopefully with less blood and demons and stuff.

- Miklós Szecsei

Ubisoft gives a little, takes a little in the PC market



“Oh Ubisoft, when will you learn?” is a phrase muttered frequently by any gamer who's been brave enough to pick up a PC title from the publisher in the last couple of years. It's not their games that are the problem – quite the opposite – but rather the digital rights management that they employ to keep their games safe from the fingers of naughty pirates. Well, it turns out that all of that nonsense with always-online DRM will now be done away with – effective immediately all PC-based Ubi games will only require a single online activation during installation; single player games and campaigns can be played entirely offline. That includes the upcoming *Assassin's Creed* and *Far Cry* releases.

Cool, great, about bloody time. But here's the thing: the publisher recently revealed that their PC games have as high as a 95% piracy rate. That's staggering. This means two things: pirates just crack their protection systems,

and thus that DRM only serves to irritate legitimate buyers. With the publisher leaning strongly on consoles moving forward, they need to ensure that their PC market doesn't feel completely neglected, so a move to ease up on the DRM that does *absolutely nothing useful* is probably a good start.

However, in an apparent effort to hold onto the reins, Ubisoft has launched their own Steam/Origin-wannabe tool called Uplay (available at uplay.ubi.com), which wraps up all their DRM, game purchases (including their growing F2P collection), library management, and social interaction into a single platform. It's not yet clear what this means for the release of Ubisoft games on rival platforms. We downloaded Uplay to test it out, and it's not terrible, but there currently doesn't appear to be a way to redeem retail box codes with the system, which kind of defeats the point of consolidating your library. But, hey, let's see how it goes.

Guild Wars 2 news fresh out of Tyria

Guild Wars 2 has been decimating cap limits for over a month now, and developer ArenaNet has been doing an excellent job in keeping players and fans up to date with what's going on behind the scenes. They've also been doing everything in their power to ensure that the MMORPG is a stable experience for everyone. For example, shortly after the game released, ArenaNet removed digital sales of *Guild Wars 2* from their website in order to slow the purchase rate of the game and thereby ease the load on their servers. Retail copies and digital versions of the game were still available from other online distribution platforms, but anyone looking for a copy from the developer's store was out of luck.

Less than a week after the game released, *Guild Wars 2* players were hit with the first wave of perma-bans issued by the developer. A total of 3,000 players were banned for accruing massive amounts of gold and crafting materials through the MMORPG's first exploit. The exploit involved an NPC merchant selling high-end equipment at very low and incorrect prices. The players who were banned bought up vast quantities of the equipment and broke it down into crafting materials. ArenaNet allowed those banned to appeal the decision. If those who appealed also deleted the equipment and materials they'd amassed, then their perma-ban was converted to a 72-hour suspension instead.

Most MMOs have to deal with spammers and gold farmers, and *Guild Wars 2* is no different. ArenaNet recently confirmed that hackers have been probing *Guild Wars 2* accounts by trying to log in to the game's servers with email addresses and passwords stolen from other websites and online games. Once logged in, the hackers are using player accounts to spam gold sales. ArenaNet has been isolating and banning hacked accounts, but they have reiterated that the account only remains banned until such time as the rightful owner takes control once again.

We really shouldn't need to remind our tech-savvy NAG readers about this, but if you have the same password for multiple online accounts then you need to fix that as soon as possible – especially if you have an account on a website or online game that's recently been hacked.



COMMAND & CONQUER WILL BE FREE-TO-PLAY FROM NOW ON

When you hear the term free-to-play, what sort of images come to mind? Are they images of a triple-A sequel to one of the most beloved RTSes from the EA stables? No? Pity, because that's what you're going to have to deal with if you plan on playing *C&C Generals 2*. Or any more *C&C* from now on, actually.

We wish we were kidding, or misreading something, or drunk, or stuck in a nightmare world, but EA has been pretty clear about their intentions with the *Command & Conquer* franchise.

"We are thrilled about this opportunity to transform *Command & Conquer* into a premier online experience," said Jon Van Caneghem, VP and general manager at EA. "For nearly two decades, this franchise has existed as something you buy; now we are creating a destination where our fans will be able to access the entire *Command & Conquer* universe, starting with *Generals* and continuing with *Red Alert*, *Tiberium*, and beyond.

"With Frostbite 2, we are able to keep an emphasis on the AAA quality our consumers expect while staying true to the RTS gameplay they know and love – all available online for free."

If you're not put off entirely, or maybe you're actually keen on the idea of this transformation, head over to www.commandandconquer.com/free and register for the beta.



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The Game Stalker



Girls suck at video games

Despite the title of this piece, I don't actually believe that. I'm also not going to make a statement about the different kinds of games men and women play. Granted I don't know many girls who are interested in *FIFA*, myself included, but I do actually know a couple so it's not a complete anomaly.

So it always both frustrates and bemuses me when people, sorry, make that teenage boys, ask me the question, "Why aren't there more girl gamers?" Now apart from the fact that many gamers of the female persuasion dislike this term intensely (I personally don't care all that much, but that's me – maybe I'm not political enough) a fair number of them not only enjoy playing games but are also really good at it! I mean REALLY good!

I recently came across a forum thread (and of course everyone knows how I feel about trolls) that trolled the question, "Do girls suck at video games?" Whilst most answers were reasonable, one particular uh... gentleman's answer was along the lines of "Gaming is encoded into a guy's DNA."

Wait what?

That is a terrible argument. What kind of idiot thinks that gaming has anything to do with DNA? And whilst I'm not denying that men have different hand-eye coordination skills to women, the idea that gaming is a genetically encoded difference is just silly. Yes I know to a certain extent that it was a figure of speech, but the fact remains that many men think that they are naturally just better at games than women, and that makes me mad.

So maybe you spent your youth sitting in front of the TV beating *Super Mario Bros.* for the fiftieth time and your girlfriend didn't but all that equates to is the 10,000 hour rule — the idea that it takes approximately 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to master a skill. And what does that say about those girls (like myself and some others I know) that did spend a vast portion of their childhood inside playing games? I recall many afternoons rushing home from school to boot up my computer and getting into trouble from my mother for neglecting my homework in favour of whatever game I was playing at the time. Sadly, this was also around the time I lost my tan... and now I have tattoos so I've resigned myself to the fact that I will never be golden-skinned again. Damn, now I've lost my train of thought... where was I? Oh yes... mastery of skills — are our 10,000 hours completely ignored simply because of our gender?

The fact of the matter is that games are increasingly becoming a more integrated part of our digital existence, for both sexes, and this idea that guys are more dominant in the gaming arena will in my opinion very soon fall away. Sure, gaming was a very male dominated pastime for many years, but the fact that more and more people consider gaming a part of their daily lives, even if unconsciously, means that this stereotype and attitude towards gaming simply cannot persist.

At some point we as a society will all be forced to accept the fact that GIRLS DO PLAY GAMES. And in the same manner that some guys suck at gaming (you think you don't but you do), some girls kick ass at it. Because they've mastered the skill.

- Pippa Tshabalala

Returning West: Techland/Ubisoft announce new *Call of Juarez*



The modern era was not kind to Old West FPS series *Call of Juarez*. The most recent title in the series, *The Cartel*, was widely slated by critics, series fans and pretty much everyone else who played it. Drug cartels, car chases and modern-day tomfoolery just couldn't match the unique Wild West flavour of its forebears. With that in mind, we bring you news of a new *Call of Juarez* title, proudly returning the series to its six-shootin', spittoon-fillin' ways. It's subtitled *Gunslinger*, and it's due out next year.

In it, you play a (currently nameless) bounty hunter who's returned to his hometown to spend his final days in peace. The story will supposedly reveal some "untold stories" of notorious gunmen of the era, like Billy the Kid, Jesse James and Pat Garrett. It's told in romanticised flashbacks to times in the bounty hunter's life

when he rode with the gangs of these infamous legends.

Gameplay will reportedly have a very arcade feel, complete with scoring system, and will boast a new art style to go along with it. Scoring high by stringing together headshots, environmental kills and more will enable you to unlock various character upgrades, like improving your ability to slow down time (concentration mode), shortening reload times and more. For some reason, even the ability to pick up a defeated foe's dropped weapon must be purchased. In near-death situations, a new mechanic called "Sense of Death" lets you slow-motion dodge the bullet that would put you down and kill the enemy who fired it to save yourself the time it takes to reload from your last checkpoint. *Call of Juarez: Gunslinger* is due out sometime in 2013 on PC, XBLA and PSN.

DLC woes continue for Skyrim players on PlayStation 3



Perhaps you own *Skyrim* for the PlayStation 3? If that's the case then know that you have our sympathies. Bethesda hasn't exactly created the most seamless experience for *Skyrim* on PlayStation 3, and it looks like the issues are set to continue. Soon after the game released in November last year, PlayStation 3 users reported game-breaking bugs that were corrupting saved game files. Bethesda has largely fixed that issue, but the new issue is downloadable content.

"Dawnguard" and "Hearthfire" are the first two add-on content packs for *Skyrim*. The first is already available on PC and Xbox 360, and presently "Hearthfire" is available on Microsoft's console as well. By the time you read this there's a good possibility that "Hearthfire" will have already jumped to PC. Neither DLC pack is on PlayStation 3.

According to Bethesda, they have a team working on "Dawnguard" for PlayStation 3 but the problems being faced by the team (Bethesda has not clarified exactly what those problems are) are seemingly insurmountable: "This is not a problem we're positive we can solve," a representative posted on the official Bethesda forums, "but we are working together with Sony to try to bring you this content."

Sony's VP Adam Boyes has since added his own voice to the *Skyrim* PlayStation 3 problems saying that he "can't promise any kind of resolution or timeline." He did, however, reiterate that Sony has "a big, broad dev support team that works closely with Bethesda—and with all of our partners—to work with them to solve that any sort of issues they have along the way." Hopefully this is one of those developer issues that this Sony support team will be able to resolve.

"We would say to Microsoft, we understand all these frustrations about the challenges to your business, but trying to copy Apple will accelerate, not slow, Microsoft's decline."

-Gabe Newell, co-founder of Valve Corporation

SCRIBBLE ME THIS

Scribblenauts is finally making its way to the PC with the anticipated Q4 2012 release of *Scribblenauts Unlimited*, which will also be available for the Wii U and 3DS. *Unlimited* will add even more depth to the game's Objectnaught engine which allows players to create puzzle-solving devices limited only by their imagination. Best of all, the PC version will use Steam Workshop to store and distribute custom-made content so you can try to get inside the minds of random people on the Internet (which we'd never recommend doing). We look forward to seeing how they manage the influx of penis-based custom content.

According to the ESA, every state in the US now has a college that offers a course in game development. Unsurprisingly, the majority of those colleges are based in California – 70 in total – with Texas coming in second with a respectable 24. What's more interesting is that the top-rated schools in California offering these courses aren't specialist media/game design colleges, but rather government or privately-run universities that have added game development to their curricula, which gives us hope that more local universities will pick up on this growing trend.

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The Indie Investigator



About mindshare

The Internet is generally too big and jaded to be moved permanently by one lonely effort of self-promotion, particularly if you're just some weirdo trying to make a game. There's only one sure-fire formula of receiving sustained attention online at very little expenditure of effort, and that's usually for all the wrong stuff.

Marketing isn't about making your work reach as many eyes as possible. That's only part of the task. The rest of the time, you want yourself entrenched in the psyche of the people you interact with. It's about leaving little reminders for them on every web page they visit, like some eerily indirect stalker who gets at people through press coverage and strange YouTube videos. And while this is partially achieved by making news about yourself *everywhere*, it's also about having a consistent online presence that puts your personality forward.

Have you ever picked up a game that you just didn't get or play at release time? Sometimes, one stumbles across a title years after its original release and gets absolutely hooked. This situation is particularly true of indie games, where the reasons for not trying something out the first time are numerous: up to and including the potential to miss news of a release completely no matter how enthusiastic the developer's marketing storm had been then.

The reason for picking it up later and trying it out is often the same — somewhere along the line, a reminder was received. Maybe it was a week, a month or even a year later, but some fresh trigger was enough to grab attention where the first mention wasn't. And those refreshers (especially when we're discussing indie titles) probably exist because the developer continued engaging in the long term instead of fizzling out. The dev kept posting new work, chatting to people and playing a meaningful role with industry events.

In fact, you'll find that most of the highly visible (and effective) developers out there keep their marketing consistent rather than explosive. When they're not at "peak promo" time, they're still naturally inclined towards forging meaningful connections and taking an interest in current affairs.

To put it more personally, people don't like being regarded as network nodes. Don't treat them as such. Two major signs are: bursting into a new community with an instant business-related request ("Hi, none of you know me, but I'm promoting this game! Buy the collector's edition for \$75!"), and dropping off the face of the planet once your effort is expended (the "kthxbaai" of community engagement). Such behaviour will, to put it mildly, inspire some resistance, whether people wilfully choose to respond with such or not.

Marketing with an actual interest in forging meaningful personal connections also makes it far easier to sustain these connections. You may stay in regular contact with some journalists because they're genuinely interesting to talk with. You're inclined to continue visiting that community of developers because you're all involved in a Civilization PBEM (and one of them hasn't taken their turn in, like, a week). You keep in touch with Peter Molyneux because he helped you hide that body once.

If you want some Internet mindshare, make yourself more open and accessible as a standard philosophy rather than waiting on a "time to market". To succeed, deal with people passionately rather than efficiently.

- Rodain Joubert

Cloudburst: OnLive in a spot of bother

Pioneering cloud gaming service OnLive has run into some difficulties, bringing into question

whether or not cloud gaming really has a place in the modern gaming industry. The service, first announced back in 2009 to much speculation, eventually launched in 2010 and has since expanded to include Windows PC, Mac OS, iOS and Android in its repertoire of

gaming platforms. More than 50 major publishers and over 300 titles have joined the service – and yet, while that sounds impressive, it hasn't saved the company from its apparent woes.

The first signs of trouble came via a tweet from InXile Entertainment's Brian Fargo (of *Wasteland* fame), claiming that he'd heard from a source at OnLive that the company was closing down the very same day, that everyone on staff had lost their jobs, and that "a new company" would be formed soon after. When asked for comment, OnLive's Director of Corporate Communications Brian Jacquet denied the speculation by saying this: "We don't respond to rumours, but of course not."

When asked if there were any layoffs at the company at all, Jacquet would only say that "the OnLive service [was] not shutting down."

Despite his reassurances, the plot thickened when *Kotaku* reported that an anonymous source had told them

that there had been a meeting with OnLive CEO Steve Perlman that morning, who told staff that the company was filing for bankruptcy, and that going forward nobody would be employed by OnLive. Later it was reported that employees could be seen leaving OnLive's HQ with



moving boxes.

Eventually, the secrets couldn't be contained anymore and it was revealed that the company had let go of 50 percent of its staff, and has been purchased by an unknown (at the time of writing) third party. The employees affected by the mass layoffs have reportedly not been offered severance. The unknown buyer of OnLive is said to have offered jobs to an unknown amount of the former OnLive employees.

The reasons for the sudden dropping of half of its employees are unclear, but sources have revealed that monthly operating costs for the company amount to around five million dollars, and that's partly to blame for this. It's a very sad situation for OnLive, and for cloud gaming as a whole. We wish all the best to everyone affected by it.

New Metal Gear Solid game revealed; dubbed a "prologue" to Metal Gear Solid 5

Konami recently held a press event in Tokyo where series director Hideo Kojima unveiled *Metal Gear Solid: Ground Zeroes* running on the new (and very impressive) Fox Engine. At time of writing, the upcoming title is still shrouded in quite a bit of mystery, but what is known so far is that *Ground Zeroes* will be an open-world game. It'll also be the first *Metal Gear* game to introduce an escape mechanic, which means being detected won't end the mission, but rather force you into

getting your butt out of danger.

For now, Kojima is being tight lipped about the project, only choosing to clear up confusion by clarifying that the game stars Naked Snake (aka Big Boss). Consequently there's all sorts of speculation as to how the storyline will fit in with other *Metal Gear* games. Needless to say, this is one for series fans to keep an eye on over the coming months. We're just surprised Konami chose to announce a new *Metal Gear* game before *Revengeance* is even out.

Ubisoft Montreal announces its first free-to-play title



In between working furiously at completing development of two of this year's biggest games, *Assassin's Creed III* and *Far Cry 3*, Ubisoft Montreal has obviously found time to develop their first foray into the free-to-play arena. They've given it the glorious title of *The Mightiest Quest for Epic Loot*. And, as you might've guessed, it's a dungeon crawler – but a very interesting one with an asynchronous multiplayer selling point.

Designed to run on mid-range PCs, the game sees players constructing castles from a pool of available tiles, designing hallways and rooms before populating them with monsters that'll fight to murder loot-happy adventurers who wander in uninvited. These adventurers can be random players, or friends made from within the game's built-in social network, or friends pulled from (surprise!) Facebook.

On the game's flipside, you too are one of these adventurers, assaulting other players' castles while customising your equipment and abilities that are unlocked by earning experience points. Each castle ends with a final boss encounter if adventurers make it that far, and after defeating this boss they can have at the glorious riches waiting in the treasure room beyond. The enemy units and bosses that you can deploy in your castle (and the goodies you can unlock for your adventurer) are determined by your player level, which you increase by playing the game, obviously. There's no set release date for the game yet, but Ubisoft has revealed that a closed alpha test is due to start soon.

ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST

Hot on the heels of the launch of *Guild Wars 2*, NCSoft has decided to withdraw funding from *City of Heroes/Villains* developers Paragon Studios, effectively shutting down the company entirely. All work on the game is to cease immediately. With that closure comes the end of their online super hero/villain MMORPG, which NCSoft has confirmed will see its servers switched off altogether by November 2012.

Here's the official word from the publisher: "Both NCsoft and Paragon Studios are incredibly proud of the success of *City of Heroes*, but unfortunately, the continued support of the franchise no longer fits within our long term goals for the company. All employees at Paragon Studios are affected by this decision, including the management team."

Monolith's *Gotham City Impostors* was a decent enough game, but anyone who shelled out the \$15 for it would no-doubt have been disappointed with its money-grubbing attitude that all-but required players to spend more money on in-game purchases. Thankfully, the game has now gone free-to-play – exactly what it should have been from day one. For now, this is on PC only, and you can pick up your digital copy through Steam.

rage expo

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Miktar's Meanderings



When fanboys were young and free

It's the end of 1996. I've matriculated from a high school in Pretoria. I didn't think I would, but somehow I did. I turned 16 earlier in the year.

I wish I'd taken more pictures.

But what a year! *Duke Nukem 3D* was released near the beginning of the year. *Quake* came along in the middle, and everyone forgot about *Duke*. The Nintendo 64 seems magical, all fresh and new. The PlayStation is only two years old and already showing its age. The PlayStation 2 won't exist for another 4 years. *Pokémon* is a new thing, thanks to the Gameboy games. *Tomb Raider* redefined the action-platformer, and marked the start of a decade-long bad boob joke. *Diablo* came out that year. I remember seeing an exhibit for it at some kind of expo held at the Kyalami race track that year, no gameplay, just a mural and a logo. *Crash Bandicoot* made his debut that year as well, putting Naughty Dog on the map after the horror that was *Way of the Warrior*.

The first 3D MMO launched that year: *Meridian 59*. It's still being played today, can you believe it! *Ultima Online* is still a year away, *World of Warcraft* still a whole eight years in the future.

Google launched that year, a scrappy little search engine trying to compete with the big boys. Computer mice still had balls that could get fuzzy. 3D hardware accelerator cards only really started in the consumer arena that year with the 3dfx Voodoo. It wouldn't be until 1998 with the Voodoo 2 before things really got rolling. The Internet wasn't ubiquitous, nor that important. One could survive without it, but it sure was nice to be able to download things. It just took a long, long time – unless you knew someone whose dad worked at a Scientific and Industrial Research facility.

NAG Magazine won't exist for another year. YouTube won't exist for another nine years.

Gaming is still considered a deviant activity. Many parents connect it to Satanism. Then again, in South Africa, back then everything was somehow connected to Satanism. I'll never forget seeing *StarCraft* on display in Menlyn Mall in 1998, as part of a "signs your child may be a Satanist" exhibit by the South African Police Department. It broke my heart, to realise that some people still lived in the dark ages. I had thought, even back then, that we were past such nonsense [wow, I wish you had a picture of that! Ed].

I spent much of my time at a cyber cafe across from the high school, even after I matriculated. I would end up working there for a few years. I made lifelong friends in that cyber cafe. It also gave me all the skills I needed for this job: which is good, because I had no other skills anyway. Game development wasn't anything you could study at any kind of established institution. It was something you did, instead of doing your homework.

To have grown up with gaming – when it wasn't this "bigger than Hollywood" thing yet – takes a special kind of tenacity. The gamer had to deal with judgemental attitudes and strong misconceptions. But among friends, and fellow gamers, you could call yourself a fanboy. And it wasn't a slur, or an insult, because it meant that you loved gaming, and nobody could take that away.

- Miktar

Trials returns home

Bike-crashing simulator series *Trials* may have gotten its start on the PC, but it promptly went off to do its thing exclusively on the consoles with *Trials HD* and *Trials Evolution*. Now, the physics-based motorcycle mayhem of the series is set to return to the PC in *Trials Evolution: Gold Edition*.

It includes both *Trials HD* and *Evolution*. Essentially, every bit of *Trials* content that's been missing from the PC since 2008 will be repackaged in a PC-optimised release. All in all, it'll boast "more than 120 tracks, skill games and multiplayer levels" say Ubisoft. In addition, there's also the excellent map editor to look forward to, so you can be frustrated by the ridiculous creations of other players, as well as online multiplayer and global leaderboards. It's due out in "early 2013" according to Ubisoft.

Elsewhere, the XBLA version of *Trials Evolution* is set to receive its first DLC pack, due this month (October). It's called *Origin of Pain*, and transports players

to Paine Island, where you'll discover 36 new tracks in locales like "lost temples, a haunted circus, deserted beaches and a menacing volcano". It also adds a new BMX dirt bike with its own tracks and special event, while the track editor sees additions like "teleporting, gun firing, switch filters and vector math". There'll also be ten new multiplayer tracks. It'll cost 400 MS Points (\$5), and will unfortunately not be included in *Trials Evolution: Gold Edition*.



Lightning strikes for the third time

Anyone who finished *Final Fantasy XIII-2* will know that the game suggested a third title in what's become known as the Lightning Saga, and now we finally have the solid information we need to confirm this: it's called *Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII*. The game was introduced in a rather odd video presentation by *FFXIII*'s producer Yoshinori Kitase in which he talks about crystals in a metaphorical way, describing *Final Fantasy* as an ever-shifting but still constant series.

A follow-up presentation gave us a few new juicy details: Lightning will be the game's main playable character, and she'll be even more powerful than she was in the previous two games. There's no word on the

inclusion of other playable characters, but we do know that Lightning will have access to over 20 customisable costumes – whether or not these will play to the notion of swapping out class kits or not remains to be seen.

The game will take place in a world of connected islands collectively known as Navus Partus, and the developers obscurely hinted at some sort of interplay between the game world and the real one, a mechanism which they call "World Driven". Details on combat are still uncertain, but there have been indications that Lightning can take cover from incoming attacks, and, while they insist this isn't an action game, the developers claim that combat will be "button response-based".



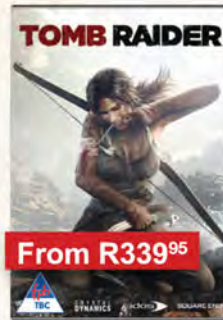
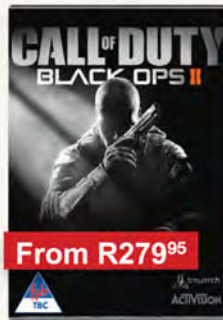
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PC

Dishonored	October
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	November 2nd
Hitman: Absolution	November 20th

Xbox 360

Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2013	September 28th
Resident Evil 6	October 2nd
Call of Duty: Black Ops II	November 30th

PS3

Medal of Honor: Warfighter	October 26th
Assassin's Creed III	October 31st
Far Cry 3	November 30th

Wii

Skylanders: Giants	October 31st
WWE 13	November 2nd
The Hip Hop Dance Experience	November 16th

3DS

Transformers: Fall of Cybertron	November 2nd
Rise of the Guardians	November 23rd
Ben 10: Omniverse	November 30th

DS

Pokémon Black and White Versions 2	October 12th
Ben 10: Omniverse	November 30th
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	TBA

Kinect

Fable: The Journey	October 12th
Dance Central 3	October 19th
Nike+ Kinect Training	November 2nd

Move

DanceStar Party Hits	October 26th
Sports Champions 2	November 2nd
Wonderbook: Book of Spells	November 2nd

NATURAL SELECTION 2 NATURALLY SELECTS A RELEASE DATE

If this doesn't excite you, then you have no soul. Or perhaps, on a less hyperbolic note, you've no desire to play asymmetrical multiplayer action games in which you're free to roam the map as a pair of eyes awkwardly situated within a mouth lined by rows of razor-sharp teeth (but not really). Or you've just never heard of *Natural Selection*. No matter the reason, we want to tell you that your lack of excitement doesn't make us any less excited about the fact that the long-awaited, brilliant-looking sequel to *Half-Life* mod *Natural Selection* is due for release this month (i.e. October).

It might be out by the time you read this, but if it isn't, you might consider loading up Steam and pre-ordering the game if you're planning on buying it later anyway, since the pre-order bonus is quite worthwhile. While the standard edition of the game will set you back \$24.99, buying before launch will get you a free upgrade to the deluxe edition (which sells for \$39.99), a package which includes the game's soundtrack, a digital art book, in-game armour and more. *Natural Selection 2* sees two teams, one side marines, the other aliens, facing off while a single "Commander" player on each team plays the game similar to an RTS, building defences, purchasing upgrades and more.

J U D G M E N T I S C O M I N G



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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 "October Roxy", and of course your contact details, and you could win a prize.

September winner



Rudi van der Walt, page 43

THIS MONTH'S LOOT

5-in-1 essentials kit for PS3 valued at R599.99. sponsored by dreamGear and Musica.



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A WORLD AWAITS

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 *Risen 2: Dark Waters* for Apex from Ster-Kinekor Entertainment. Send your captions to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line "October caption".



NAG's lame attempt at humour

Bandit Matthew got a little too close to the giant Skaggs during mating season...



Last month's winner

In Kratos's early days he worked as an asian hooker Sent via my BlackBerry from Vodacom - let your email find you! - Didn't feel the need to supply a name

SONY CLOSES STUDIO LIVERPOOL'S DOORS

After 28 years of game development, Sony's Studio Liverpool has had its plug pulled. It's not all horrible news, however: Sony have reportedly attempted to internally relocate as many staff as possible from the shuttered developer. Studio Liverpool began as Psygnosis way back in 1984 and became best known for the *Wipeout* series – which has appeared on every one of Sony's consoles since the original PlayStation in 1995. Most recently, Studio Liverpool released *Wipeout 2048* for the PlayStation Vita. According to a "reliable source" of *Eurogamer's*, the dev studio was working on a "dramatically different" *Wipeout* title for the next PlayStation console, which had been in production for over a year. A different source said that another, gangster-themed title was in the works as well, one which used *L.A. Noire*-style motion capture. We wish the best of luck to everyone affected by the closure of Studio Liverpool.



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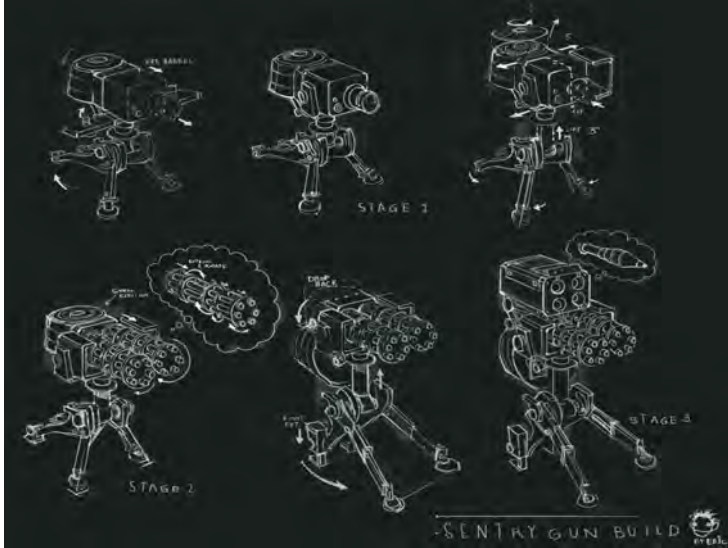
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Games codes expire December 2012.

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More talk about Valve hardware



There've been rumours circulating for a while now that Valve is looking to get their hands buried in creating their own hardware – rumours which have often promptly been shut down. Now, however, a job ad listed by the company has fuelled the hardware flame once more. The posting is for an "Industrial Designer" – which sounds mighty fancy – who's interested in joining "a world-class group of electrical, mechanical, software engineers and designers who are busily defining new entertainment experiences through both hardware and software. We're hoping to add your expertise in product design and manufacturing, ergonomics, usability, aesthetics, and surfacing to our team." Their ideal candidate would have "6+ years of professional experience shipping world-class, high-tech hardware products."

The most important part of the job listing – and the part where Valve's intent for this new employee

is made *slightly* more clear – is this: "Valve is traditionally a software company. Open platforms like the PC and Mac are important to us, as they enable us and our partners to have a robust and direct relationship with customers. We're frustrated by the lack of innovation in the computer hardware space though, so we're jumping in. Even basic input, the keyboard and mouse, haven't really changed in any meaningful way over the years. There's a real void in the marketplace, and opportunities to create compelling user experiences are being overlooked."

What this all could mean has already sparked massive debate, and as always, only Valve knows what Valve is up to. Given how much they've had to say on the concept of wearable computing, it could very well have something to do with that. Chances are, it'll relate to games and hopefully improving (or at least moderately altering) the way we play or experience them.

Release list

Dates subject to change without notice

October week 1

Just Dance 4	360 / PS3 / Wii
Resident Evil 6	360 / PC / PS3
Angry Birds Trilogy	360 / 3DS / PS3
Dead or Alive 5	360 / PS3
Dragon Ball Z for Kinect	360
NBA 2K13	360 / PC / PS3 / Wii

October week 2

Dishonored	360 / PC / PS3
Fable: The Journey	360
Pokémon Black Version 2	DS
Pokémon White Version 2	DS
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	360 / PC / PS3

October week 3

007 Legends	360 / PC / PS3
Dance Central 3	360

October week 4

DanceStar Party Hits	PS3
Doom 3 BFG Edition	360 / PC / PS3
Football Manager 2013	PC
Forza Horizon	360
Harry Potter for Kinect	360
Just Dance: Disney Party	360 / Wii
Killzone Trilogy	PS3
Medal of Honor: Warfighter	360 / PC / PS3
Smart As...	Vita
Street Fighter X Tekken	Vita

"There are brutal expectations around the PC version of Crisis 3. So this time we promise to melt down PCs."

-Cevat Yerli, CEO of Crytek



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XBOX 360

XBOX LIVE



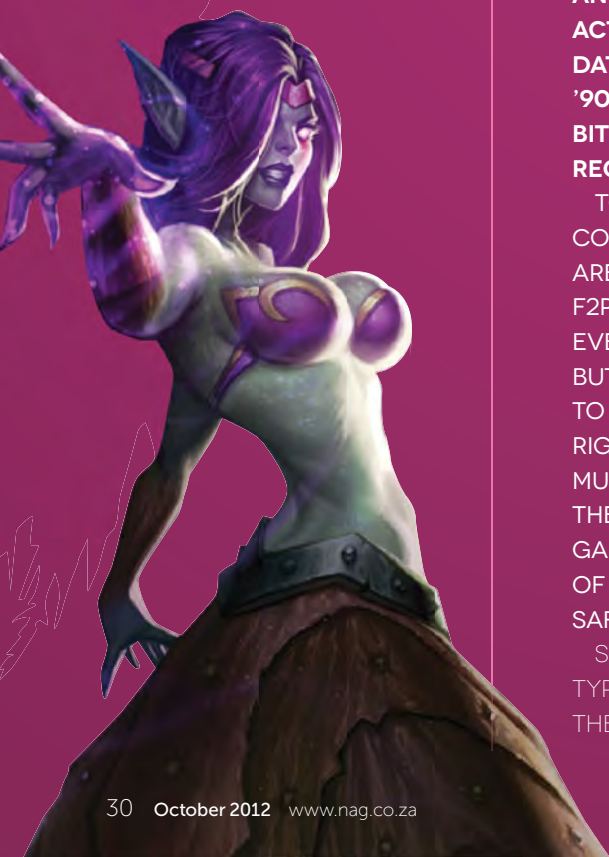
PS3



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Free play

- 1 Aion
- 2 League of Legends
- 3 Dota 2
- 4 The Lord of the Rings Online
- 5 Star Wars: The Old Republic
- 6 Rusty Hearts



Free to play to pay to play...

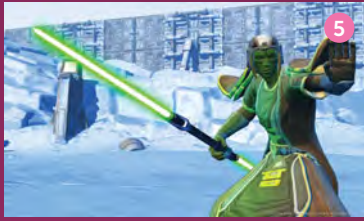
NOTHING IS TRULY FREE. EXCEPT GOOD ADVICE. AND LOVE. AND THAT R100 YOU FOUND IN THE STREET ONCE. LATELY, MORE AND MORE "FREE-TO-PLAY" (F2P) GAMES ARE STARTING TO APPEAR. LEAGUE OF LEGENDS, DUNGEON FIGHTER ONLINE, RUSTY HEARTS, DOTA 2, BLACKLIGHT: RETRIBUTION, AND MORE. THE F2P MODEL ISN'T ACTUALLY THAT NEW: SOME GAMES DATING BACK AS FAR AS THE MID-'90s USED SOME FORM OF "THIS BIT IS FREE, BUT THESE OTHER BITS REQUIRE REAL MONEY".

TODAY THERE ARE SEVERAL COMPETING MODELS IN THE F2P ARENA. THE DIVERSITY IS BECAUSE F2P IS STILL A WILD FRONTIER: EVERYONE'S DIGGING FOR GOLD BUT NOBODY'S SURE WHO'S GOING TO STRIKE IT RICH. MOST F2P GAMES RIGHT NOW ARE ONLINE-ONLY MULTIPLAYER GAMES OF SOME SORT. THE EXCEPTIONS ARE MOBILE F2P GAMES, WHICH TEND TO BE CLONES OF FARMVILLE ANYWAY AND CAN BE SAFELY IGNORED.

SO WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF F2P GAMES, AND WHAT ARE THE RISKS?



"... you may end up paying for it when your bandwidth cap gets busted by bulldog bikinis."



We

(free) kings

Shareware-like:

The first model of F2P, and perhaps the oldest, can be seen as a revival of the "shareware" model. You get part of the game for free, usually a good chunk, which lets you try it out and decide if you want to pay to get more. If not, you can walk away having invested nothing except the time it took to download and try it. A popular strategy in the '90s, it generally gave you the first 3rd of a game for free and you could buy the remaining "episodes" if you liked it. The shareware-inspired F2P games are different from the "freemium" model explained below, in that they usually only require a one-time fee to be fully unlocked. This style of F2P is quickly losing ground to the other two styles, because it doesn't make as much money in the long run.

Time equals money:

Some F2P games really are 100% free; you never have to pay anything if you don't want to. All the items, like guns, upgrades or maps can be bought using in-game currency, which is earned by playing. The exception to this is usually cosmetic vanity items, like new skins or clothing for characters. The trick here: the rate at which you earn the in-game currency is artificially lengthened. Meaning you have to invest a lot of time before you can unlock even the basics. The company makes its money by selling you "boosters", time-limited multipliers to experience or currency. Depending on the conditions these may expire when you're not playing. So be sure to pay close attention to the fine print. Another way companies may try to upsell you on spending money is letting you buy new items straight up, instead of having to wait. You want that awesome gun? No worries, it's cheap, just R5. Better than playing for a whole two weeks to save up for it, right? Impatience will cost you real money.



Premium freemium:

This style of F2P is quickly gaining popularity, especially among failed subscription-based MMOs like *Star Trek Online*, *The Lord of the Rings Online* and *Star Wars: The Old Republic*. You get the game for free, and can play as much as you want, but certain things are limited. Like inventory space, how much experience you can earn per day, or what kind of equipment you can wear. You'll always be a second-class citizen until you spend real money to get the premium service. Usually, premium costs are monthly, so you end up subscribing to the game to get the best deal on the monthly fees. This type of F2P game can cost you a lot of money in the long run, yet they allow you to play almost normally as much as needed to determine if going premium is worth the investment.

Free-to-play warning labels

FREE TO PLAY GAMES ARE ALL FUN AND GAMES, BUT THERE ARE A FEW PITFALLS TO BE MINDFUL OF:

BANDWIDTH BUSTER

Many F2P games have a habitual or near-constant update cycle. Not just because of patches that fix various game issues, but also because of new content being added, like maps, weapons, or polo-neck T-shirts for your virtual schnauzer. Half the stuff will likely require real money to get: but even if you don't plan on buying digital clothing for digital

dogs, you may end up paying for it when your bandwidth cap gets busted by bulldog bikinis.

SECURITY PURITY

Not even the mighty Blizzard is immune to security breaches. Just recently they got hacked, and while the culprits didn't get away with much other than email addresses, secret question answers, and encrypted passwords, things could have easily

turned out differently – especially if you're not Blizzard. A lot of F2P games are from relatively new developers, ones that aren't quite that jacked up on anti-hacking stuff. Don't use the same password for everything you do online, especially not when signing up for F2P games. If you buy digital goods online, don't save your credit card information. Most importantly, never log into your games when using an

unknown computer, unless you're 100% sure it's safe.

DIGITAL ISN'T FOREVER

Buying a digital hat in a game isn't the same as buying a real one. It sounds obvious, but some F2P games are designed specifically to make buying that digital hat very appealing. You can always sell the real one if you don't like it anymore, but most F2P games have End

User License Agreements that prohibit re-selling your digital goods for real money. If you ignore the agreement, you might find yourself banned from the game, and the company gets to keep all your money. If a company that manages a F2P game goes under, all the digital goods you've bought vanish along with them, so be careful what you buy, and to whom you decide to give your hard-earned cash. **NAG**

TABLE TOP ESSENTIALS

A BRIEF GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMING

We know that there's more to gaming than sitting in front of a monitor or TV. The hobby is as old as humanity, but sometimes, we tend to forget that. So now we'll try to make it up to you, by presenting you with this quick look into the world of tabletop gaming, which includes a selection of wargames, board games, dice games, card games and every combination of the above. We've probably left out your favourite game of all time, but we're not trying to hurt your feelings, so feel free to email Geoff (geoff@nag.co.za) and tell him just how important that game is to you and why everyone on the planet should play it. Maybe we'll cover it at a later date!



Hands-on with D&D Next

Dungeons & Dragons has come a long way since its humble beginnings as the misunderstood tabletop game, but, you know, not much has actually changed in that time. Sure, the rules have been reworked over and over again between each new edition of the game, but the idea of sitting down with a group of friends, throwing dice around a table and arguing about the validity of using a goblin as a ranged weapon (a no-brainer if you happen to be an orc, which is handy since orcs tend to excel at matters which require no brains) has been left blissfully intact.

Despite its fancy working title, D&D Next is really just 5th Edition. It's also currently in beta, which means we had a chance to test it with a group of seasoned and newbie players to see how it plays. Simply, it plays very well, even at this early stage in development. Character creation has been given a major overhaul; players now build their character from a selection of base classes, backgrounds, and specialties. Not only does this give greater flexibility to the process, but it means that players are forced to think more about the personality and history of their characters, which leads to a better role-playing experience.

The focus on combat in 4th Edition has been eased up; there are now fewer complex combat mechanics to worry about and longer periods between healing, which means players are forced to rely on smart role-playing instead of grinding away at a paper-based combat simulator. There's also an all-encompassing system of advantage/disadvantage which means, at any time, the DM may ask you to roll a D20 twice. If you have advantage, you take the highest score, if you have disadvantage, you take the lowest. Fighting a harpy while dangling from a gibbet would generally give you disadvantage for combat rolls, but climbing a tower with the aid of a trained party member would bestow advantage. It sounds like a simple idea, but in practice, it allows the DM to create just that little extra bit of believability in their party's actions, which can mean a lot to players.



Pokémon Trading Card Game – not just for kids

Supplier: Core Group

Price: R149.⁹⁹ (themed starter deck); R49.⁹⁹ (booster pack)

We admit, when we signed up to visit Core Group to have their expert sit down and teach us the ins and outs of Pokémon, we were sceptical. Magic the Gathering is for adults, and Pokémon is for kids, right? Surely it's always been that way? As it turns out, the implication is wrong, but not entirely unfounded. Pokémon is less complex than MtG in that there are fewer things you can do to make your opponent cry inconsolably, but all that does is put 90% of the game in front of both players' eyes. Simply, you can't be as much of a bastard in Pokémon as you can in MtG, because you can't interrupt your opponent's turn (except for a couple of very limited situations).

The rules are also much easier to understand, which is excellent for anyone seeking an introduction to trading card games; and many games tend to play out a little quicker than Magic, which suits practically everyone who doesn't have endless hours each day to be schooled by a 12-year-old. The base rules have remained practically the same since Pokémon's inception, but as new cards which come with their own special powers are added, the meta-game shifts to accommodate new strategies – just like Magic.

But perhaps the best thing about Pokémon is its digital counterpart. Unlike MtG, which has its own online game that's all-but entirely removed from the tabletop version, Pokémon online is an exact replica. It's also free. Adding cards to your online library is as simple as it is in real life – every time you buy a premade deck of cards or a booster pack, you get a code that lets you redeem that exact deck or a new random booster online, which allows you to test your strategies and get in as many quick games as you'd like before taking your deck to a tournament.



Magic: The Gathering turns thirteen

Supplier: Blowfish Entertainment

Price: R314.⁹⁵ (starter box); R264.⁹⁵ (themed starter deck, includes two booster packs)

Your opponent is tapped out. He used the last of his mana to summon a creature you just know he's had in his hand since the first round. Next turn, you're toast. But you're playing a blue deck. Possession is nine-tenths of the law, and you're the other tenth. You tap a couple of islands and, quick as a blink of the eye, the smirk on his face has been replaced with a look of horror. But you're feeling pretty good about life.

Unless you've been living under a rock or some other place with no attachment to reality, you'll be familiar with the feeling of playing a round of Magic the Gathering. It's a thrilling tactical card game that's been around for 19 years, and is now on its 13th edition.

If you've been following the scene, not much has changed with the release of M13, compared to the veritable sh*t storm that was kicked up a couple years back, but there are a ton of new cards to get your hands on: 249 cards in total, including lands and reprints of older cards. The immensely powerful Planeswalkers have made a return, but perhaps the biggest addition is the Exalted game mechanic, which is actually a returning mechanic from 2008's Shards of Alara, that behaves in a similar way to many goblin mechanics. Pro tip: if you see your opponent begin to lay down a couple of Exalted creatures, start killing them as soon as possible.

Dust Tactics Core Set Revised

Supplier: Skycastle Games
Price: R899⁹⁵

If the idea of Warhammer has always appealed to you, but not the effort required to get a game going, then Dust Tactics might be just what you're looking for. Units in this alternate history, science-fiction strategy game come pre-assembled and don't require painting (but you can if you'd like to), and include stat cards to help you stay on top of the game without constantly referring to a rule book or Codex. The Core Set includes two small armies, fold-out battle boards and everything you need to get started.



Quarriors

Supplier: Skycastle Games
Price: R599⁹⁵

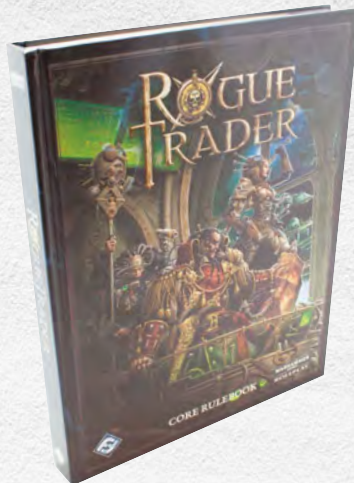
This is one game that will take you and your friends a few hours of head-scratching and shrugging to figure out, but when you do, the speed at which Quarriors is played will impress you. This deck-building game uses the randomness of dice rolls to allow you to build up your forces of creatures and spells as you play, with players drawing from a common pool of cards during the game, all while fending off attacks from opponents.



Rogue Trader Core Rulebook

Supplier: Outer Limits
Price: R720

A deep role-playing game system set in the Warhammer 40K universe, Rogue Trader features a highly flexible character creation and progression system, a dynamic rules system and space combat. The book features everything you and your party need to get going, including a campaign setting and bestiary. All you need to add is a few sets of dice and a table of willing participants. Pizza is optional, but encouraged.



Descent: Journeys in the Dark Second Edition

Supplier: Skycastle Games
Price: R899⁹⁵

If you enjoy RPGs, but find all of that role-playing stuff a bit silly, then Descent might be just the ticket. It's no less complex than the venerable D&D, but forces players to stick to the grid-based game board like glue. There's a Game Master, dubbed "The Overlord", who manages the quests and places terrain pieces on the table as players set out on their adventures. We wouldn't go as far as calling this the perfect RPG for newcomers, but it would be a great place to start if the idea of D&D puts you off.



Munchkin

Supplier: Wizards
Price: R250

Munchkin is a funny little game. It sits in the corner, mocking your other role-playing and trading card games for their complexities and steep learning curves, and strives to deliver a hilarious, sneaky, and not-at-all-simple experience of its own. It's a card game for up to six players that can best be described as a mixture of MtG, Monopoly and those game books from way back when, which makes sense, since Steve Jackson is the mind behind this game.



HeroClix Avengers & Batman

Supplier: Skycastle Games
Price: R250 (starter set); R40 (single figure)

HeroClix has been around for a few years now, and its popularity tends to rise and subside in waves as new editions are introduced. Clearly, the *Batman*- and *Avengers*-themed sets are aiming for a rise in popularity, and with so many more on the way, including sets based on *Assassin's Creed*, *The Hobbit* and DC Comics, it looks like HeroClix is here to stay.



Wonderland

Supplier: Steampunk Comics
Price: R450

A board game with a few twists, Wonderland uses artwork from the Zenescope comics (the ones with all the big-boobed girls and smug-looking guys) and is set in the world of the same name, and pits players against each other to see who can survive this insane world. There's a small element of combat, plenty of chance with players drawing cards at certain points, and a bit of backstabbing to keep things interesting.



The Settlers of Catan

Supplier: Wizards
Price: R450

Catan is one of those games that you've inevitably encountered at gaming stores, usually with a group of very serious men crowded over the game board with scowls on their faces. But, like most games of this type, it actually isn't too difficult to get into. It also looks rather nice, with its hexagonal terrain pieces and neat little wooden game pieces that fill the board as you attempt to win control over the island of Catan from your opponents. Anyone who hasn't yet given this game a chance owes it to themselves to do so as soon as possible.



Dominion

Supplier: Boardgames.co.za
Price: R532

It might sound rude to call Dominion the card-based version of Catan, but that's kind of what it feels like. You play as a monarch who attempts to take over the land (the unruly peasants are in need of some civilisation, according to the game's blurb) by amassing wealth, land, soldiers and other cards that'll make your opposition think twice about trying to muscle in on your action. Its relatively simple base rules mean you should be up and running in no time.



Dungeons & Dragons Starter Set

Supplier: Wizards
Price: R330

With its plethora of books, D&D can get expensive, and, despite how much we enjoy it, we know that it's not for everyone. So, if you've been considering getting into this game but aren't keen to dish out the cash just yet, pick up this handy starter set. It includes slimmed-down versions of the *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide* for D&D 4th Edition, as well as a set of polyhedral dice, dungeon map, blank character sheets, power cards and game tokens – everything you need to get started.



Wallace & Gromit's Fleece!

Supplier: Wizards
Price: R395

In simple terms, this is a very silly game. Played out on a good old board with good old markers and regular six-sided dice, Fleece! sees players attempt to round up errant sheep in the town and steal those belonging to other players. The game package is filled with high quality playing pieces, including a bag of sheep and six sheep whistles that players must blow almost every turn. Expect lots of noise and plenty of laughter – this is one for the family, the kids, or even a pack of adults in a foolish mood.



Star Wars X-Wing Miniatures Game

Supplier: Skycastle Games
Price: R474.95

It can't be easy to translate spaceship dog-fighting to a board game format, but the Star Wars X-Wing game manages to do just that. It's also pretty complex, but newcomers to the game are greeted (actually, it's insisted upon) with a simplified rule set for their first couple of games – nice. Additional expansions that allow for more players to play at once or give you access to new ships and tactics can be purchased once you feel comfortable with the full rules. **NAG**



Please note: Most of these games will be demoed and on sale at the rAge Expo in JHB, 5-7 October.

DETAILS

Release date

Q1 2013

Platforms

360 / PC / PS3

Genre

Role-playing game

Developer

Obsidian

Entertainment

Website

www.stickoftruth.com

Publisher

THQ



South Park: The Stick of Truth

Will this stick be true, or is it just another shtick of poo?

Finally, a *South Park* game! It's not the first one, sure. Throwing urine-soaked snowballs at turkeys was amusing, but *South Park* on the Nintendo 64 was crap. *South Park: Chef's Luv Shack?* – A bastardisation of *Mario Party* without the *Mario*, *Party* or anything resembling fun. There was that *South Park Let's Go Tower Defense Play* game for Xbox LIVE Arcade, but we all know tower defence isn't a *real* game. Nobody even remembers *South Park Rally's* trashy karting. And we don't speak of *South Park: Tenorman's Revenge*. That way was madness.

So, ignoring the previous five games: finally, a *South Park* game! It's got a pretty decent developer as well, but as we discovered with *Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood* (developed by the apparently prestigious BioWare), that doesn't always guarantee anything.

Stick of Truth follows the trials of "the new kid", a.k.a. you, as you try to become a part of the gang. You've just moved to South Park, and before you're even unpacked your parents chase you out of the house so they can have sex. Initially, Stan and the other



The costumes the gang wears (and the classes they play) seem based on the *South Park* episode *The Return of the Fellowship of the Ring to the Two Towers*.

"Suddenly, a bunch of kids dressed as elves invade Cartman's back yard and piss in his kiddie pool, which starts a combat sequence."

regulars (battling imaginary foes while dressed in papercraft fantasy gear) ignore you, as you wander the streets of town. *Stick of Truth* faithfully mimics the show's

paper-cutout style (even though the show is done entirely in computer-animation software), so everything is charmingly flat and badly animated.

The effervescent Butters is the first kid to acknowledge your presence, you bump into him while he's LARPing (Live Action Role-Playing) as "Butters the Merciful". He instructs you to meet with The Wizard, who ends up being Cartman. The role-playing begins when Cartman asks for your name, but no matter what you enter, he calls you Douchebag anyway. Suddenly, a bunch of kids dressed as elves invade Cartman's back yard and piss in his kiddie pool, which starts a combat sequence. The battle system is entirely cribbed from the *Paper Mario* and *Mario & Luigi* games. Your turn-based attacks are made more powerful by stopping a swing-meter in the right place (like a golf game), and items are



Obsidian Entertainment is composed of members from the defunct Black Isle Studios, who were responsible for *Fallout* (1997), *Planescape: Torment* (1999) and *Icewind Dale* (2000).



themed appropriately, like the "Revival Tacos" used to resurrect fallen party members.

"Killing" enemies gives you experience, get enough experience and you level up, gaining new attack abilities and better stats that influence what equipment you can wear. After the first battle, your name changes from Douchebag to Butthole. Nice. It's all just harmless fun and games, the kids playing at being fantasy characters in an epic battle, until in typical *South Park* style, the fantasy becomes reality.

Here's the real selling point though: *Kinect* support. Not for the voice commands during battle, no. You can use it to insult Cartman, and the fatass will respond appropriately. Sweet.

NAG

- Miktar

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After Capcom revealed the redesigned Dante, Ninja Theory's chief designer, Tameem Antoniades, received death threats (in the form of comics and heavy metal songs) from enraged *Devil May Cry* fans.

DETAILS

Release date

15 January 2013

Platforms

360 / PS3

Genre

Action

Developer

Ninja Theory

Website

www.devilmaycry.com

Publisher

Capcom

DmC: Devil May Cry

Ninja Theory's grimy reimagining of a cult classic

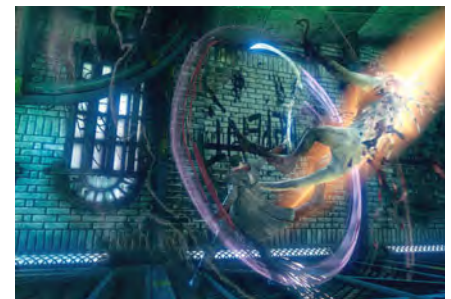
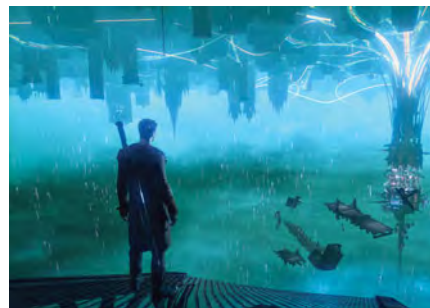


When Capcom unveiled Ninja Theory's reimagining of the venerable *Devil May Cry* series, many fans of Hideki Kamiya's originals were livid. Here they were being presented with a redesigned Dante who was nothing like the original character, and for most fans of the series, Dante *is* *Devil May Cry*.

I can't comment on whether or not this is true because I haven't played any of the other *Devil May Cry* games. I have, however, played two hefty chunks of Ninja Theory's version, and I've got to admit that what I played I wholeheartedly enjoyed. A large part of what appealed was the character of Dante. He's an obnoxiously cocky antihero, but he's also entertaining. Ninja Theory has always prided themselves on character development, and I think their

"He definitely won't appeal to everyone, but he'll be memorable – I'm willing to put money on that."

version of Dante is destined to find a place among their collection of memorable characters. He definitely won't



appeal to everyone (you don't need to look hard to find somebody denouncing Ninja Theory's efforts), but he'll be memorable – I'm willing to put money on that.

The game takes place in Limbo City, a contemporary metropolis run by a malevolent demon organisation that has masked its presence from mankind. Only a rebel group called The Order stands against them. The head of The Order is Virgil, Dante's twin brother – he requests Dante's help to end the demons' hold on Limbo City. Dante himself is a social misfit who is wanted by the Limbo City police force. Ninja Theory's *DmC: Devil May Cry* is most definitely a radical departure from the original four titles.

Another departure from the original series'

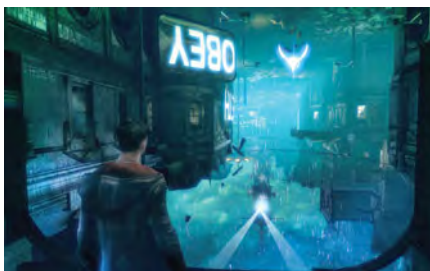
tone is the amount of social commentary Ninja Theory has included in their reimagining. Virility, for example, is an energy drink that's marketed to Limbo City's population. It's not exactly healthy and one of the missions Dante undertakes is to shut down Virility production. It turns out that Virility is "manufactured" by a giant, maggoty demon worm that is, in no uncertain terms, revolting. This culminates in an epic boss battle with Dante grappling from platform to platform above a Virility acid pit.

Dante can switch between demonic and angelic attacks on the fly by holding the right or left triggers respectively. Mid-air combo juggling is still there as are the style rankings doled out after each encounter. I've played all of Ninja Theory's games and *DmC: Devil May Cry* has the superior combat system by far.

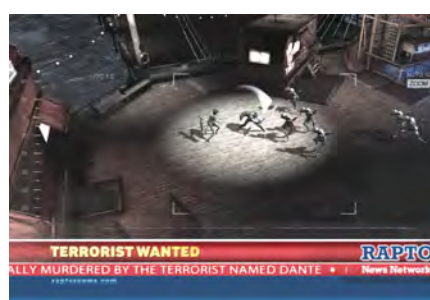
I'm really looking forward to the game. It won't appeal to the stalwart *Devil May Cry* fans who have already snubbed the reimagining, but for those approaching the series for the first time, or for those who are fans of this genre, there's a lot to be excited about.

- Mikit0707

NAG



Ninja Theory has loaded their reimagining with satire and social commentary. Fox News is satirised in the game as the Raptor News Network – a news channel run by demons to feed humanity misinformation and incite paranoia.



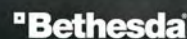
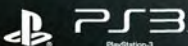
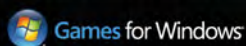
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Remember Me

Because there's never too much cyberpunk

Remember Me's setup ticks all the right cyberpunk boxes: shady corporations, a technologically enslaved population, chip implants in humans, wet city streets with plenty of neon billboards, and a kickass protagonist who can kill people by scrambling their memories. Set in "Neo-Paris" in the year 2084, memories have become a commodity that can be bought and sold to anyone.

Players take on the role of Nilin, a highly trained "Memory Hunter" whose job it was to steal, erase and remix targets' memories. Fearing her power and seeing her as a potential threat, the government arrests her, wipes her memories and throws her into the Bastille prison. The game begins with Nilin's escape and her setting out to reclaim her stolen memories.

Remember Me looks very promising with a good mix of exploration and combat. Gameplay areas seem expansive and the streets of Neo-Paris buzz with life and atmosphere. One mission that was shown off involved Nilin having to assassinate a target called Frank Forlan. She did so by locating him in his office and then positioning herself outside the window. From there she was able to hack into the target's mind to remix his memories. Doing so pulled the player out of the game-world and into Forlan's memory, which had a completely different aesthetic. The memory almost looked like a set from a theatre stage, hovering in mid-air and populated by a few key props and people. This particular memory that Nilin was manipulating was of

"Set in Neo-Paris in the year 2084, memories have become a commodity that can be bought and sold to anyone."

a recent break-up between Forlan and his wife. By manipulating various parts of the scene, the memory would play out differently.

In this case, Nilin removed the safety latch on a gun Forlan was holding. This resulted in him shooting his wife during the argument. Once memory remixing was finalised, Nilin left Forlan's mind and the viewpoint returned to the game world where we watched the repercussions of remixing the target's memory. In his newly remixed memory, Forlan shot his wife; wracked by guilt, this results in him committing suicide in the game world. His wife was not actually dead in the game world, but Forlan didn't know that.

It all sounds great on paper and most of what was shown off certainly looked intriguing, but there are a few areas that could do with a nip-tuck before release. For a start, voice acting is a mixed bag, with Nilin's voice actor (Kezia Burrows) ranging from convincing to utterly cringe-worthy. Secondly, Nilin's movements seem a little stiff when she's running or when she's vaulting over obstacles. For a game that features lots of acrobatic traversal, it's a bit of an eyesore. Still, those are subjective observations and Remember Me is still quite a few months away from release. **NAG**

- Mikit0707



Why yes, I do remember you from *Mirror's Edge*.



DETAILS

Release date

May 2013

Platforms

360 / PC / PS3

Genre

Third-person action
adventure

Developer

Dontnod

Entertainment

Website

www.dont-nod.com

Publisher

Capcom

Remember Me was supposed to be a PlayStation 3 exclusive, but after a falling out between Dontnod and Sony, the game has since gone multi-platform.

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DETAILS

Release date

TBA 2013

Platforms

PS3

Genre

Platform

Developer

SCE Japan Studio

Website

www.

worldwidestudios.net/

japan

Publisher

Sony Computer

Entertainment

Puppeteer

A new platform game with a very creative twist

Gavin Moore, the game director from Sony's SCE Japan Studio, is sick to death of obsessing over making hyper-realistic games. The final straw was when his son spent half an hour with a brand new game before putting the controller aside, sighing about how he'd played the game before, and then running outside to play in the garden instead. Moore's son hadn't played the game before, but to him it felt like every other game he'd played – the hyper realism and technology had reached a dead end and he was now bored of gaming. As a result, Moore set out to design a game to reawaken his son's imagination – and so *Puppeteer* was born.

This new and exclusive IP for the PlayStation 3 plays out as a puppet show, albeit an interactive one with platforming game mechanics. It's taken Moore's team

three years to get this far, mainly because everything has been animated by hand. Your viewpoint never moves from the stage area, but the game world moves and slides into view just like the props and sets in a theatre. In a sense, the world of *Puppeteer* revolves around you the player.

You play as a boy called Kutaro who is kidnapped by the evil Moon Bear King and taken away to a castle on the moon. Kutaro, like many of the other kidnapped children, is turned into a puppet. It doesn't take long before Kutaro angers the Moon Bear King who then eats Kutaro's head and throws the boy's puppet body aside. Luckily that is not the end of Kutaro, who finds help from a



"the unique and quirky design gives it a Tim Burton meets LittleBigPlanet vibe"

witch and her cat, Yin Yang. With cat in tow, Kutaro sets off to steal the Moon Bear King's magical

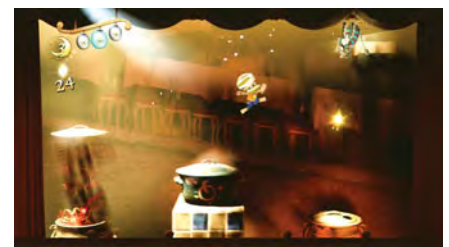
scissors, reclaim his devoured head and find a way back home. If that plot doesn't reawaken a kid's imagination, then nothing will.

Central to the game's core mechanics is collecting different heads for Kutaro. You'll find various heads hidden throughout the game, and each one grants Kutaro a different ability. Obviously a few of the heads will be really well hidden, but you'll be able to backtrack to find anything you might have missed. You'll be able to swap heads at any moment, but you can only ever have three in your inventory. If you take damage from a trap or enemy, Kutaro's head will pop off. You'll have a limited amount of time to retrieve the head before you lose a life.

Puppeteer looks set to be another strong exclusive for Sony's PlayStation 3. Despite the game being made with kids in mind, the unique and quirky design gives it a Tim Burton meets *LittleBigPlanet* vibe, which is good enough to make us wholeheartedly on board. **NAG**

- Mikit0707

With a fixed camera perspective came a freeing up of PlayStation 3 system resources. That extra processing power is now used to render 140 individual stage lights for the puppet theatre. The result is breath-taking.



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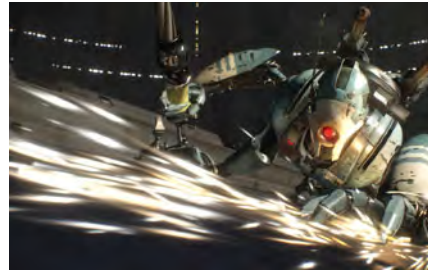
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Nearly every team involved in making *Star Wars* movies is on board: Industrial Light & Magic, Skywalker Sound and Lucasfilm Animation. *Star Wars 1313* uses Unreal Engine 4.



Star Wars 1313

Bounty hunters! We don't need their scum

Take a glance over at the "Details" listing for this game; see all the question marks under the category for Platforms? That's because no matter how hard journalists pressed the LucasArts team at Gamescom, the developers refused to comment on the game's intended platforms. They are masters at sidestepping direct questions. Everyone who has seen the video clips of the game will be able to agree that there is no way in hell *Star Wars 1313* is coming to current generation consoles. The live gameplay that was shown off at Gamescom just exemplified this unlikelihood. It was running on a high-end PC powered by NVIDIA hardware, and what we saw of the game was unbelievable.

Star Wars 1313 is an action adventure game set in the original trilogy timeline of the *Star Wars* films. In the game you play as a bounty hunter who LucasArts is yet to formally introduce. In fact, the character you've seen in the gameplay footage released so far is probably not the final design; LucasArts representatives kept reiterating that the character we were seeing was merely a placeholder. As a bounty hunter, you'll only have access to "conventional" weaponry so don't expect Force powers and lightsabers in this game.

The game takes place on the planet of Coruscant; or rather it takes place *underneath* the city of Coruscant. For those whose *Star Wars* canon is a little rusty, Coruscant is the capital planet in the galaxy. It is the home

In the extended *Star Wars* fiction, Boba Fett once used the alias CT-1313. This connection led many to believe that LucasArts was making a game starring the franchise's most famous bounty hunter. The overlaps are definitely there, but whether or not Fett will make an appearance in *Star Wars 1313* is still unknown.



"Twi'lek prostitutes working the streets and crime rotting the level from the inside out."

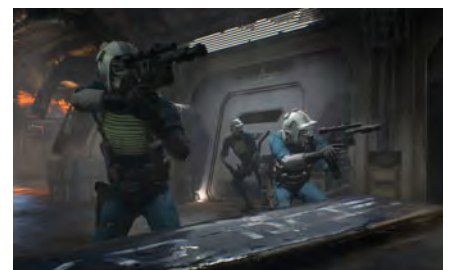
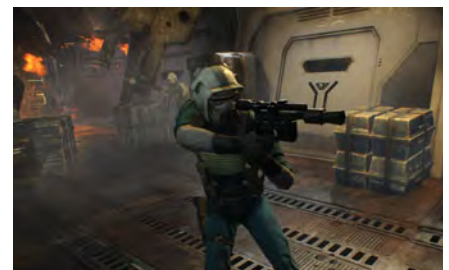
of the Republic for Episodes 1 to 3, and the seat of the Empire for Episodes 4 to 6. The entire planet is one massive city made up of multiple

layers. Who knew there were as many as 1313 levels on Coruscant?

Level 1313 is the seediest of seedy underbellies, with homeless creatures huddled around fires burning in old R2 droids, Twi'lek prostitutes working the streets and crime rotting the level from the inside out. It is the most dangerous area in the *Star Wars* universe and is most definitely a side of the franchise that fans have never seen before.

The game is being designed around three core concepts: being a bounty hunter, surviving level 1313, and playing a cinematic experience. Core gameplay mechanics shown off included cover-based shooting from a third-person perspective and platform sequences. If you're looking for a comparison, think along the lines of *Uncharted* with lots of set pieces and cinematic moments.

Star Wars 1313 is still very much a mystery title. There are no official platforms, no tentative release date and no identifiable characters. Needless to say, it's still very early days but one thing is certain: old-school *Star Wars* fans have every reason to be thoroughly excited. **NAG**
- Mikit0707



DETAILS

Release date

TBA

Platforms

???

Genre

Third-person action
adventure

Developer

LucasArts

Website

www.starwars1313.com

Publisher

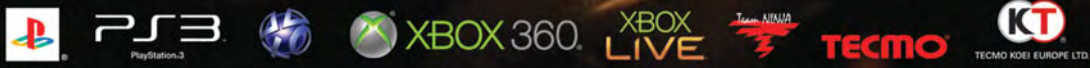
LucasArts

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Tearaway

A new IP from one of the most creative studios

When it comes to creating games that help Sony sell gaming hardware, one of the most prized developers in the manufacturer's stable has to be Media Molecule. The British development team that created *LittleBigPlanet* six years ago is probably responsible for a lot of people deciding to buy a PlayStation 3. Sackboy and his charming, hand-crafted world was what eventually won me over and prompted me to buy Sony's current console. Now it looks like Media Molecule has done it again with *Tearaway*, a new and exclusive IP for the PlayStation Vita.

The game stars a little paper envoy called Iota (no capital letter, poor guy) as well as you, the player with "god-like powers". Iota is on a mission to deliver a very important message, but he has become trapped within the world of *Tearaway*, so it's up to you to help him reach his destination to deliver his message. The message is actually for you the player, and Media Molecule has promised that every person will get a unique message. How they're planning on achieving that is still very much under wraps.

The game is an adventure title with platforming and puzzle elements. Because

the entire world is made out of paper (and populated with papercraft animals and beasts), you can expect a fair amount of cutting, pasting, folding and tearing as you help Iota traverse the colourful world. Media Molecule has an unbelievable ability to create the most original and absorbing game worlds, and the world of *Tearaway* looks to continue this tradition.

Your ability to influence the world is powered by the PlayStation Vita's collection of input methods. The rear touch-pad allows you to poke your

"I can't shake the feeling that Media Molecule is on to something very special here"



DETAILS

Release date

TBA 2013

Platforms

PSV

Genre

Adventure

Developer

Media Molecule

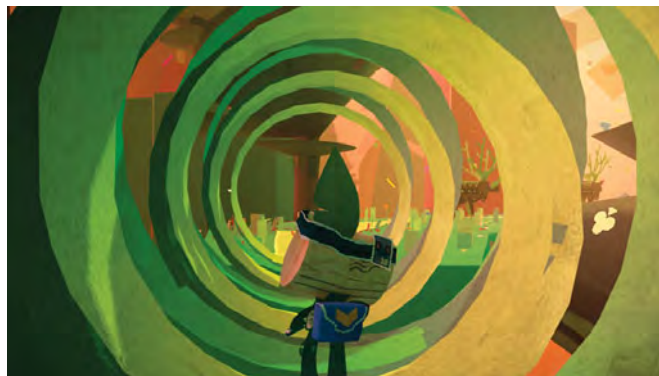
Website

www.tearaway.
mediamolecule.com

Publisher

Sony Computer
Entertainment

Rex Crowle is a graphic designer who has worked on several games. He's been part of Media Molecule since LittleBigPlanet. He's continually making papercraft animals and leaving them around the Media Molecule offices. This was one of the main inspirations for Tearaway.



You should see the other guy.

fingers seemingly through the back of your handheld to make them appear in the game. Once your godly digits have ripped through the papercraft ground to appear in the world of *Tearaway*, you'll be able to influence various things ranging from pulleys and trampolines to bridges and enemies. The built-in microphone will allow you to shout at the various creatures in the game, and the camera will let you snap real-world pictures to re-skin in-game objects and characters.

Tearaway is looking quite lovely, and Media Molecule's unwavering creativity can be seen in every fold and crease of their papercraft world. This is a title with a lot of promise and one to definitely keep an eye on if you're a PSV owner clamouring for something new. The overarching concept of our real-world leaking into the world of *Tearaway* (made possible thanks to augmented reality and clever input ideas) is completely intriguing and I can't shake the feeling that Media Molecule is on to something very special here.

NAG

- Mikit0707

If you're feeling arts-and-crafty, the plans for each of the creatures in the game can be printed out to make actual papercraft versions of them. Best. Idea. Ever.

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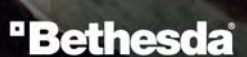
19 OCTOBER 2012

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SCAN FOR TRAILER



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Family Guy: Back to the Multiverse

Come for the franchise; stay for the humour.



The game is based off the episode entitled *Road to the Multiverse* from season 8 of the TV series; it's one of the most highly rated episodes in the show's history.



Family Guy: *Back to the Multiverse* sees Stewie and Brian travelling between multiple parallel worlds in an attempt to stop Stewie's evil twin brother Bertram from recruiting an army. Bertram plans to use that army to kill Stewie. Yeah, that pretty much sounds like *Family Guy*.

On the surface, the game's your typical action brawler with light puzzle elements. Honestly, it looks like a fairly standard affair but that's not why you'll want to play it. You'll want to play it for the *Family Guy* humour and cameos by every single character from the TV series. You'll also want to play it because, like the show, it's not afraid to go against political correctness. The section of the game we saw was called "Handicapable", which was set in a parallel universe populated exclusively by handicapped people. There's another universe that's run by Amish people, but those are just two of the many in the game.

The game is primarily focussed on Stewie and Brian as the playable characters, but during the brief hands-on we got to play as Lois as well so expect character unlocks. All characters have ranged and melee combat weapons, with Stewie using science-fiction themed guns and golf clubs, and Brian opting for pistols, shotguns and a broken whiskey bottle as his melee option – you know, because he's classy.

- Mikit0707



DETAILS

Release date

October 2012

Platforms

360 / PS3

Genre

Third-person action

Developer

Heavy Iron Studios

Website

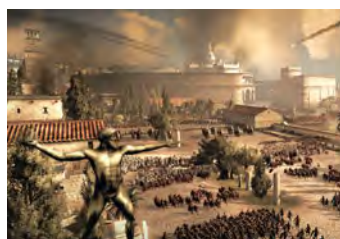
www.activision.com

Publisher

Activision

Total War: Rome II

Think you've seen large scale Total War before? Think again.



The content demoed showed the siege and destruction of Carthage in 146 BC. It's the largest city that Creative Assembly has ever recreated for a battle ground. It's a little sad watching the whole thing burn.



DETAILS

Release date

TBA 2013

Platforms

PC

Genre

Strategy

Developer

The Creative Assembly

Website

www.totalwar.com

Publisher

SEGA



By the time *Total War: Rome II* releases next year, it'll have been nine years since the original *Rome: Total War* debuted. According to James Russell, the lead designer for the *Total War* franchise, the *Rome* series is the one that gets the most requests for a sequel. Needless to say, fans of *Total War* are pretty damn excited for *Rome II*.

Creative Assembly has more than 100 people working on the game. They also have a budget that is roughly 40% bigger than any they've ever had. This has allowed the team to develop a new graphics engine with which to power a much larger and more ambitious *Rome II*. During the behind-closed-doors session at Gamescom, NAG was shown "pre-pre-alpha" content, but it was all live gameplay. The scale is breath-taking as you can zoom out to see battles with thousands of troops, or zoom right in to see the individual faces of your units complete with expressions and emotions.

The over-world, turn-based portion of the series makes a return, and Creative Assembly intends to focus on the political rivalry that existed between families at the time. It'll be up to you to guide Rome and keep in favour with the senate. Various historical figures will make an appearance as will many of the pivotal moments in Rome's history.

- Mikit0707

WRC

FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

3

2012 OFFICIAL VIDEOGAME



For PlayStation®3, PlayStation®Vita, Xbox 360® and PC.



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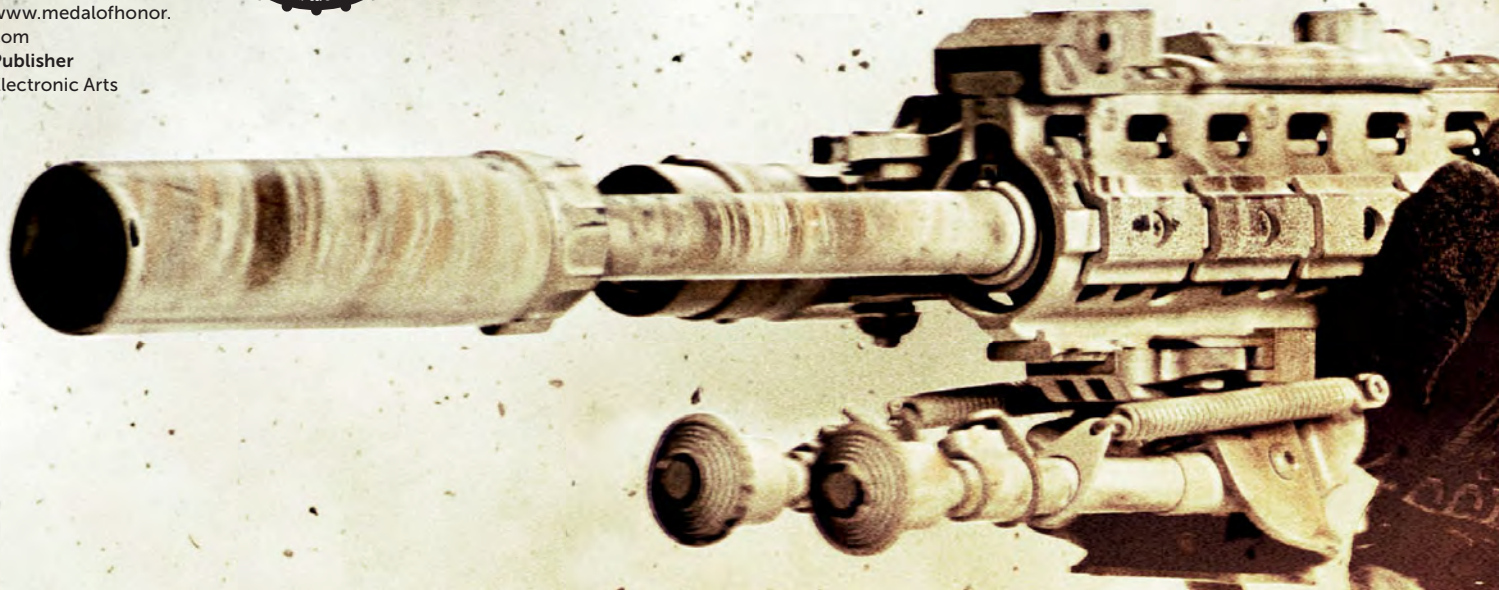
- Xbox LIVE CLAW Avatar Prop – An exclusive avatar prop, deployable to a dashboard near you.
- Xbox LIVE Zombies Avatar Costume – Show off your pride with an avatar costume built exclusively for fans of the Call of Duty undead.

PS3 VERSION INCLUDES:

- PlayStation 3 Multiplayer Theme – Turn your menu screen into a scenic view of Turbine, a map set in the rocks and shadows of a 2025 Middle Eastern wind farm.
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Release Date
26 October 2012
Platforms
360 / PC / PS3
Genre
First-person shooter
Developer
Danger Close
Website
www.medalofhonor.com
Publisher
Electronic Arts



ONCE
MORE
WITH
FEELING



In 2010, EA released a reboot of the *Medal of Honor* franchise. The game was met with mixed opinions – more than likely a result of the market at the time. A year prior to its release, Activision had released *Modern Warfare 2*, the sequel to a game that had already proven the world was tired of historical military shooters. The zeitgeist of the first-person shooter playing masses had been irrevocably changed, and any publisher not following the trend could have been construed as failing to keep up. Perhaps rather unfairly, when EA announced the release of a *Medal of Honor* reboot based on contemporary global events, it was not uncommon for those already enraptured by *Modern Warfare 2* to cry “copycat”. It didn’t help that *Medal of Honor 2010*’s multiplayer was no match for the ludicrously popular offerings of *Modern Warfare 2*. As such, Danger Close’s *Medal of Honor* reboot lacked the longevity required to keep it in the gaming public’s consciousness – an unfortunate situation considering how enjoyable the single-player campaign was. Shirking the Hollywood blockbuster styled action sequences common to the *Modern Warfare* series, *Medal of Honor* opted for a more subdued approach with feet firmly planted in authenticity and probable military scenarios. It was a treat for gamers who were looking for believable immersion in a contemporary military shooter, as it was based on the war in Afghanistan rather than improbable military doomsday scenarios.

Two years on and Danger Close is poised to release a direct sequel to their 2010 reboot,

but they’ve headed into the development with the strengths and weaknesses of the previous game at the forefront of their minds. They’ve been working on *Medal of Honor: Warfighter* since work on the 2010 *Medal of Honor* wrapped up. Studio head Greg Goodrich is not shy in admitting that the development of *Medal of Honor 2010* wasn’t without its difficulties primarily because there were two studios working on two different aspects of the game, each with a different game engine. For *Warfighter*, Danger Close is developing every aspect of the sequel including the multiplayer. They’ve expanded their team and they’ve head-hunted a sizable collection of developers to lend them a hand – including people from Treyarch (one of the many *Call of Duty* developers and the team currently working on *Call of Duty: Black Ops II*). For Goodrich, “it’s one team with one clear creative vision and obviously one engine, so it’s allowed us to create this one-game-many-parts feel.” Of course, that “one engine” is the phenomenal Frostbite 2.

The events of the single-player campaign will revolve around two playable characters: Stump and Preacher, the latter of which some will remember from 2010’s *Medal of Honor*. After his deployment overseas and upon returning home to the US, Preacher finds that his family has fallen apart. Once a terrorist threat (fuelled by an explosive called PETN) penetrates US borders, Preacher and other soldiers are forced to fight for their loved ones. The basic premise is supposed to represent a collision of worlds, as the soldiers’ families that used to be safe at home now find themselves on the battlefield, so to speak. The core theme of the plot is sacrifice, and Danger Close is being fastidious in their careful treatment of the subject matter. Central to the developer’s design ethos is respect for global military personnel who have all made sacrifices in some way or another. It’s a sensitive subject for the “very closed community” that makes up the families of military people, but after spending some time with Goodrich and other key members of Danger Close, it is abundantly clear that they feel honoured to be able to tell these stories with the blessing of the US military community.

Instead of setting the bulk of the game in a single country, the plot will send the player to various hotspots across the globe. Judging by



HANDS ON



SPECIAL FORCES



SASR



JTF2



KSK



FSK/HJK



GROM



GRUPPA ALFA



UDT/SEALSSIG



SOG (SSG/SIG)



SAS



U.S. NAVY SEALS
SFOD-D / OGA

the snippets of *Warfighter* shown off so far, it looks like they've added a liberal dash of *Battlefield 3*'s action-packed scenarios. Whether that's a good or a bad thing will depend on your opinion of the previous game's single-player campaign.

During development, more than 30 active and retired Tier 1 Operatives provided Danger Close with first-hand accounts and information on what it's like to be amongst the world's most skilled military individuals. Central to any Tier 1 Operative's work is their fireteam buddy. Those working alongside Danger Close kept reiterating how connected fireteam buddies become during real-world missions. Apparently, fireteam partners become so in sync with one another that they almost know exactly what their buddy is going to do before they've even done it.

At Gamescom 2012, Danger Close showcased their multiplayer component. Two-man fireteams have been introduced to *Warfighter*'s multiplayer. In any multiplayer match, the maximum player count is set to 20, with each side comprising a maximum of five fireteams of two players each. This sixth-sense connectedness that exists between real-world Operatives has translated into gameplay mechanics as well: you'll always be able to see your fireteam buddy as they're permanently outlined in a faint green glow, even through walls.

"Home Run" was the new multiplayer mode shown to press during behind-close-doors sessions at Gamescom. Danger Close describes the new mode as one that's "near and dear to [their] hearts." It's a streamlined take on capture the flag that's played on levels with tight confines. The match was made up of ten rounds and each side had two fireteam pairs making the match a four-versus-four competition. An attacking team had to capture one

of two flags being protected by the defending team. Once a flag was captured, the attacking team needed to hightail it back home with the flag in tow – hence "home run". There are no respawns in Home Run, meaning careful planning is a must and fireteam buddies become all the more valuable. Support Actions were also deactivated, forcing players to rely on traditional skill. After five rounds, attackers and defenders switched.

During the hands-on, Danger Close kept emphasising their design decisions in developing Home Run: they're targeting an eSports uptake. It's not difficult to imagine the eSports collective picking up the game mode; it's fast, spectator-friendly and rather similar to *Counter-Strike*. What's more, with full Battlog integration in *Warfighter*, following multiplayer communities and stat-tracking profiles will add to that competitive culture.

Multiplayer will ship with six classes: the Assualter (an all-rounder, soldier class); Point Man (a frontline recon class); Heavy Gunner; Spec Ops (the fastest class); Sniper; and Demolition Unit. Each class has three levels of Support Actions that can be charged through usual multiplayer actions like accumulating kills or capturing flags.

Additionally, there are twelve Tier 1 Operatives to choose from ten different countries (three hail from the US). With twelve different operatives and six different classes, there are 72 character options to bring into multiplayer. Some of the different operators will bring unique weaponry to that particular class depending on their country; so for example, the German KSK Heavy Gunner carries the MG4, whereas as the British SAS Heavy Gunner carries an M240. Players will be free to create their own two-man fireteam using any combination of these Tier 1 Operatives – personal choice is another multiplayer cornerstone for Danger Close.

It's clear that Danger Close is taking *Warfighter*'s multiplayer very seriously. They're targeting the eSports community, creating a more focussed experience built around the two-man fireteam concept, and their inclusion of Tier 1 Operatives hailing from different countries is meant to foster local pride and patriotism on the online battlefield. Don't worry, local gamers will be able to represent South Africa despite no official SA Operative being offered for multiplayer – find out how in the interview with Greg Goodrich. **NAG**



If your fireteam partner is killed, you'll have a moment to kill his aggressor. If you succeed, your partner will instantly respawn at your side. It's an interesting twist that makes opponents a little trickier to eliminate.



Tier 1 Operatives are specialised members of the US armed forces. They come from different US divisions, including: Delta Force, the NAVY SEALs and the 24th Special Tactics Squadron from the US Air Force. They're used for unconventional missions and are overseen by the United States Special Operations Command, or SOCOM.

“...IT IS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT [DANGER CLOSE] FEEL HONOURED TO BE ABLE TO TELL THESE STORIES WITH THE BLESSING OF THE US MILITARY COMMUNITY.”



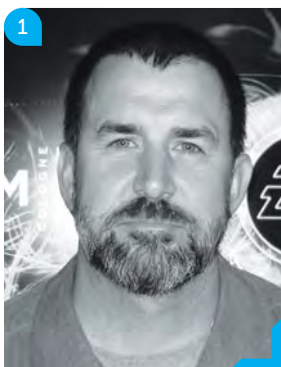
PETN or Pentaerythritol tetranitrate is a plastic explosive that's been used by terrorists. It's easy to conceal and has been hidden in things like shoes and underpants.



GREG GOODRICH INTERVIEW

MEDAL OF HONOR: WARFIGHTER

At Gamescom 2012, NAG sat down to chat with Danger Close's studio head **1 Greg Goodrich**. Greg is passionate about all things military and he and his team have relished the opportunity to work alongside some of the world's top Tier 1 Operatives while developing *Medal of Honor: Warfighter*. Joining Greg in our interview was a retired Operative called **2 Tyler** – his surname was purposefully withheld for his security – yikes!



NAG: You guys have jumped from Unreal Engine 3 to Frostbite 2. This is the first time Danger Close has used Frostbite – how was the transition?

GG: Umm, I've said it: Frostbite is a beast – it's a powerful, powerful beast and we just tried to tame it. With any technology change there are challenges, but we're learning and people have seen the look [of *Warfighter*] and I think we've done pretty well with the technology.

NAG: Your favourite feature that you've implemented from the engine?

GG: Oh man, just the sheer scale of things, and the visuals, clearly. Oh and the animation system allows us to have some pretty cool looking movements, and that's just all a part of Frostbite 2. We get guys like Tyler suited up for doing the actual motion-capture for us – you can spend a lot of time and effort trying to train a stunt man on how to move or how to act like an operator, but if you can actually get operators in the suits doing the motion-capture, it looks like nothing else. They've lived it and they've done it their entire careers and it's just natural.

NAG: For Medal of Honor 2010, the single-player and multiplayer were developed by different teams.

GG: Yeah, we're doing it all in-house now at Danger Close in L.A. We've spent a lot of time bolstering our multiplayer effort and we've got a lot of DNA from other studios. A lot of members from DICE actually came over. Kristoff Bergqvist is our creative director for multiplayer and he is from the *Battlefield* team. But you know, we're putting our own spin on it and we've got a lot of talent from the L.A. development scene.

NAG: You've got some guys from Treyarch helping you now?

GG: Yeah, yeah we've got quite a

few. So we've really just bolstered that effort because we know we've got a lot to prove in multiplayer.

NAG: You've got Linkin Park coming back for Warfighter!

GG: Yes! How awesome? We worked with them on *The Catalyst* and did a gameplay trailer with Joe Hahn directing, but that wasn't the official music video for that song. This time around they came in real early, I pitched them the story, they went away and then came back a few months later with this song called *Castle of Glass*. It's a fantastic song – it speaks with the same tones and to the same community that we touch on in the game. It's about a warrior's life and the sacrifices that are being made overseas and at home. And so then we were asked to create the official music video for *Castle of Glass*. This time it'll be a mix of live-action, gameplay and the band.

NAG: When is that video out?

GG: It'll be out in October. We haven't set exactly when but it's coming in October. But on top of the music video, Mike Shinoda is scoring two levels of the game along with Ramin Djawadi, who returns as the composer from the last game. So that's cool for Linkin Park fans because it's all new stuff that has never been heard before and has been made especially for *Warfighter*.

NAG: One of the hallmarks of the Medal of Honor franchise is authenticity. How have you guys ramped that up?

GG: We've gone really deep into the weapons systems and the tactical nylon gear. We've been working with two dozen partners or so. We've been working with them to get the gear right. Also, the story was written by two soldiers while they were deployed overseas, so you get a very authentic feel to the storyline as well as the battle-chatter, the dialogue, the locations, the tactics. So yeah, the original manuscript was written by them while they were stationed overseas in 2006. We've brought all the *Medal of Honor* goodness [to the story] as well and have combined the two to make what we have now. And then having Tyler on board fulltime as a producer on the game has proven absolutely invaluable. You know, to have someone who has lived the life be there in the studio to help us on a daily basis to get things right from a tonality aspect as well; making sure that we're portraying the [military] guys in the proper light and not misrepresenting anything.

NAG: One of things we loved in the 2010 Medal of Honor was the sound.

GG: Yeah, that was Erik Kraber and his team. Erik is the only guy left – he's our audio director and he's been on every single *Medal of Honor* ever made. He gets



BELOW: The soldiers went in two-by-two. The two-man fireteam concept is now integral to the game's online component. Pick a buddy, team up and keep each other alive.



it and he understands it; he's sort of the heartbeat of our franchise and he's done a great job through the years. He's also won every award possible for audio and mixing. Even when it comes down to the dialogue, music, score and everything – he's just incredible.

NAG: Could you tell us more about the meta-game that was announced at EA's press event during Gamescom?

GG: You know, when we came out and chose the twelve Tier 1 units from ten nations for the multiplayer, everyone was like: "cool, where's my country?" Clearly we can't do them all and so we devised this meta-game where you essentially win tokens by playing and doing deeds on the battlefield, and then you can go to our social network, Battlelog, and spend those tokens to represent whatever nation you want to fight for. There are 193 in total – all of the United Nations, essentially.

NAG: So Tyler, is this the first video game you've been involved with? How was the experience?

Tyler: Yep, it's been really good. For me I happened to be in the military but before that and during that I was a gamer. When I got the opportunity to give my input on a first-person shooter game which I've played since, hell, since they came out, it was a really awesome moment. To have any kind of involvement in the industry was a really awesome opportunity and it definitely changed my perspective from just playing games to seeing the work that goes into them. I didn't realise the amount of work that goes into a game – it's pretty unbelievable. Especially for a first-person shooter because of the multiplayer and the amount of work that goes into balancing that. It's just mindboggling. It's been an awesome experience to learn what's behind the curtain and to be able to give my input and my opinion as a military person, but also as a gamer.

NAG: Speaking of logistics, *Danger Close* dealt with a lot of Tier 1 Operatives to get their input throughout development?

GG: Yeah, a little over 30 of them. In the last game we had about half a dozen and it was a great success. We took care of that trust that was given to us the first time around, and so for *Warfighter*, more guys just started showing up. At first, [the military] is a very closed community and they'd much rather have you just leave them alone. They're quiet professionals and so it took a long time to build that trust and to get them in the building, but once they came in and saw what we were doing and understood our intent, and then once the game came out and really spoke to that community and paid tribute to them, it was at that point that guys started coming out of the woodworks to offer their help on the next game. It's been great to have both the Navy and the Army side, as well as the OGA [Other Government Agencies – think CIA] side; they gave us all sorts of viewpoints and perspectives. There are commonalities and traits that they all share, but there're also those little differences that make up these individual units. Little things that you don't really even expect like if a Navy guy is engaging a target on the second floor he'll say "upper-deck" whereas an Army guy would say "second-floor"; "check" versus "roger" and that sort of stuff. So we've tried to infuse that wherever we can and have the guys saying what they should in the proper places.

NAG: Tyler, regarding your contribution to the game, what aspects are you most proud of?

Tyler: I think the ability to show within the storyline the sacrifice that's still happening today. I'm retired, but there's still a whole ton of my friends who are still going through that steamroller of a lifestyle that bulldozes over everything. So just being able to show that in a game. For me the best part would be to have a kid play it whose dad or mom keeps deploying overseas, and maybe for that kid, through the game, to understand a little bit better about the sacrifice – to realise that this is what his parents are doing when they're gone. If there's any kind of education or awareness that's raised with anyone in general, but especially a kid for me, that seems like a very worthy cause.

GG: Yeah, one of the guys we worked with on *Medal of Honor* 2010 played through that game twice with his son, level by level. He was in that fight. Since it was so authentic and inspired by the best traits of a lot of those soldiers, he said his son was like, on every level, "Hey dad, do you know this guy?" And he would just have to say, "Yeah I know that guy." It helped the son connect to what his dad did overseas. **NAG**

- Mikit0707

“WE’VE GONE REALLY DEEP INTO THE WEAPONS SYSTEMS AND THE TACTICAL NYLON GEAR. WE’VE BEEN WORKING WITH TWO DOZEN PARTNERS OR SO. WE’VE BEEN WORKING WITH THEM TO GET THE GEAR RIGHT.”

REVIEWS INTRO

When making an omelette it's okay to break a few eggs. What they don't tell you is that sometimes you find rotten eggs – meet your reviewing team.

Tell everyone a secret, something not commonly known about you. Keep it clean; remember your parents read NAG too.



RedTide

Easy one... I don't have any qualifications at all to do this job. No course in grammar, spelling, or even how to do good sentences. All you need to command is a loud clear voice.



Miktar

I've lived in seven different countries, went to over 11 primary-schools, five high-schools, one middle-school, at one point could speak four languages, and I have a Diploma in Digital Art and Animation.



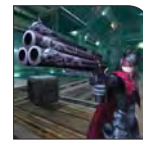
Azimuth

I've never played *System Shock*. PLEASE DON'T FIRE ME.



Mikit0707

I can't go near Queenstown airport because I once got drunk and sprinted down the runway naked. I'm not making this up. It's no great loss because, well, it's Queenstown.



GeometriX

I have never finished *Final Fantasy VII*, despite it being one of my favourite games of all time.



Barkskin

I used to be a comic book super villain. I got kicked out of the mega-exclusive Comic Book Super Villain Club because I'm incapable of choosing evil dialogue choices.

MINIREVIEWS

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

HYBRID

Hybrid is an online shooter with a catch: you don't have freedom of movement, but rather jetpack between clusters of cover distributed around symmetrical levels. There's a learning curve, but it makes *Hybrid* rather refreshing.

Matches take place between two factions: Paladins and Variants, with a maximum of three people per team. Combat can be frenetic, which sometimes results in multiplayer matches that last less than a minute. It's multiplayer gaming for people with a limited appetite for online interaction, and I think that's why I enjoyed it. I never felt penalized for not working with my team. The concise nature of matches means you can do your own thing and still make significant contributions to winning the round.

There's also a persistent map meta-game that plays out in seasons. At the start you're asked to pick a faction (they're the same aside from aesthetics) and then you're given the map to pick a warzone. The faction that wins the majority of matches in that warzone gains 20 Dark Matter points towards season victory. Once a faction



wins 100 Dark Matter points, the season ends, the map resets and a new season starts. It's a neat idea that gives every match a feeling of contributing to a larger war effort.

75

RESONANCE

This new title from the stables of "indie publisher" Wadjet Eye and developer Vince Twelve sees players taking on the roles of four characters as they attempt to stop a powerful scientific device from falling into the wrong hands. The setup is simple, but the game plays out in a way that is both unique and sometimes painfully clunky – probably because it's unique.

Resonance uses a combination of regular dialogue options for chatting with characters and a mix of short-term and long-term memory for each player. STMs can be captured from the environment by dragging in any object with which you can interact; LTM's are granted at key points in the story. The result of this system is a modern conversion of the text parser that lets you ask other characters about literally anything in the game. And, like the humble text parser, it leads to a lot of guesswork and a potentially irritating experience when you get stuck.

It has its problems, but *Resonance* is an otherwise well put-together adventure game that's not afraid to take risks. Thankfully, that's what this industry is there for.

70

“Hey ball sack, *Jagged Alliance* is not an Apex game, it’s a Silverscreen game.”

– Name withheld



Ramjet

I have no secrets... but it is a little known fact that I have ambitions towards owning a bonsai nursery. My other obsession...



SAVAGE

I was a great fast bowler in high school; it’s how I got my nickname SAVAGE, which has stuck with me till today. Be afraid.



ShockG

Out of all the extracurricular activities I did during my tenure at school, there was none I was more dedicated to than the choir/music group.

WEBScores

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

BORDERLANDS 2

NAG: 94
Metacritic: N/A
Gamerankings: N/A

DARKSIDERS II

NAG: 92
Metacritic: 84
Gamerankings: 85

DUST: AN ELYSIAN TAIL

NAG: 90
Metacritic: 83
Gamerankings: 83

GUILD WARS 2

NAG: 95
Metacritic: 93
Gamerankings: 92

LEGENDS OF PEGASUS

NAG: 40
Metacritic: 36
Gamerankings: 30

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

NAG: 80
Metacritic: 78
Gamerankings: 78

RESIDENT EVIL 6

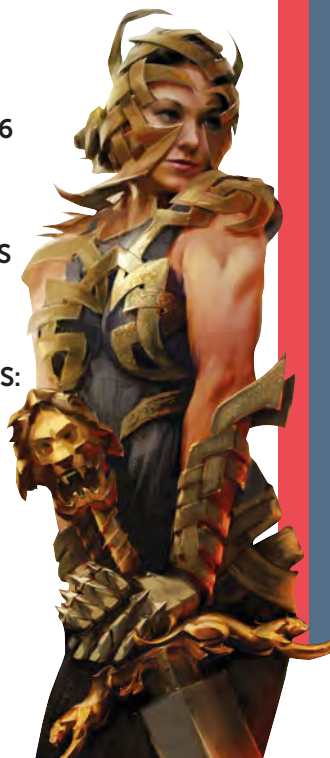
NAG: 58
Metacritic: xx
Gamerankings: xx

SLEEPING DOGS

NAG: 87
Metacritic: 80
Gamerankings: 81

TRANSFORMERS: FALL OF CYBERTRON

NAG: 80
Metacritic: 80
Gamerankings: 81



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.

Borderlands 2

This ain't no place for no hero

This is an easy review to write. Just tell the *Borderlands* fanatics what they want to hear – how absolutely sweetly awesome this game is and how they're going to love the Claptrap out of it and be done. Just make sure you keep it unbiased and for the sake of professionalism try and find a few things wrong with it.

The first part is easy; this is *Borderlands 2* and Gearbox is doing it so it's easy to love. Hands up if you've been gushing over the videos, and who hasn't been drooling over that sexy collector's edition loot box? Of course if you missed out on the first game you'll be wondering what all the fuss is about. So let's get started here, at the end of the first *Borderlands*.

In the first game your character is a vault hunter, hunting for a vault of treasure on the planet Pandora (no, not the one from *Avatar*). You could choose to play one of four different character types and one of the game's big features was having millions of guns. The game's graphics use illustrative/cel-shading/cartoon-like (pick one) styling, giving the world and characters a unique look. Besides all the technical stuff, *Borderlands* has heaps of humour and outlandish flair. It was a shooter at heart but the ever improving weapons and upgrades meant it was also a bit of a RPG. It was amazing and sold millions and scored highly (92 in *NAG* December 2009).

Borderlands 2 picks up a short while after the original vault was opened and we now find there is another vault that a nasty asshole called Handsome Jack of the Hyperion Corporation is trying to open. Again there are four different character types to select (including a fifth if you pre-ordered the game). The same graphical style has been used but the

last three years have been kind to the game engine. If you have the right kind of card you can turn on the NVIDIA PhysX and enjoy the way material shreds, water flows and explosions explode. Not only will you need to shield your eyes from the particles swirling around your head but you'll also need to pay attention to the extra detail all over the place. Compared to this new Pandora, the original feels barren. There are new environments; the starkest being the ice and snow levels and the green toxic goo maps. You can also find idyllic city bits, desert bits and rocky mountain bits. There are underground bunkers and floating cities and you'll even get to see Claptrap's "home". If that's not enough then pop past Fink's Slaughter house and see how many waves of enemies you can crush while some epic techno/rave music keeps the adrenaline pumping. The city of Sanctuary is your base of operations and where you'll find a few familiar faces from the original game. It's a new city with a new name but it really feels just like home. In case you're wondering – you will benefit if you played the original, but it's not essential and the game makes more than enough sense to keep newcomers interested. It's just that much better if you've been to Pandora before – the developers have taken what seems to be a great deal of time and pleasure making veterans feel at home.

Other new things in the game include Eridium, a mineral on the planet that affects almost everything in the game in varying degrees. In some instances it's abused to mutate animals into more deadly versions and in others to add a little spark to the weapons. There is also a new dealer in town that will take Eridium off your hands to upgrade your backpack and ammunition capacity. The mineral can now

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / PC / PS3

Genre

First-person shooter

Age restriction
18

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

4 players

Developer

Gearbox

Software

Website

www.
borderlands2.
com

Publisher

2K Games

Distributor

Megarom





The characters in the game world are what really make it fun and interesting. The voice acting, characters, events, problems and solutions all work together to bring the player a vividly imagined world.



be found all over Pandora – it seems opening that vault had far greater implications than anyone imagined. There is a bar in Sanctuary run by Moxxi from the original *Borderlands* DLC, *Mad Moxxi's Underdome Riot*. In the bar you can play the slot machines and win everything from new guns to bars of Eridium.

Each of the four characters has an upgradable ability; Axton (the commando), for example, has a turret. With each level up you can unlock or increase the potency of new abilities for the turret such as greater accuracy or the ability to mount on any surface. There are multiple locked pathways for the upgrades and there's something to suit all playing styles. If you don't like what you've unlocked you can always reset the allocated points for a small fee. But that's not all; as you kill bad guys and monsters you unlock badass points which you can use to improve your shield recharge rate or how much melee damage you cause. The increments are small but you keep them after you've finished the game so eventually all those small percentages add up.



Other sequel changes look like this: Players can change their look (face), outfit and name; there is a new vehicle type to unlock; you can store items in a vault; you can leave items for your other characters in a special Claptrap safe; there is a new elemental effect called slag. Enemies covered in slag are easier to kill (this works for the other way around too). Essentially, for a sequel, there are many tweaks and additions and things you'll be discovering deep into the game. It all feels very refined and tested and complete. Along with all these improvements and new ideas it's really just more of the same *Borderlands* goodness that made the original so popular. The developers have been smart and haven't messed around with the formula – it's more of the same but much better.

- 1 So... Do you come here often?
- 2 See this guy here. Shoot him in the face. That's the whole mission. Not in the knee, just the face.
- 3 Godly guns like this will make you think you've broken the game they're so deadly.

SO WHAT'S IT LIKE REALLY?

It'll take you around 30 hours to finish the main campaign (including about 10% of the side-missions). If you play it properly and take it slow you're looking at around 40-50+ hours. The game shows its guts and genius in the side-missions so if you're planning on rushing it, don't bother. You'll find yourself arranging a twisted tea party that ends with a little torture, you'll grapple with an AI system that keeps lying to you and Claptrap will ask you to collect 139,377 brown rocks because you're his minion. But that's not all; if you turn in your mission to different NPC, you will get different rewards.

The characters in the game world are what really make it fun and interesting. The voice acting, characters, events, problems and solutions all work together to bring the player a vividly imagined world. It feels very real and very dysfunctional with the kind of depth that'll have you thinking it runs by itself while you're at work and dealing with real life. There is good humour around all the corners, none of it feels forced and there's never a mission that won't have you smiling or shaking your head in disbelief at what you've just done, heard or seen. The story is simple enough but the magic is in how it's told. The bazillion guns thing is all true. No two guns are the same in *Borderlands 2*, they look, feel, sound and even function differently and sometimes, if you're lucky, you'll find a gun that makes you feel like you've broken the game. It'll have you smirking and looking around to see who's watching as you effortlessly kill enemies that two minutes ago were making you cry. The upgrades are generous and each mission will see you



4 The rare *Borderlands 2* treasure goblin – hard to kill but so worth it.

5 Cute as a button, deadlier than a sack full of cobras.

6 The game is stuffed full of new and old monsters. Some even have complex (and deadly) life cycles.



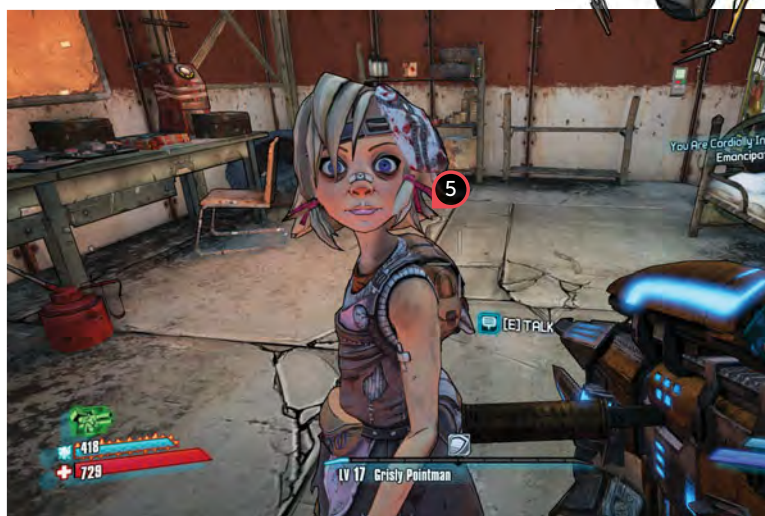
upgrading some part of your equipment and if not it's because you just prefer the way a certain sniper rifle feels. It's really quite amazing how all this variety feels so natural. A bazillion is no exaggeration. Hell, it's even got its own treasure goblins.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT?

This is going to be a very short read. There's nothing really wrong with the game. In fact, not a single tiny bug cropped up anywhere during the first play through which is a remarkable achievement. If you're looking hard for problems you can start with enemy intelligence – it's basic and predictable so the only real challenge comes from overwhelming numbers of bad guys or sheer brute force and armour points. Flying enemies come at you in predictable patterns and you just have to wait for heads to pop up when sniping. Ammunition can get scarce if you try and use all the different ammunition types in one session instead of focusing on two or three. This does get a little tiresome on longer missions, but thankfully save points are plentiful and there are plenty little boxes all over the game world filled with stuff. The new user interface is a little confusing to use initially but gets the job done if you persevere. But again, this is just looking hard for problems and nothing negatively detracts from the overall experience.

Borderlands 2 will have you grinning from the opening cinematic until the crazy fight at the end. The whole experience is a work of wonder and a labour of love. Everything in the game has been done for a reason, it's intelligently designed, fun to play and will leave you wanting more. It also achieves all these feats effortlessly. There's no need to tell gamers to buy it because it's already probably on pre-order. Well done Gearbox, you guys rocked this one hard like we knew you would. **NAG**

- RedTide



94 *Borderlands 2* is the perfect sequel. It's fun, witty, exciting, addictive, and compelling and stuns with smart choices and snappy design. It's a work of art and a labour of love and as many other positive clichés you can think of. More importantly – it's better than the original.

PLUS

Characterisation / Side-missions / Story telling
You can play it again

MINUS

Ammunition can be scarce / Predictable enemies / It ends

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Resident Evil 6

Now with more sniper rifles!

As gaming journalists, we usually try to adopt as neutral as possible a stance when reviewing a game. After all, not all of our readers are into genre X or game franchise Y, but the pure loathing for the *Resident Evil* brand that has grown on me over the course of playing *Resi 6* cannot be ignored. However, in the interest of fairness and warm feelings, I will attempt to review *Resi 6* as both the seasoned, long-standing fan of the series I am, and a bright-eyed, bushytailed newbie who's never touched the series. Let's see how this turns out...

Wow, look at all the cool graphics! This game is sick! Aw yiss, you can klap an oke in the face with the butt of your sniper rifle! Hey, I'm like a guy with big triceps now; what happened to that emo guy? Doesn't matter, I just killed like my hundredth zombie. I mean J'avo (you can pronounce it "Jay Avo" for laughs; it's meant to be "Juavo"), this minute. That one even had a sniper rifle of his own. Hey, those guys just rappelled in through the ceiling, just like in *Call of Duty*! And that guy is shooting at my APC with an RPG-7! Man, I'm totally gonna blow up the bridge in this grey and bizarrely linear war-torn city with all this C4 I have so I can kill that tank that's being driven by a zombie. Flip, this game is hella cool.

Are you sold yet? Me neither, and I think I just shed about a million brain cells. Well then, with those few that I have

DETAILS

Platforms
360 / PC / PS3

Genre
Action

Age restriction
18

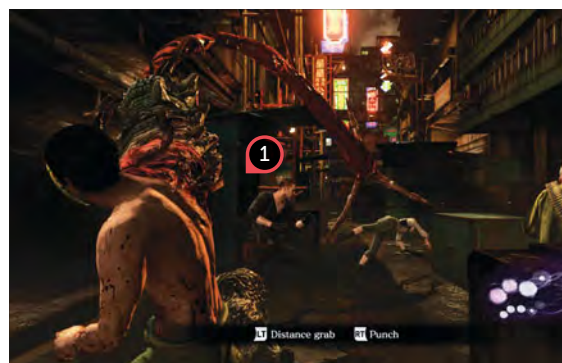
Multiplayer
Local
2 players
Online
4 players

Developer
Capcom

Website
www.residentevil.com/6

Publisher
Capcom

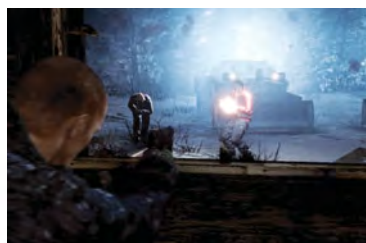
Distributor
Ster Kinekor Games



1 In addition to split-screen or online co-operative play for the campaigns, *Resi 6* includes two multiplayer modes. Horde defence mode The Mercenaries has made a return, which is always good for a laugh, and Agent Hunt Mode allows you to join in a friend's game to play as the infected. Neat! Additional multiplayer modes will be made available after launch as premium DLC.




"OMG is that what my farts smell like?!"



left I can continue, and I'll start by saying that the above is probably how Capcom envisioned their audience would respond to this sad excuse for a *Resident Evil* game.

If you've been paying attention to our preview coverage, you should know by now that *Resi 6* is made up of four campaigns (the last one is a secret... shh!) and takes place after the events of *RE 5*. So, it's a continuation of the series, if you want to insist we call it something, but its narrative is almost entirely disconnected from the rapidly withering root from which it grows. And, unlike *Resi 5*, which traded survival for action yet actually managed to deepen the lore of the series, *Resident Evil 6* has just two saving graces: it *does* look damn good (animations, textures, lightning, cinematography – the works), and the first campaign – in which you play as Leon and Helena, isn't terrible. Okay, that last part was a partial lie, but I am trying to be fair here. Most of the campaign is decent enough – it includes a number of tastefully handled throwbacks to the series that *Resi* used to be, including a few clever but easy puzzles and brief moments of exploration of both the physical area and the narrative – but that all sort of falls away the second you realise you're just farming zombies and crates for enough ammo and herbs to kill the next giant boss.

Also, explosions. Lots of them. In their campaign, Chris 

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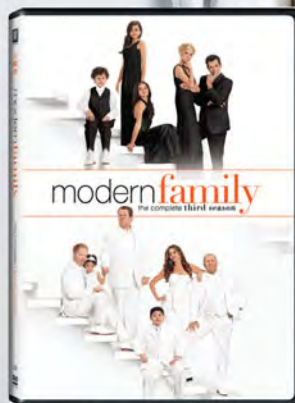
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and his effeminate partner Piers (who we're meant to believe is a hard-ass military guy because he once tells an even more snivelling soldier to "suck it up") blow up things all the time when they're not comparing tricep sizes in the shower (that doesn't actually happen... that we can confirm). They also sometimes do that thing where they jump away as things blow up behind them. What heroes.

Then there's Jake and Sherry, both of whom are playable for the first time in the series (Jake's entirely new, but as the 20-something year-old son of Albert Wesker we assume he's been around for some time, probably sulking in his room while daddy attempted to destroy the world instead of buying him the latest Bullet for my Valentine album). Sherry is the most bubbly and happy-go-lucky security agent you've ever seen in a game, and Jake is a mercenary with a spider badge on his arm and a scar on his face – he also tries to act as tough as the character designers obviously want him to be, which results in some comical "serious" moments between the parts where you're bashing in the



2 While we wouldn't usually be as presumptuous as to recommend a difficulty level for you to play at, if you do pick up this game, we strongly suggest that you try Veteran or higher. At least that way, regular encounters with the Jay Avos actually require a bit of effort.



head of a Jay Avo with your bare hands and stomping them to dust with your big boy army boots.

Gosh, I'm running out of space. I could fill this last paragraph with more things that irritate me about *Resident Evil 6*, like the snap-to cover system that snaps-to a little more often than any sensible person would like; or the fact that there's barely enough depth to the story to cover a single campaign, let alone four; or the fact that the story designers just assumed the players would readily accept whatever drivel they spewed forth because they've thrown in vaguely familiar terms like "C-Virus" and "Neo-Umbrella" without taking the time to come up with any reasoning other than "this man is evil!"; or the fact that what little back story they have bothered to write up has been stashed away in an arbitrary menu instead of even attempting to integrate it into the narrative; or the awful, *stupid* AI of absolutely every character in the game except for the apparently expert snipers fourteen miles away; or the blatantly cheap shots that the bosses take that knock you down to a single block of health; or... **NAG**

- GeometriX

58 This is more than just an average action game or a shameful *Resident Evil*; this is a prime example of what is so wrong with the big publisher, AAA mentality in this industry. *RE 6* does nothing but take the piss out of the customers who either expect it to be another excellent *Resi* game because of its title, or a sweet action game because of its visuals. *Resident Evil 6* is neither.

PLUS

Looks incredible / Leon's campaign is only half bad / Cool multiplayer modes

MINUS

Lacking narrative / Poorly implemented copycat game mechanics / This is no *Resident Evil*



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

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



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Guild Wars 2



The next generation of MMORPG, and it's about damn time too.

An unordered list of things *Guild Wars 2* does right would fill the word quota for this review several times over. It's not a drastic and dramatic upheaval of established convention, but rather thousands of small, smart refinements that all add up to an experience that feels fresh, vital and above all else: like it's not wasting your time.

There is no monthly fee. This removes the artificial impetus companies use to try and get you to pay for another month of subscription. You're free to play as much, or as little, as you want. There's no rush, no curve to try and stay ahead of. You don't need to find quest givers, things just happen in the world and you choose to participate or not, and are rewarded appropriately. The dynamic nature of events often form part of a cascade: a mortar team leaves a camp and if undefended may fail to take out an invading force, which then invades and takes over the camp, changing what happens in that area. You can revisit an area multiple times and still not see everything that can happen there.

The combat is action-based. There is a dodge button, which keeps you engaged. The eight professions are all diverse and interesting, with no dedicated healers, tanks or damage-dealing professions. All professions are capable of damage, healing themselves and others, and activating

DETAILS

Platforms

PC

Genre

Massively multiplayer online role-playing game

Age restriction

12

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

Plenty

Developer

ArenaNet

Website

guildwars2.com

Publisher

NCsoft

Distributor

Megarom



GUILD WARS VS. GUILD WARS 2

Guild Wars 2 was not designed to replace the first *Guild Wars*. The two games are also radically different in how they play. *Guild Wars* is patterned more after *Magic: The Gathering* (deck-building and skill synergies), has a low level cap of 20, and you can maintain multiple AI-driven Heroes that fill up your party, turning you into a one-person army. You collect Elite skills by finding special monsters in the world and using a Signet of Capture on them.

GW2 by contrast, has a level cap of 80, there is no skill-capturing, and you only control one character at a time. They also removed the dual-class element.

You can still play *Guild Wars* today; it's held up remarkably well and is a lot of fun with friends. By playing, you also gain points for your Hall of Monuments, which unlocks special aesthetic items for your *GW2* characters, like Heirloom armour sets, weapon skins and mini-pets.

PLAYER VS. PLAYER & WORLD VS. WORLD (VS. WORLD)

Like most MMORPGS, *Guild Wars 2* is split between Player vs. Environment (PvE) and Player vs. Player (PvP). PvE is your standard "go around questing and exploring" mode, where you fight monsters and team up with other players to raid dungeons. PvP is your competitive mode, but unlike most MMOs, *Guild Wars* keeps it a separate system.

STRUCTURED PLAYER VS. PLAYER (SPVP)

Accessible at any time and at any level, sPvP doesn't use your actual character. When you

enter "The Mists" via your Hero Panel, you're given a fully equipped level 80 version of your character with all the skills and maximum possible trait points, so you'll always be on even footing with other players. What happens in PvP stays in PvP, so instead of earning experience points you earn Glory, spent at special vendors for chests. The chests contain things that benefit your PvE character too, like time-limited experience/crafting/gathering/magic-find boosters, new colours of dye, and bags to expand your inventory. But mostly, you'll get better-

looking PvP weapons and gear.

WORLD VS. WORLD (WVW)

World vs. World is a much larger and more complex affair. Three servers, in constant competition against each other for bonuses that affect everyone on their world. When you enter WvW your character is level scaled to 80, but you only have the gear and skills you brought with you. The dynamic and huge scope of WvW is too complex to explain here. It contains so much content that it could have been sold as its own game.



1 When you completely explore a map (zone) by finding all the Renown Hearts, Points of Interest, Teleporters, and Vistas, you're rewarded with random items like Transmutation Stones that let you take the look, stats and runes from two items and combine them into a custom item of your liking.



GEMS, COIN AND KARMA

There are three types of currency in *Guild Wars 2*. Gems are bought using real money (via credit card or in-store Gem cards), and are used to purchase character slots (you start with five), bank space upgrades, inventory space upgrades, aesthetic costumes like pirate and chef outfits, packs of random dyes, varieties of boosters that increase how fast you level, and so on.

You can buy Gems using the in-game Coin currency, at fluctuating market rates based on what players sell them for. Karma however, cannot be traded or bought. The only way to gain Karma is by participating in the world, helping people out and by being active in the World vs. World mode. Many of the top-tier items, and things like cultural armours, can only be bought using Karma.



various damage-mitigation skills. When your health runs out you don't instantly die, you enter a "downed" state. You can be revived by other players or you can fight and revive yourself with a *Borderlands* style "second wind" by killing an enemy.

When you create your character you make several choices that have an impact on your Personal Story: the race you pick being only the start. Your Personal Story takes place at set intervals all the way from level 1 through to 80, and contains several meaningful branch points where your choices dramatically alter the content you see. In-between Personal Story missions, you can explore the huge persistent open world, craft items, delve dungeons, uncover hidden areas, gather crafting materials and help other players: everything rewards you, no matter what you do.

In many ways, *GW2* is a Ship of Theseus paradox. If you take something and replace all its component parts one by one, once every part has been replaced, is it still fundamentally the same object? **NAG**

- Miktar

95 It may sound hyperbolic, but *Guild Wars 2* represents a sea change for the MMORPG in every way. It takes the best ideas from the last decade of the genre, and combines them into one package. This is the new gold standard for the genre, anything less (or that costs more) is simply unacceptable.

PLUS
No monthly fees / Action-oriented combat / Encourages natural cooperation / Truckloads of content

MINUS
Requires a strong CPU (ideally quad-core)

Darksiders II

Death approaches

Darksiders II ditches War in favour of Death, rotating its roster of apocalyptic horsemen to bring a new face to new worlds. First, a quick refresher: *Darksiders I* saw War, one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, riding out at the appointed hour to herald the apocalypse but instead finds that it's been unleashed early, humanity is being obliterated in a war between heaven and hell, and War's been framed for all of it. Cue War's 100 years of imprisonment as decreed by the Charred Council, and also, *Darksiders II*. Its story runs parallel to those 100 years. You see, War's brother Death refuses to believe that War could ever be guilty of this messy business involving the premature apocalypse, and so Death rides out to find proof of his brother's innocence and resurrect humanity. It's a journey that'll take you, and Death, across numerous worlds packed with puzzles, combat and exploration that amounts to dozens of hours of adventurous action. And it does the original *Darksiders* proud.

As with the first game, *Darksiders II* is a Frankenstein's monster of gaming: a potent mix of different genres, gameplay styles and design sensibilities employed by numerous other games and franchises. In my review of the original *Darksiders*, *Legend of Zelda* and *God of War* were (and still are) the most obvious parental figures to point a finger at when asked where *Darksiders* gets its mix of brains, beauty and action. Like *Legend of Zelda*, the game's a blend of engaging environment exploration and ingenious puzzle-solving, with an overworld to travel across that's populated with countless secrets to uncover and devious dungeons to stumble your way through. And like *God of War*, the combat that's interspersed with your grand adventuring is fluidly ferocious and brilliantly gratifying.

With Death, our wiry-yet-muscular new protagonist who's

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / PC / PS3 /
Wii U

Genre

Action adventure

Age restriction

18

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Vigil Games

Website

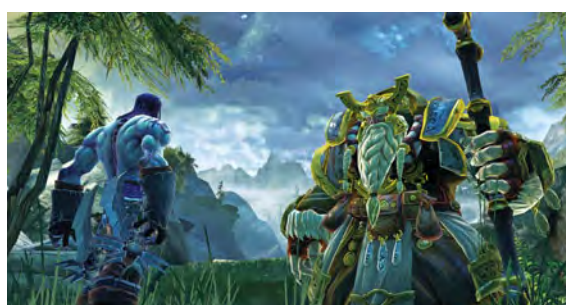
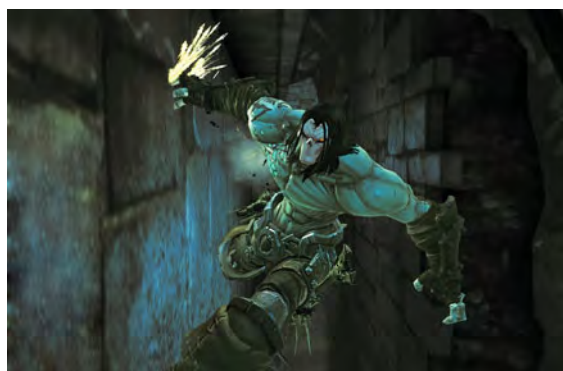
www.darksiders.com

Publisher

THQ

Distributor

Ster Kinekor
Entertainment



a bit less attached to big ol' bits of chunky armour than War is, comes a flurry of new features mixed in with the more familiar functions of War's journey. The fundamentals of *Darksiders'* formula are all still there, however. Travelling across the game's thematically varied and visually diverse worlds introduces you to a number of friendly NPCs and slightly-less-friendly beasties and bastards filled with teeth and covered in weapons who'll happily prove that Death can die if you give them the chance. The non-hostile lot will happily hand out quests and side-quests that'll reward you with experience points and Gilt (the game's currency for buying goods) upon completion. A number of merchants will gladly sell you powerful gear and buy your unwanted items – more on this in a bit. All these characters will also have a few things to say about your quest via simple dialogue trees. Some of them have special items that they desire, collectibles that they'll reward you in some way for hunting down and delivering to them.

There's a classy system of progression at work here: as Death gains experience for completing quests and slashing at angry stuff with his dual scythes, he levels up and skill points can then be spent on new abilities and improvements for existing ones, and every few levels you'll earn other cool rewards – like Death's Reaper form, which lets him take on his Grim Reaper-style alter-ego to do some serious damage to opponents once you've built up the requisite Reaper resource. ▶

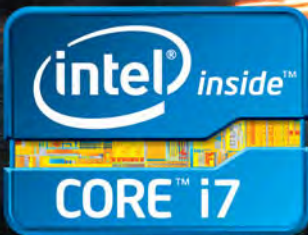
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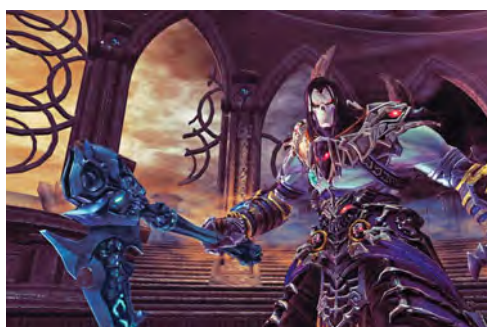
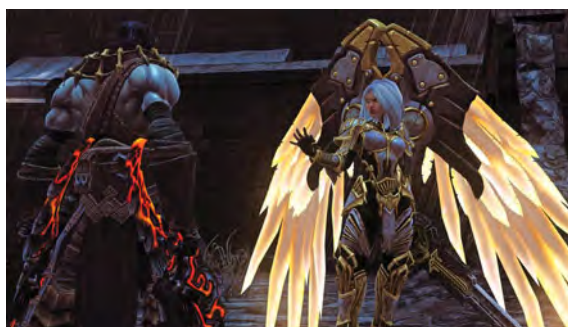
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This is in addition to his Wrath abilities, another set of powerful combat abilities that require that you build up Wrath in combat (by dealing damage) before they can be used. Then, on the side, *Darksiders II* is masquerading as a light action RPG, with a whole loot-happy system akin to those of *Diablo*, or *Sacred*, or *Whatever*. This action RPG component sees enemies and loot-bearing chests occasionally dispensing items of varying rarity across a number of different item categories, complete with stat-altering modifiers, additional damage types and even special abilities. This ties into the merchant trading above, and the system works perfectly here. I'd have liked to see a little more variety in the random item drops, and perhaps a way to better highlight dropped items (which are sometimes difficult to spot in certain environment types), but they're minor niggles in a system that perfectly complements *Darksiders II*.

To say that *Darksiders II* is a big game is like saying that having an STD would be an inconvenience – it's true, but it's an understatement that barely even begins to scratch the surface. The multiple areas and multiple dungeons spread across multiple worlds and multiple city hubs makes for a game that's packed with hours and hours and more hours still of quality gameplay. Traversing the larger, more open overworld areas is made mercifully quicker thanks to the inclusion of Death's horse Despair, and even these areas are littered with massive tertiary structures to explore and secrets tucked away in the tiniest of recesses. On a smaller, but no less impressive scale are the game's sprawling, intricate dungeons. Traversing these becomes a puzzle in itself, as Death's acrobatic traversal abilities (like wall-running) fuse with various powers unlocked



at set intervals throughout the game to create dungeons that are as entertaining to move through as the puzzles contained therein are to solve. Again, secrets are everywhere. You'll often have to backtrack to previously visited zones and dungeons, because unlocked traversal powers sometimes open paths to more secrets and loot. The enemies are always satisfying to battle thanks to the excellent combat mechanics, with boss encounters being particularly pleasing highlights of the journey.

Part of the joy of *Darksiders II* and travelling through it lies in its visual splendour, especially in the more vibrant and colourful areas. It's packed with some stunning vistas and jaw-dropping artistic moments, the likes of which few games can boast, and it's all accented by an appropriate soundtrack. The voice acting deserves special mention as well, as it's superbly delivered by the game's cast. If I had to pick things to whine about, I'd glare in the direction of the occasionally infuriating camera, as well as the repetitive pattern that slips into certain parts of the game. Honestly though, that's just me scrounging for things to complain about. **NAG**

- Barkskin

92 *Darksiders II* is a game affected to its core by the influence of passionate developers eager to create a compelling, valuable piece of quality entertainment. It's not only one of the best games of this year, but it's also one of the finest, most gripping games I've ever played. You should play it. Seriously.

PLUS

Massive game world, packed with engaging content / Fluid combat system / Looks amazing / Engaging story

MINUS

Camera can be frustrating / Occasionally feels repetitive

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Sleeping Dogs



You're in Wei too far

Sleeping Dogs has had a tough run. Originally conceived as *Black Lotus*, a standalone title based on a fresh IP, it was later picked up by Activision who, in all their wisdom, thought it'd be a better idea to put it in a pretty dress and tell everyone it was called *True Crime: Hong Kong*. But that changed soon enough; flaky publisher commitments to the series saw the project cancelled and before long the game was then picked up by Square, who kind of dug the old concept for the game (but apparently not the name) and thus we arrive at *Sleeping Dogs*. But anyone who's familiar with gaming should know that a game that's had as tumultuous a development cycle as this is bound to be left with a few casualties in its feature list.

One aspect which hasn't been touched is the game's setting: a compressed version of the real Hong Kong Island – a perfect location in which to stage a neat and contained sandbox game that picks the bits of the island it likes and leaves out the rest. That means the game's hero, Triad infiltrating cop Wei Shen, won't be taking long relaxing drives out in the countryside, but the various zones (ranging from dense urban and commercial to larry suburban estates) in the game world are expertly detailed and distinct enough to convince you that you're exploring an expansive game world. A game world with some of the worst highway designs ever, mind you, but thank Buddha for taxis.

The great thing about Hong Kong is that everyone is apparently a kung fu master, which means *Sleeping Dogs* has far less of an emphasis on gunplay than most sandbox action games (it's still there, but is poorly implemented compared to the hand-to-hand fighting). Instead, Wei fights with a flurry of fists, feet, elbows and any other bits of the body not usually considered lethal weapons, and that's when he's not fighting



I hope I win!



1 Wei can use his martial arts training to vault over obstacles, scale walls, and perform many other parkour exercises. The system works well for the most part, but there are a few instances where Wei simply refuses to climb or jump over a thing that will cause a bit of aggravation.



dirty. When he does fight dirty, *Sleeping Dogs'* brutality becomes obvious, and on numerous occasions I found myself wincing at the violence Wei is capable of (you mean "I'm capable of", Ed).

Throughout the campaign, you'll unlock a number of new combat moves as well as an assortment of vehicular and firearm-related manoeuvres that will transform Wei from a humble nose-breaking grunt trying to make a name for himself to weaponised fear-driven incontinence at the core of the Triad. These new abilities are dished out based on an initially confusing but ultimately well-built system of different experience points and levels for Wei's Face (infamy), Cop, and Triad rankings. Performing well in different mission types (almost all of which are accessible as and when you want, leaving you free to explore the city on your own terms) will boost your progress for that particular type of mission: bust a few drug dealers or push along the main police storyline and you'll gain lots of Cop score; partake in street races or help out fellow Triad members to gain Face; spend time in the main storyline and you'll gain Triad experience, as well as a small amount of Cop. If you think that Wei's police status means he can't run around killing absolutely everything that moves, you'd be right: you'll take penalties to your Cop ranking gain on any missions other than Face-based ones for performing actions anyone of a sane mind would consider "wrong", which creates a neat challenge for the player to improve their driving skills and try not to run over too many civvies. If it helps, they don't even drop cash when you do so.

There are plenty of missions to complete (134 in total), but many of the side quests are quite similar, and it's here where

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / PC / PS3

Genre

Third-person action

Age restriction

18

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

United Front Games / Square Enix London Studios

Website

www.sleepingdogs.net

Publisher

Square Enix

Distributor

Megarom



“The great thing about Hong Kong is that everyone is apparently a kung fu master, which means *Sleeping Dogs* has far less of an emphasis on gunplay than most sandbox action games.”



Sleeping Dogs trips up a bit. It's a sandbox game – no doubt about it – but many of the non-mission elements you'd expect in such a game are absent. You're simply given new apartments as you progress; purchased vehicles can only be customised through a preset selection of paint jobs; romance missions amount to little more than one-night stands (sheesh, bro); there are no properties of any sort to purchase or upgrade; Wei can't even kit out himself with different weaponry. Aside from a few outrageously random opportunities to buy new furniture for your apartments, the only non-violent cavorting you'll get up to is buying cars and clothing, and singing karaoke, all of which are fairly extensive offerings, but around the 60% completion mark the game starts to lose pace and become a tad repetitive; having even more extensive sandbox options at that exact point would have been a perfect fit, and deeper exploration of the supporting characters would've given more life to the game in general. On top of that, the repetitive nature of *Sleeping Dogs* means that it tends to become a little too easy towards the end: you only need to take so many meat cleavers to the neck before your reaction times are honed to perfection and you're able to execute Wei's vast array of combat moves with ease. It almost feels like the developers built the bulk of the game and had only a few months to add in "some stuff" – when they ran out of time, the game was simply shipped. That's not to say these seemingly absent elements ruin the game, but they do hold back *Sleeping Dogs* from competing with sandbox greats like *GTA: San Andreas*, which is a pity, since it manages to do exactly that for quite a chunk of its game time. **NAG**

- GeometriX

87

Sleeping Dogs delivers a hard-hitting, interesting story set in a game world that's filled with detail, but misses a few opportunities to take it to greatness.

PLUS

Richly detailed world / Excellent combat system / Brutal portrayal of the subject matter

MINUS

Underdeveloped supporting characters / Lacking sandbox features / Uninspired shooting mechanics

Transformers: Fall of Cybertron

Best Yet

The *Transformers* franchise of video games has been something of a mixed bag, and goes quite a long way to prove that there is a distinct gap in quality between games based on movies, and games not based on movies. In recent years, there have been three games released to support Michael Bay's cinematic exploits, and one "historical" game (in the form of *War for Cybertron*) that didn't coincide with a film release. This last game was the best of the four, and by a long shot. And now developer High Moon have added even more to the *Transformers* canon in the form of *Fall of Cybertron*, the second game not associated with a major motion picture and the sequel to *War for Cybertron*. And it's even better, easily taking the title of best *Transformers* game. That may not seem like much, but the truth is that *Fall of Cybertron* is a very decent game, all in all, and one that action fans (and fans of the franchise, of course) will find not only fun and challenging, but also rather addictive.

High Moon opted to go with a similar style of game dynamic for *Fall of Cybertron*. Using a combination of robotic and vehicular forms, the player takes on wave after wave of enemy combatants during the campaign. The game will assign roles to the player, and characters like Bumblebee, Optimus Prime, Megatron and Starscream are all up for play. The player will switch sides during the campaign, as the story requires, with a finale that allows the



player to pick sides. The campaign is fairly long, and well worth experiencing. The story isn't the greatest, but the dynamic environments, great, detailed graphics and often chaotic combat make for an excellent experience. It isn't just another cover-based shooter – using different weapons and upgrades, as well as varying between robot and vehicle, will allow the player a varied and often strategic approach.

In terms of multiplayer, *Fall of Cybertron* offers a few options. There's co-op for up to four players, as well as competitive modes. Escalation is a Horde-style mode that can be rather fun, but the multiplayer – apart from co-op – is relatively forgettable. This is in part due to the fact that player number restrictions keep things a bit tame, with a maximum of twelve players in any given game.

Still, it can be a lot of fun, and the overall package is a good way to kill a few hours. The campaign is the shining jewel of the package, offering some replay incentive too, with weapon blue-prints and voice logs to be discovered in the massive levels.

In short, it is the best *Transformers* game we have seen from High Moon studios. **NAG**

- Ramjet

80

High Moon have created the best *Transformers* game yet in the form of *Fall of Cybertron*

PLUS

Lots of chaotic action / Looks pretty

MINUS

Average multiplayer / Not very deep

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / PC
PS3 / Wii

Genre

Third-person
shooter

Age restriction

12

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

12 players

Developer

High Moon
Studios

Website

www.transformersgame.com

Publisher

Activision

Distributor

Megarom

Dust: An Elysian Tail

A modern homage to all the right classics

Created (designed and programmed) entirely by one person, *Dust* is a beautifully articulate love-letter to seminal games like *Castlevania*, *Metroid*, *Ys* and *Devil May Cry*. It's full of secrets to uncover, areas to explore and enemies to kill in fantastically over-the-top ways. Getting a 1,000-hit combo during a fight with dozens of bad guys is not only immensely satisfying, it's also almost effortless.

The story may not be that unique or special, but it's charming enough. The graphics are lush, and wonderfully animated, betraying how it was all done by a single individual's hard work over the last three years. But the real soul of *Dust* is the confident combat system, which struts up to you the moment you start playing, takes you by the hand and encourages you to have fun. It's not *Bayonetta* levels of sophistication, but it doesn't have to be. The combination attacks are simple but empowering, launchers take you into the air with ease, and the Dust Storm (a kind of magic attack with several spells to uncover) has you stun-locking herds of enemies, experience points exploding around you like New Year's fireworks.

If games are a dialogue between the player and the game's creator, then playing *Dust* is like sitting down with an old friend who's back in town, full of fresh stories to tell and eager to reminisce with you about the good times.

- Miktar



90

Dust is an inspired collection of all the best ideas from a long legacy of platform games, adventure games and side-scrolling beat-em-ups, executed with a proficiency rarely seen from the indie scene.

PLUS

Vibrant and lush artwork / Satisfying combat system / Lengthy adventure / Lots of hidden secrets

MINUS

The voice acting won't appeal to everyone / Boss fights are perhaps too easy

DETAILS

Platforms

360

Genre

Action role-playing game

Age restriction

10

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Humble Hearts

Website

www.noogy.com/main.html

Publisher

Microsoft Studios

Distributor

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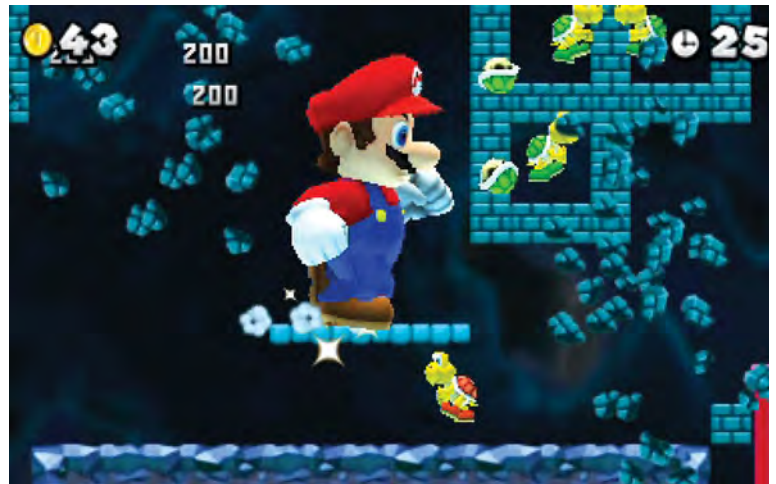
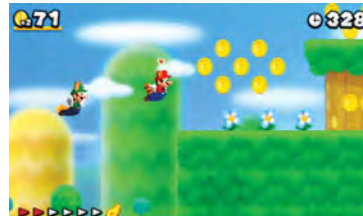
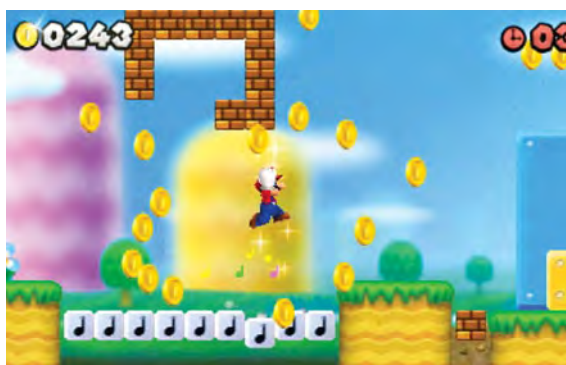
New Super Mario Bros. 2

Same old Mario

You know what to expect from a side-scrolling, momentum-powered platformer starring the plumber synonymous with the genre. It's a return to the classic formula after the lauded inventiveness of the Mushroom Kingdom's 3D-powered shenanigans seen in Mario's recent 3DS adventure, *Super Mario 3D Land*. It's got more of a focus on precision platforming, and embracing the familiar in every regard: from the stunning visuals and iconic coin chimes and musical tunes, to the power-ups and enemies, you've likely played this game before.

The difference lies in its focus. While they've always been a *Super Mario Bros.* staple, there's huge emphasis placed on collecting coins herein, with new mechanics and power-ups created specifically to cater for this. It turns it into somewhat of a score-attack title. While it won't take long to breeze through the main worlds, squishing Goombas and trying not to murder yourself on an errant shell that's just bounced back off a block you didn't see and is racing to end your run through the level, the essence lies in replayability. Playing through previously completed worlds to repeat the branching levels within, learning the best paths through them for maximum coin collection within the time limit, finding secret routes and unlocking secret levels filled with even more coins. New golden fire flowers have Mario spit out projectiles that explode and turn chunks of scenery and scores of enemies into coins. A new golden block sits on Mario's head and periodically spits out coins, at a quicker rate if the plumber runs faster or jumps higher to encourage building up the classic Mario momentum that's naturally lost in the painstaking hunt for craftily placed coins. A golden ring transforms enemies into golden foes and makes shells leave trails of coins as they glide. There's more coin-themed stuff as well – like the Coin Rush mode that takes three random levels from the game and provides you just one life to quickly traverse the three worlds while grabbing as many coins as possible within a strict time limit.

The platforming itself is as perfectly crafted as always, polished to the point that it's impossible to fault. Each level



brings momentary innovations and new mechanics that'll more often than not exist exclusively in that level alone, making memorising the intricacies of levels different in each case. It sees the return of familiar power-ups like mini and mega mushrooms, along with new ones like the raccoon suit, following its return in *Super Mario 3D Land*. Grab a friend with their own 3DS and a copy of the game and you can play cooperatively through the levels as Mario and Luigi, and some additions to the game are obviously geared toward two-player coin grabbing – like ghost coins that only appear once one player has touched them, allowing a deft partner to grab them when they appear shortly thereafter. The 3D effect, meanwhile, provides a depth of field effect to the game's backgrounds, but not much more. There really is a lot to love about the iconic fun that's offered here, so long as you don't expect a complete revamp – because this is really more of the same content we've seen in previous *New Super Mario Bros.* titles.

- Barkskin

80

It's got all the hallmarks of classic Mario platforming, with a few new coin-centric twists. The pitch-perfect execution of the classic formula, and the immediate familiarity of its moment-to-moment delights and challenges make it undoubtedly fun – but also very similar to other titles in the "new" *Super Mario Bros.* line-up. Nevertheless, it's the 3DS' best 2D platformer to date.

PLUS

Excellent, varied platforming / Awesome 2.5D retro look
Comfortably familiar

MINUS

Doesn't do much that's actually new / 3D effect is meaningless

DETAILS

Platforms

3DS

Genre

Platform

Age restriction

3

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

2 players

Developer

Nintendo EAD

Website

newsuper
mariobros2.
nintendo.com

Publisher

Nintendo

Distributor

Core Group

Legends of Pegasus

Waste of space

Within five minutes of starting up *Legends of Pegasus* for the first time, the game had crashed to desktop.

That's what I'll remember *LoP* being: a buggy, unfinished mess of ideas borrowed from sci-fi 4X games that came before it; games like *Sins of a Solar Empire* and *Galactic Civilizations*, both superior to *LoP* in every way. It plays like you'd expect a 4X game to play: your job is to rule an empire, colonising planets, researching new technologies, designing (and this part of the game is decent, allowing you to customise the design and components of each ship in your fleet to suit specific roles) and building ships, and dealing with opposing civilisations in whatever way you see fit while keeping your populace happy and productive.

The real-time combat that begins whenever hostile forces are nearby sees terrible AI and very little need for strategy turning it into a meaningless, tactics-free affair. The user interface is badly laid out, and the game does a horrible job of explaining its intricacies. While the galaxy is large, the level of zoom is so restrictive and moving across each solar system so painful that you'll not want to bother seeing it all. **NAG**

- Barkskin

DETAILS

Platforms
PC
Genre
Turn-based strategy
Age restriction
12
Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
8 players
Developer
Novacore Studios
Website
www.legends
ofpegasus.com
Publisher
Kalypso Media Digital
Distributor
Silverscreen Trading



40 It's difficult to tell if *Legends of Pegasus* would be a decent 4X game beyond its many problems. There was definite potential, given that it borrows liberally from the design of excellent turn-based sci-fi titles that have come before. Unfortunately, it's just transformed those collected ideas into a messy, wasted clump.

PLUS
Occasionally pretty graphics / Some good ideas

MINUS
Limp, predictable narrative / Hollow real-time battles / Terribly buggy

GX GAMING

GILA
MMO/RTS APPROVED GAMING MOUSE

MAURUS
FPS/RTS GAMING MOUSE

DeathTaker
MMORPG/RTS GAMING LASER MOUSE

HS-G600
MORDAX
UNIVERSAL AMPLIFIED GAMING HEADSET

HS-G550
LYCHAS
FOLDABLE GAMING HEADSET

HS-G700V
CAVIMANUS
VIRTUAL 7.1 CHANNEL GAMING HEADSET

HS-G530
GIANT HORNET
FOLDABLE GAMING HEADSET

GX Gaming Series By Genius

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Fax: +886-2-2995-4751
E-mail: sim@geniusnet.com.tw

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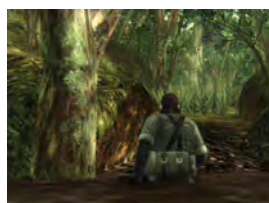
Taiwan Excellence Silver Award
Taiwan Top 20 Global Brand

Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D

Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D is an enhanced 3D version of the acclaimed PS2 game and is chronologically the first game in the Metal Gear saga. Set during the Cold War, MGS 3D has special operative Snake covertly infiltrate Russia in an attempt to assist a Russian scientist defect to the USA. It's a dramatic story, blending real world events and people with fiction. It has numerous twists and unique Japanese flair.

Most of the game is about stealth and survival. You control special agent Snake through various missions. Quiet close-quarters attacks or sneaking and avoiding combat altogether is the best course of action as enemy reinforcements will overwhelm Snake. Emphasis is also placed on survival and using the environment to your advantage. Snake's cuts, burns and broken bones will need to be healed or else he won't perform as effectively. His stamina will also need to be replenished by feasting on the local flora and fauna.

Wearing camouflage to blend with the environment is essential to avoid detection. A cool addition is Photo-Camo which allows you to create a camouflage texture by taking a picture using the 3DS camera. This novel addition is quite nifty and actually works.



DETAILS

Platforms
3DS

Genre
Stealth action

Age restriction
18

Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
None

Developer
Bluepoint Games / Kojima Productions

Website
www.konami.com/games/mgsse3d

Publisher
Konami

Distributor
Ster Kinekor Games

READER PROFILE

My gaming addiction started when I was two years old and introduced to computers by my parents. Two decades later and I'm more passionate about gaming and technology than ever. I graduated from university with a Cum Laude IT degree and don't foresee my love for technology diminishing!



The controls generally work well due to the slow nature of the game. The 3DS's analogue stick controls movement while the face buttons adjust the camera. The shoulder buttons are used for aiming and attacking. The touch screen is used for other functions such as displaying the map and sorting the inventory. It is only the intense boss fights which expose the limitation of the standard controls but the Circle Pad Pro is supported which makes aiming easier.

The game looks good, easily matching the visuals of the original game. What sets this version apart is the 3D effect which works very well and makes the game immersive and even more exciting.

There's still nothing quite like Metal Gear Solid's unique brand of stealth-action. This enhanced version is a great choice for fans and newcomers who want an excellent handheld stealth game. **NAG**

- Yudistra Thakurdin

READER SCORE

80

The combination of proven mechanics and a great story with unique 3DS features is a winning one.

PLUS

Great story / Good 3D effects

MINUS

Requires lots of patience / Controls can get a little awkward

Share 3G



Plug in your 3G dongle

Share a 3G Internet connection with friends, family, and colleagues

TEW-655BR3G

- Share the Internet from anywhere you have a 3G mobile connection
- Compatible with USB modems from every major mobile provider
- Built in rechargeable 2.5 hour lithium Ion battery under full loading
- One-touch connection with Wi-Fi Protected Setup (WPS)



TEW-658BRM

- Combination ADSL 2/2+ modem and high performance 300 Mbps wireless n router
- Compatible with most ADSL-based Internet service provider networks



TRENDNET®

TECH NEWS

KNOW YOUR TECHNOLOGY

CFM: Cubic feet per minute

This is a standard Imperial system measurement for the amount of air moved in a minute. In the context of computing and hardware, it's usually the amount of air a fan can move in a minute; the higher the value the more air and hence better cooling the fan can provide.

WPA

WPA is a security protocol designed to create secure wireless networks. It is similar to the WEP protocol, but offers improvements in the way it handles security keys and the way users are authorized. WPA also implements something called the Extensible Authentication Protocol (EAP) for authorizing users. Instead of authorizing computers based solely on their MAC address, WPA can use several other methods to verify each computer's identity.

PS/2

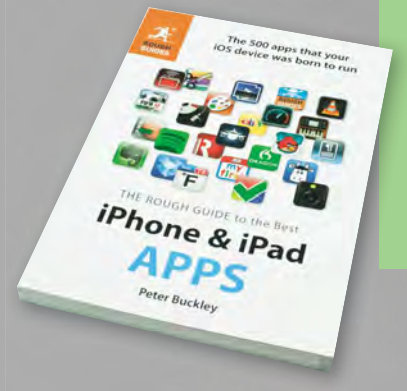
PS/2 is a type of port used by older computers for connecting input devices such as keyboards and mice. The port was introduced with IBM's Personal System/2 computer in 1987 (which was abbreviated "PS/2"). In the following years, the PS/2 port became the standard connection for keyboards and mice in all IBM compatible computers.

CCD

Charged Coupled Device. CCDs are sensors used in digital cameras and video cameras to record still and moving images. The CCD captures light and converts it to digital data that is recorded by the camera. The quality of an image captured by a CCD depends on the resolution of the sensor. In digital cameras, the resolution is measured in Megapixels. Therefore an 8MP digital camera can capture twice as much information as a 4MP camera. The result is a larger photo with more detail.

THE ROUGH GUIDE TO THE BEST IPHONE & IPAD APPS BY PETER BUCKLEY

If you've recently bought an iPhone, iPad or iPod touch and you're looking to get some great free and paid-for apps from the App Store, this handy 182-page book lists 500 for you, and gives you a brief summary of what each one does. R70 | www.penguinbooks.co.za



ASTRUM METAL EARPHONE AEP-106

In-ear earphones for your iPod, MP3, or MP4 Player in a range of sassy colours. R99 | www.astrum.co.za



DID YOU KNOW?

The minimum system requirements for PC have been released for *Call of Duty: Black Ops II*. With the new engine being designed for DirectX 11, the game will no longer support Windows XP, yet it can make do with DirectX 10 hardware running on newer operating systems (Windows Vista and above). So check your specs because this is what you'll need to run *Black Ops II*:

- Intel Core 2 Duo E8200 (2.66 GHz) or AMD Phenom X3 8750 (2.40 GHz), processor.
- 2 GB for 32-bit, 4 GB for 64-bit environments, memory.
- NVIDIA GeForce 8800 GT 512 MB or ATI Radeon HD 3870 512 MB, video card.
- Windows Vista SP2 or Windows 7 or above, operating system.

Mosh Pit

WD SCORPIO BLUE 500GB

This notebook hard drive sports 5,400 RPM drive speed, 12ms access time, and up to 3 GB/s SATA interface speed. This being a "Blue" product, it's mainstream, if you're looking for a more high-performance drive then go for the WD "Black" range.
R649 | www.drivecon.net



XFx PRO1000W PSU

Compatible with Intel Core i3, i5, i7 and AMD Phenom, FX, this PSU features Easy Rail Technology, Hybrid Fan Control and is fully modular.
R2,600 | www.kairaglobal.co.za



CM STORM SKORPION MOUSE BUNGEE

If your mouse cord keeps getting stuck at inopportune times while you're gaming, then you need one of these mouse bungees.
R249 | www.cmstorm.com



"The mouse is an extension of the player's soul" and has the potential to become a "game changer"

Tony Liu, director of Tt esports, the gaming division of Thermaltake

Thermaltake and BMW Group's DesignworksUSA have once again collaborated to bring a new Level 10 gaming product to the market. The Pro-Gaming Computer Mouse Level 10 M is truly a thing of beauty and is available now in Diamond Black, Iron White, Military Green and Blazing Red.

#

13%

BY THE NUMBERS

Steam's August Hardware and Software Survey showed that 13% of its audience ran their games on Windows XP, compared to the 71% who used Windows 7. *Black Ops II*, it was recently revealed, will be the first *Call of Duty* not to support Windows XP. *Sleeping Dogs*, which released in August, also did not support the almost 11 year-old OS.

DREAMMACHINE

Despite the difficulty in overclocking GTX 680 cards for competitive overclockers, the GIGABYTE GTX 680 Super Overclock is hands down the best graphics card we've tested in a gaming context. Short of dual GPU solutions, you'll not find a better graphics card for the money. As such the GV-N680SO-2GD becomes our Dream Machine graphics card this month.



Cooler Master Silent Pro M2 1500Watt PSU
R3,300 / www.coolermaster.com



GIGABYTE GV-N680SO-2GD
R7,329 / www.gigabyte.com

NEW



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
R1,299 / www.gigabyte.com



Roccat Kone [+]
R899 / www.roccat.org



Roccat Alumic
R319 / www.roccat.org



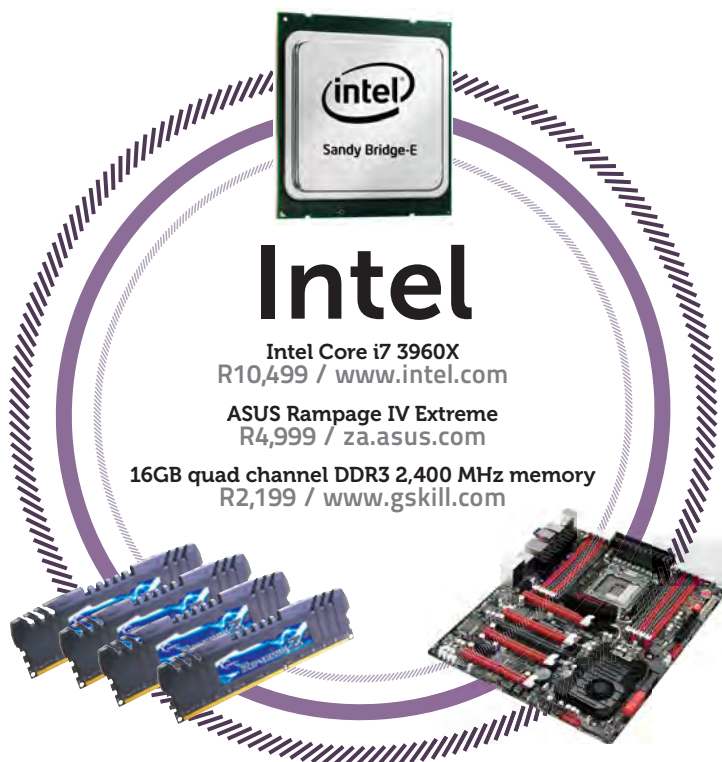
Asus Xonar Essence STX
R1,399 / za.asus.com



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



CM Storm SIRUS
R1,199 / www.coolermaster.com



Intel

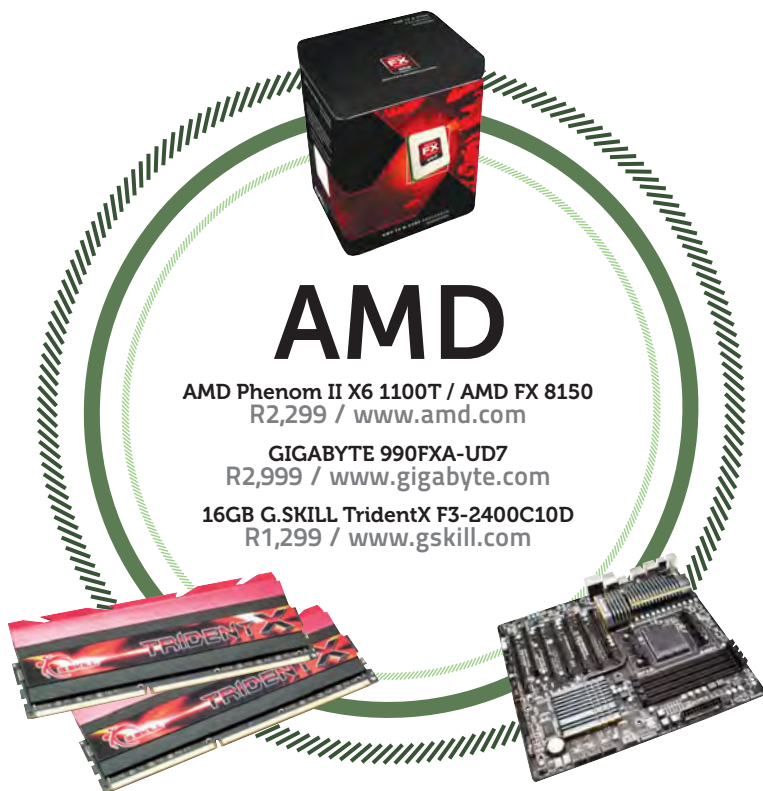
Intel Core i7 3960X
R10,499 / www.intel.com

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:

R59,336



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:

R42,237



Hardwired

Funny business part 2

I'll continue directly from my previous column in the September 2012 issue of NAG. If you didn't get to read the first part do not be put off as I'm confident you'll have a rough idea where all this came from.

It's strange how NVIDIA has changed its tune, especially given that they were at one point the champions of overclocking. In fact, with the GTX 560 Ti, they told press that not only did the GPU perform exceptionally well, but it had huge overclocking potential. Prior to that, in 2006 with the 8000 series graphics cards, NVIDIA sponsored an entire truck of liquid nitrogen to the then number one overclocker in the world, K|NGP|N, for the sole purpose of pushing the limits on what was possible with the world's first ever DirectX 10 graphics cards.

With such a favorable attitude in the past to enthusiasts and competitive overclockers, it's rather disappointing to see NVIDIA actively discourage overclocking in such a manner and so aggressively. I can't know for sure why their tune changed, but I doubt if the RMA rate was high enough to justify this new position. Instead I suspect it all has to do with making as much money as

"The antagonistic approach to overclocking is what I suspect will eventually lead customers away from the vendor"

possible from the mid-range silicon. By virtue of the smaller 28nm process and other related parts of the GK104 ecosystem, NVIDIA is making more on these GPUs than they did their previous family, even if RMA rates remained the same in percentage terms.

The antagonistic approach to overclocking is what I suspect will eventually lead customers away from the vendor. Not directly, but through the sheer inability to market their products via extreme overclockers as they have in the past. As it stands, the AMD 7000 series is just as competitive if not more so than before with the NVIDIA 600 family. Price cuts, GHz Edition cards and BIOS updates have breathed new life into the series and currently the fastest single GPU on the market right now is from AMD. That carries a lot of weight because unlike NVIDIA's high-end GTX 680, the HD 7970 can actually be overclocked fairly easily and there are no restrictions put in place to specifically prevent high clock speeds.

With the true high-end Kepler GPU only making its way to us at the end of the year or possibly the beginning of 2013, I doubt if NVIDIA's tune will change, especially given just how massive the core will be. By their current reasoning, you'll unlikely be able to even use sliders to increase clock speeds. Hopefully that isn't the case but I'm sure you get the picture. What is happening at NVIDIA with the modern GPUs is undesirable and one can only hope that the company changes its ways sooner rather than later.

The enthusiast community has given so much to this company and others in general user computing. All the stress that components are put under in a few hours by overclockers simulates hundreds to thousands of hours of normal usage by games and average users. The computing landscape would look completely different without overclocking and in very direct ways we have all benefited from this enterprise.

NVIDIA's policies are in no way encouraging of this, and I sincerely hope it changes this year because if it doesn't there'll be no reason to stick with NVIDIA, for it's proving to be more trouble than it's worth when AMD has alternative and sometimes better solutions.

- Neo Sibeko

G-ForceSim Pro Race Rig Gun Metal Hammer-tone Limited Edition

Website www.gforcesim.com **RRP** Limited Edition version: R7,250 direct from G-ForceSim
Black Gloss version: R6,100 (special offer valid until end October)

The thing about hardcore simulations, you see, is that they're generally meant to simulate exciting real-life situations without all the training and/or experience and/or natural talent and/or possible death that generally goes hand-in-hand with some of these experiences. And when the real thing you're trying to simulate is flying an aeroplane with zero knowledge of how to actually, you know, fly a plane

or driving an obscenely fast car around a racetrack at speeds that'd make children spontaneously combust when in real life you're afraid to let the speedometer roam past 100 km/h, then you're going to want to get all the equipment you can to ensure that your virtual simulation is brought as close to the real thing as possible. That's where G-ForceSim's Pro Race Rig bundle comes in.

COMFORT IS KING

Seeing as how you're going to be spending a whole lot of time in the seat part of this bundle, it had better be comfortable – and thankfully, it is. The seat itself is made of tough, lightweight GRP (fibre-reinforced polymer), but is covered in enough padded fabric and faux leather to ensure that you won't send your back into a pain-filled spasm by spending lengthy periods of time in it. The seat cover looks the part as well, with its obligatory pseudo racing seat aesthetic. The footrest can be adjusted on-the-fly to be further away from or closer to you, as can the steering wheel mount be raised and lowered to tailor to your needs.

The G27's gear shifter is on a mount attached to the base (it can be adjusted for left- and right-hand drivers), and it even comes with a cup holder that's similarly attached on the opposite side – although having both of these attached

does make climbing (and there will be climbing) into and out of the seat rather awkward. The quality of the materials and the construction is good – but we do have a slight concern about the footrest, which tends to bend forward and lift the bar connecting it to the base off the floor when you apply pressure to the pedals. It could be a distracting annoyance during heated racing sessions.

IT'S ALL IN THE WHEEL

To match the build quality of the seat, you'll need one of the best racing wheels out there today, and the Logitech G27 is just that. Its components – the 270mm wheel, the six-speed gear shifter (with push-down reverse gear) and the pedals – are all robust and ooze quality. The wheel is even wrapped in hand-stitched leather, and each pedal has different

springs to change the way they react to pressure. Behind the wheel are two steel paddle shifters, styled after those seen in Formula 1 cars, and lining the top of the steering wheel are LEDs showing you the perfect time to shift gears in supported games. Dual-motor force feedback lets you feel the virtual road, and the wheel is good for 900 degrees of rotation – just like your average real-world car. Considering that the standalone G27 retails for between R3,000 and R4,000, the asking price for all this should make a bit more sense.

WHERE'S THIS BOLT GO?

Should you fork out the exorbitant amounts of cash required to comfortably seat your luxury-demanding posterior in this here racing seat, you should know that there'll be a bit of work required before you can actually put your new



toy to use. Ours came mostly pre-assembled to save us time, so we're not entirely sure how much assembly is required – but chances are you'll at least have to attach the footrest bar to the seat base, and there's also the cup holder and gear stick mount that must be attached to either side of that as well. Also, the G27 will have to be attached to its mount, and the pedals will have to be mounted on the footrest bit. Bear in mind that none of this is actually difficult, and assembling everything requires no tools – but lazy people might be offended and immediately boycott this seat. We're just helping those lazy people make an informed decision here.

When you buy this Limited Edition version, your G27 comes unopened in its original packaging and will take you max 6-10 minutes to set up. **NAG**

TECHNICAL

What you get

- G-ForceSim Pro Race Rig
- Gear stick mount
- Cup holder
- Logitech G27 Racing Wheel

Logitech

G27 features

- Dual-motor force feedback
- Six-speed gear shifter
- Formula 1-style paddle shifters
- Steel clutch, accelerator and brake pedals
- 900-degree wheel rotation
- 16 programmable buttons and d-pad

Extras

- 2 year guarantee
- Seat can be personalised with your name and logo on it
- Can be upgraded to any steering wheel system at any time
- Additional accessories such as Bass Rockers and TV stands are also available

PROS

- Excellent construction
- Comfortable seat
- G27 is great

CONS

- Pricey
- Footrest could be sturdier

ALTERNATIVES

- Playseat WRC



GIGABYTE GV-N680SO-2GD



Supplier Rectron **Website** www.gigabyte.com **RRP** R7,329

GIGABYTE is more often than not the first vendor to release their special edition graphics card after a new GPU is released. With the GK104, however, GIGABYTE was amongst the last. Even now, getting a hold of the GTX 680 Super Overclock isn't easy. If you do manage to get your hands on one, you'll more than understand why this is the case. Simply put, it's the most impressive graphics card GIGABYTE has ever produced, and most certainly amongst the best we've ever seen.

If that doesn't mean much to you, know that it is the fastest single GPU card we've tested to date. Naturally this is not hard to achieve considering that we are dealing with a GTX 680 graphics card, but realize that it isn't just any other GTX 680. Despite the limitations imposed by NVIDIA on its partners, GIGABYTE has managed to make their offering stand out from the rest in practical and in not-so-practical terms.

For starters, this graphics card is massive. By that we mean it's bigger than the DCU II products from ASUS, bigger than the Lightning range from

MSI and simply dwarfs any and all previous efforts from GIGABYTE itself. This is one massive graphics card, but with that you do get one of the coolest operating GPUs around. With no less than five fans, the approach to cooling we see here is unique. The air passes through the massive heat fins in parallel to the GPU face and does not push cool air directly against the core as with every other cooler.

This allows the Super Overclock to operate very well in three- and even four-way SLI configurations without much sacrifice in the way of cooling performance. No other GTX 680 graphics card can claim such low temperatures in multi GPU configurations. Such a design however also means that GIGABYTE has had to rely on several smaller fans instead of the larger, low RPM fans of their previous Super Overclock models. As you would expect, five smaller fans will cause a racket at maximum speed – a noise you cannot ignore. This is especially true when attempting to reach even higher clock speeds than

SPECS

Core:
GK104 (28nm)
Processors:
1,536
Render outputs:
32
Memory:
2,048MB GDDR5
6.2GHz
(198.4GB/sec)
API:
DirectX 11.1
OpenGL 4.x
OpenCL 1.x
PhysX

the shipping frequencies of this card.

Fortunately, much like other GTX 680s, overclocking is determined by the GPU voltage first before it is by the operating temperature. As such, even if you seek more performance via overclocking, there'll not be any need to change from the default fan profile. Our own testing had this particular sample reach an impressive 1,300MHz boost clock. 100MHz higher than the shipping clock may not seem like much, but given the complexity involved with overclocking the GTX 680, it's a fair overclock and one that most enthusiasts and hobbyists will appreciate immensely.

For the competitive overclockers, this is the card to get because, for the first time ever, GIGABYTE has produced a card worthy of competing against the Lightning and others which have dominated the competitive overclocking scene for years. With the LN2 mode, things really do get interesting and it won't be long until we see overclocking records broken with this card.



With no less than five fans, **the approach to cooling** we see here is unique.

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: ASUS GEFORCE GTX680

Hard Reset DX9 1,080p 4xAA	112.77 99.6
Just Cause 2 DX10 1,080p	174.2 155.72
3DMark11 Extreme	3,810 3,343
3DMark Vantage	38,355 39,722
Unigine Heaven Xtreme	2,076.967 1,871.607

Using the standard cooler, you may be deceived into thinking the LN2 BIOS does nothing, but just take a quick look at the +200% TDP setting made available in this mode and you should be aware of just how potent this graphics card can be in the right hands.

This is an important point and is arguably one of the reasons why this graphics card is so expensive. It's actually going to be competing with the best in the enthusiast line of graphics cards from other vendors and, as such, it needs to prove itself under the most extreme conditions. For gaming it's a relatively easy win, but for overclocking, especially in circumventing NVIDIA's policies without jeopardizing themselves, GIGABYTE has done something amazing.

For the first time ever, there's actually some kind of parity between the overclocking grade motherboards GIGABYTE makes and the graphics cards which have traditionally not been up to scratch. With the GTX 680 Super Overclock, it seems they've taken a page from the best and produced a

graphics card that not only allows massive clock speeds, but can achieve them relatively quickly, with some claiming that no modifications are needed except for the right BIOS and the correct vGPU trimmer. So in essence it's ready to compete for the highest honours on HWBOT.

We didn't get a chance to verify the claims made by several top overclockers about this card, and indeed our own testing using the default GPU cooler showed no difference in overclocking headroom between the regular and LN2 BIOS. However, it can be argued that that is the point and how it should be, because no user is actually risking their hardware by operating the graphics card in unsuitable conditions by merely pressing the LN2 BIOS button.

What we'd like to highlight in overclocking in particular is that even though we did not get a chance to try extreme cooling, we did reach a magnificent 7.4GHz on the memory. Very impressive given that we were at no point able to raise the vMEM

PLUS

- Performance
- Good for extreme overclocking
- Highest clock speed of all GTX 680s

MINUS

- Massive proportions
- Can be loud
- Expensive

BOTTOM LINE

The fastest GTX 680 money can buy and by extension the fastest GPU graphics card on the market.

voltage. The best part of this overclock was that it was stable for gaming for hours on end. Sadly it didn't yield any magnificent performance gains, but that can be argued is the result of the GK104 GPU design and no fault of the memory employed or anything to do with GIGABYTE.

The GTX 680 Super Overclock isn't cheap, not by any stretch of the imagination, but it is one impressive graphics card that the well-heeled should probably consider before and above all other GTX 680 cards for now. At the very least because it's the fastest GTX 680 available. So even when you're not overclocking or competing you'll always get better than average performance, and that in our books is never a bad thing. We would never claim this card is perfect, but its shortcomings are not enough to detract from everything else it does right. If you can afford it, we suggest you buy it; it just doesn't get better than this in the NVIDIA GPU family.

NAG
– Neo Sibeko



SAPPHIRE Vapor-X HD7970 GHz Edition

Supplier Sapphire Website www.sapphiretech.com

Call it what you will, but AMD really did pull a fast one on NVIDIA. Soon after the GTX 680 had established itself as the fastest graphics card on the market, AMD released what they termed the GHz edition. With a mere 75MHz GPU clock speed bump over the original model, AMD was set to bring the fight to the green team's champion.

The truth behind reclaiming the performance crown though was not merely the clock speed bump, in fact one could argue that the clock speed increase was cosmetic, as the true performance gains came via the Catalyst 12.7 drivers which boosted performance even on the original 925MHz model. Many hardware publications missed this and attributed the retaking of the performance crown to the clock speed, however 75MHz was never enough to change the status quo, but a more aggressive, refined and tweaked driver did the trick. Getting these gains across the board is no easy task as well, so despite the devious nature in which AMD went about this, the outfit really did the work at the driver level where it really mattered.

Borrowing from NVIDIA's playbook, AMD introduced the boost clock, or rather turbo clock feature, which essentially works to increase the clock speed, provided the GPU is not beyond the set TDP limits. Similar to

NVIDIA's Turbo feature on the latest 600 series GPUs but less obstructive, if only because it's simpler in design and implementation. Best of all it doesn't ruin the fun for extreme overclockers which is exactly what NVIDIA's turbo boost does.

With this SAPPHIRE model, we have what is pretty much a standard GHz card. The only difference being the cooler used, which as always by Sapphire standards is rather impressive. It helps keep the card cool and any overclocking limits that one reaches are through no fault of the cooler but just the silicon itself failing to reach higher clock frequencies.

That is a very important point especially for the enthusiasts because most GHz cards actually have inferior silicon compared to the original models. It sounds strange, but the operating voltage for the GHz cards is significantly higher than that of the original HD 7970, TDP is higher, thermals are higher and just about everything has gone the opposite of performance. The GPUs seem to be the high leakage parts which, while great for extreme overclocking, quickly put the party out for regular air clocking.

We witnessed these overclocking limits ourselves when tweaking the SAPPHIRE card. We did reach 1,200MHz, but it was hardly stable and in realistic terms you're better off operating the



HARDWARE

RRP R6,399

SPECS

Core:
Tahiti XT (28nm)
Processors:
2,048
Render Outputs:
32
Memory:
3072MB GDDR5
6GHz (288GB/sec)
API:
DirectX 11.1
OpenGL 4.x
OpenCL 1.x

PLUS

- Easy Boost
- Great performance
- Runs cool

MINUS

- Toxic edition is better for a little bit more spend.

BOTTOM LINE

A great showing by SAPPHIRE of the AMD HD 7970 GHz Edition. Well worth the purchase.

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: ASUS GEFORCE GTX680

Hard Reset DX9 1,080p 4xAA	90.7 99.6
Just Cause 2 DX10 1,080p	145.71 155.72
3DMark11 Extreme	3,244 3,343
3DMark Vantage	37,132 39,722
Unigine Heaven Xtreme	2201.349 1871.607

card at 1,150MHz to be safe. That is still a mighty fine speed and will deliver even better performance than this card already offers. You'll especially appreciate this when running Eye-Finity configurations using a single card.

Worthy of mention is the more refined version of this card, the Toxic edition, which operates at a scorching 1.2GHz. That's right, it's easily the fastest clocked graphics card ever released and we hope to put it through its paces in the near future. It's obviously a limited number of binned GPUs that will reach this speed, but if you want the best from just about any HD 7970 released, this may be the one to wait for.

Until then, if you're looking for a GHz edition card, you could do a whole lot worse than the SAPPHIRE card. It's not cheap, but the performance is top notch and it's an upgrade that is sure to last you for years. Give this card serious consideration if you're in the market as you won't regret your purchase.

NAG

– Neo Sibeko

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1 x Phanteks PH-TC1CS (Black) CPU Cooler



1 x Phanteks PH-TC14PE (Orange) CPU Cooler



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1 x Silverstone RV02-EW Gaming Case



1 x Silverstone RL01 Gaming Case

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Akill 170

Supplier TT3 Digital **Website** www.ckill.net **RRP** R21,999

Despite its demure styling and blocky physique, the Akill 170 is a remarkable machine. With its drool-worthy list of specifications, it's no surprise that this notebook's performance left us impressed – which, at the price it's asking, had to be the case, or we'd have been mightily sad. It's a hefty beast, contrasting the diminutive bombshell that is the Akill 100 Mini – but the heightened performance and features that can be shoved into its larger frame make it well worth the extra strain it'll put on your back when you're hauling it around.

Open its lid and you'll find a fairly comfortable keyboard, backlit in various colours. The tiny, smooth touchpad is passable for occasional use (but you'll want to buy a dedicated mouse as soon as possible, which you can get bundled with the notebook directly from TT3), and the matte LED is perfectly bright and vibrant for gaming or watching movies (there's also a much appreciated Blu-ray reader for this). The audio produced by its speakers is not the best we've

ever experienced emanating from a desktop replacement, but it's decent enough. So far, so average.

Start up any benchmark, however, and this notebook proves to be anything but average, a lion masquerading as a regular house cat. 3DMark Vantage, running with the performance preset selected, awarded it 20,153 3DMarks – a truly remarkable score for a gaming notebook. To put it into perspective, the previous best notebook we've had pass through our office scored 12,486 3DMarks in the same test. To push the notebook even harder, we put it through testing with 3DMark 11 using the extreme profile, and it managed to obtain 1,823 3DMarks. Elsewhere, Unigine Heaven (at the laptop's native resolution of 1920x1080, with no AA and 4X AF) awarded the machine a score of 1,410 in DirectX 11 mode. Switching to the same settings using DirectX 10 raised that score to 1,790. The previous top notebook managed scores of 603 and 1,070 respectively at the same settings.

To test its real-world gaming

performance, we used our trusty *Resident Evil 5* benchmark (our current standard for notebook tests) in DirectX 10 mode at native resolution with 4X AA and it managed an average frame rate of 121 – up from the 90.9 average of the previous best. What all these numbers mean is that you'll have no trouble playing today's games on this notebook at their highest settings, which will make for awesome times if you buy a dedicated mouse and keyboard and connect it to your gigantic HDTV.

With such amazing performance, the only aspect of this notebook that falters is its presentation, purely because we've come to expect extravagance and bombast from our gaming notebooks. Even without the flash, this notebook is currently the best we've ever put to task here at NAG. While the price can be tweaked by customising your components and optional extras when ordering the machine, it's still painfully expensive – but you get what you pay for. **NAG**

- Dane Remendes

SPECS

CPU
Intel Core i7-3610QM @ 2.3GHz
GPU
AMD Radeon HD 7970M 2GB GDDR5
RAM
16GB DDR3 1,600MHz
Storage
2x 500GB HDD
Kingmax 30GB SSD
Display
17.3-inch matte LED @ 1920x1080
Optical drive
6x Blu-ray read
8x DVD-RW
Battery
8-cell Li-ion
Connectivity
1x USB 2.0
2x USB 3.0
1x DisplayPort
1x HDMI
Wi-Fi 802.11a/g/n
Bluetooth
9-in-1 memory card reader



PLUS

- Incredible all-round performance
- Pre-loaded free-to-play games

MINUS

- Expensive
- Bulky, and ugly compared to the competition

BOTTOM LINE

This is the most powerful notebook we've ever tested. It's that simple.

Evetech 4.6GHz Overclocked mid-range Gaming PC

Supplier Evetech
Website www.evetech.co.za
RRP R15,999

We all know what to expect from Evetech's pre-built gaming rigs by now – excellent performance at a reasonable price with stunning workmanship shown in the construction and cable management of each of their PCs, resulting in remarkable value for money. This particular pre-built rig, aimed at the upper echelon of the mid-range, is no different.

Let's dive right into the numbers, since they speak for themselves. For real-world gaming performance, the *Lost Planet 2* benchmark spat out an average frame rate of 114.5, while *Hard Reset* and the *Sniper Elite V2* benchmark managed to attain averages of 94.8 and 35.1 respectively. They're all very good results, and you'll be able to comfortably play today's games at their highest settings – and in 3D as well, with some tweaking for the more demanding titles.



HARDWARE

Synthetic benchmarks awarded similarly good results: 3DMark 11 (running the extreme profile) scored 3,148 3DMarks, and Unigine Heaven DX11 scored 2,310 at 1920x1080 with no AA and 4X AF. PCMark 7 (which we use for benchmarking general office productivity) awarded Evetech's PC 6,206 PCMarks.

The only other feature of this

machine that might affect your purchasing decision is the chassis it ships with. The CM Storm Stryker's white and black detailing (with white LEDs for accent) is certainly striking, but some might not like the aesthetic. Still, it's a capable chassis, sturdily constructed and well ventilated. The duo of fan speed controller buttons on the

top of the case (near the power and reset buttons) are a very welcome addition, given how noisy the Corsair H100 water cooling system can be at high capacity.

All in all, Evetech's put together yet another well-priced machine that delivers great performance.

- Dane Remendes

SPECS

CPU
Intel Core i5-3570K overclocked to 4.6GHz
Motherboard
GIGABYTE Z77-UD3H
GPU
MSI GeForce GTX 670 Power Edition
RAM
Corsair Vengeance 8GB (2x 4GB) DDR3 2,133MHz
Storage
1TB Seagate Barracuda HDD / Corsair Force GT 120GB SSD
PSU
Corsair HX650 650W

PLUS

- Good performance
- Tidy cable management
- Fan speed controller

MINUS

- Chassis won't suit everyone

BOTTOM LINE

It's familiar Evetech build quality, geared towards those looking for mid-range excellence.

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ASUS GTX660 Ti-DC2T-2GD5

Supplier ASUS Website za.asus.com RRP TBA

As per our last GTX 660 Ti graphics card review the ASUS offering is clocked much higher than the reference NVIDIA part. Not unusual for graphics cards, but in this particular case, it affects the value of the card intrinsically. This is by way of offering consistently better performance than the competing HD 7950, even with the recent BIOS update from AMD.

Call it cheating or underhandedness by AMD, but with the GHz edition HD 7970 and the updated HD 7950 firmware, AMD managed to make the GTX 660 Ti a little less appealing. Add the price cuts to the equation and the value of the reference GTX 660 Ti is severely diminished. Fortunately we are not dealing with any regular card here but the highest performing SKU of the GK104-400 powered GPUs.

We briefly detailed the technical elements of the GPU in our September issue review (page 88) so they won't be repeated here, but we will take the time to address why it is that NVIDIA chose to outfit the GF114 successor with four times the number of compute cores. While we will admit that the 1,344 CUDA core count does sound impressive, it isn't as simple as making much larger compute clusters in the GPU. Rather, the four fold increase in cores has been necessitated in part by the absence of a hot clock or shader clock if you will. To keep the same level of performance with the GF114 on the GK104-400, the number of cores had to first be doubled,

and then doubled again to yield double the theoretical throughput. So the performance gain when compared to the predecessor is closer to double, rather than quadruple as the numbers may suggest.

This is why in turn, a GTX 660 Ti clocked at such high speeds delivers such impressive performance that keeps the HD 7950 at bay and encroaches on the vulnerable GTX 670 more often than not. There are some titles where the overclock makes very little difference as the inefficiency is not something that can be remedied by clock speeds, but these titles are far and few in-between, having always been AMD strongholds.

As a result of the smaller 192-bit memory bus, memory bandwidth is not particularly impressive despite the 6GHz+ clock speed. Fortunately for the ASUS card though, the Samsung GDDR5 memory used made it fairly easy to reach 7.2GHz. Not quite the 192GB/s of the GTX 680, but 172GB/s is still respectable and makes a massive difference when gaming at 1080p and higher resolutions.

Actual GPU overclocking on the Direct CU II also fared very well, as we were able to reach a boost core frequency of 1,200MHz. It is worth keeping in mind that this frequency will not always apply and it will sometimes be a little lower depending on TDP, but most of the time it should be around that figure. With such a high clock speed, the difference between this card and

SPECS

Core
GK104-400
(28nm)
Processors
1,344
Render outputs
24
Memory
2,048MB GDDR5
6GHz (144GB/sec)
API
DirectX 11.1
OpenGL 4.x
OpenCL 1.x
PhysX

PLUS

- Good performance
- Memory overclocking headroom
- Looks great

MINUS

- May end up costing more than the GTX 670

BOTTOM LINE

The fastest GTX 660 Ti currently on the market.

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: ASUS GEFORCE GTX680

Hard Reset DX9 1,080p 4xAA	85 99.6
Just Cause 2 DX10 1,080p	144.7 155.72
3DMark11 Extreme	3,117 3,343
3DMark Vantage	34,778 39,722
Unigine Heaven Xtreme	1,998.670 1,871.607

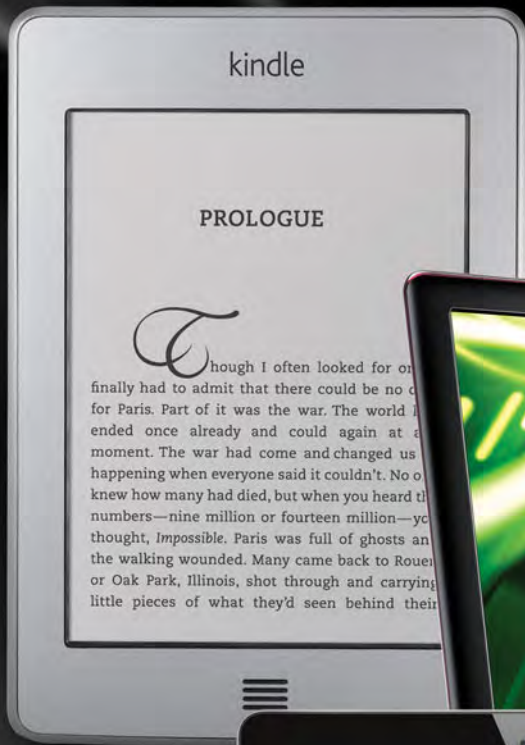
the GTX 670 is blurred even further and, in most cases, the GTX 660 Ti has the upper hand if only because of the ridiculously high clock speed.

ASUS has produced an impressive card once again under the Direct CU II name. It is certainly the best GTX 660 Ti we've tested here at NAG and one that we wouldn't hesitate to recommend provided you're not paying GTX 670 prices for it.

NAG

– Neo Sibeko

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Cooler Master HAF XM

Supplier Sonic Informed

Website www.sonicinformed.com **RRP** R1,599

Cooler Master's HAF-X has long dominated the sub-R2,000 chassis market, but what if you wanted to shave off a few bucks from your PC build without dipping into the somewhat gaudy looks of the HAF 922? The answer is the slightly smaller, ever-so-subtly less imposing HAF XM – a mid-tower chassis that has all the tricks you'd expect from Cooler Master, at a more palatable price point.

Cheaper doesn't mean "cheap": the HAF XM is well-constructed, neat and sturdy. Everything inside has an even powder-coat and there aren't any burrs or nasty bits on the hunt for wayward fingers. The biggest downgrade from the HAF X is the lack of wheels; instead, the XM uses regular feet that elevate the case to provide a bit of breathing room for your PSU. Speaking of which, the XM features a great cable management shroud that'll keep all of your PSU's cables

neatly out of sight; together with the ample conduits and back-panel spacing, you shouldn't have much trouble with cable mess there. If the six standard HDD bays aren't enough, another two slots feature quick-remove docks with a built-in SATA controller that hooks up to your motherboard. Rather surprisingly, the controller has no access to the cable management system, so you'll have to get creative with a few cable ties.

Cooling options here are plentiful, and if the standard 25cm fans aren't enough to cool your components, the XM's top bay can accommodate up to three 12cm fans or a triple water-cooling radiator. Unfortunately, the nature of the top bay's design means that you'd struggle to find space for a double-mounted rad in a push/pull configuration – it'd have to be one or the other. **NAG**
- Geoff Burrows

9

SPECS

Dimensions
252 x 530.5 x 579mm
Weight
10.5kg
Front panel
2x USB 2.0; 2x USB 3.0; audio
Bays
6x 2/3.5" fixed; 2x

2/3.5" removable; 3x 5.25"; 1x 2.5" hidden
Included fans
1x 25cm LED fan (front); 1x 25cm fan (top); 1x 12cm fan (rear)
Optional fan mounts
2x 25cm / 3x 12cm (top); 2x 12cm (front)



PLUS

- Excellent build quality
- Loads of cooling options

MINUS

- Upper cooling area is cramped

BOTTOM LINE

A near-perfect mid-range case that will do just about everything you could want at this price.

Phanteks PH-TC14PE CPU Cooler

Supplier Evetech **Website** www.phanteks.com **RRP** R999

We all know what it's like to be confronted with a new brand. A brand you've never heard of selling yet another component that is near identical to so many others. The first thing that comes to mind is anything but intrigue. In fact, when we were first confronted with the Phanteks CPU cooler, we were not moved at all. Looking inside the box it was neatly packed, with a very high build quality, but still we remained indifferent.

Even more annoying was the fact that the box had so many components and, having used the Corsair H100, which is minimalist in installation procedure, we can't say we were looking forward to the PH-TC14PE. To make matters worse, the name was anything but cool, it's a SKU number more than anything else, and in all honesty, this looks like a variation on the famous and well respected NOCTUA DH-14,

our favourite air cooler.

So why then would anyone even consider buying this CPU cooler? Well, simply put; all the above is irrelevant given just how well this CPU cooler performs. It's not close to the NOCTUA NH-D14 in performance, it's identical. In fact in some cases it may be even better. It's truly challenging to be most accurate

with these measurements but we did manage to POST the 3770K CPU at a slightly higher speed than we did with the NOCTUA cooler. Granted there could be other factors involved, but for the most part the system was identical save for the coolers. In light of this, we are absolutely blown away by the PH-TC14PE. We do wish it was easier to install, had fewer

components and actually had a name worthy or at least reflective of its performance, but we are willing to overlook all of that in light of the fantastic cooling power of this unit. It's massive, yes, but very few CPU coolers can match it in thermal dissipation or in how quiet it is, definitely worth buying. **NAG**
- Neo Sibeko

9

SPECS

Weight
1.25Kg (with both fans)
Dimensions
159 x 140 x 171mm
Socket
AMD FM1, AM2, AM3+ / INTEL 775 - 1155
Fans
2x140mm

PLUS

- Cools very well
- Quiet
- Comes in 5 colours

MINUS

- Too many parts
- Not very attractive

BOTTOM LINE

One of the most underrated CPU coolers on the market, but it's easily one of the best yet.



Akill 100 Mini

Supplier TT3 Digital **Website** www.akill.net **RRP** R14,999

Whoever invented the term “dynamite comes in small packages” probably couldn’t do the basic math that proves if you had a bigger package, you could have even more dynamite, which is obviously better than having less of it – but the point still stands, and it’s for that reason I’ll use that classic cliché when referring to this little beast notebook.

You can see the specs for yourself, and it’s a wonder that the manufacturers managed to fit so much power into this tiny machine. But its size also comes with a cost of high heat levels. A single tiny fan spins at great speeds to exhaust the heat produced by the notebook’s internals, which causes undesirable levels of heat from the left-side vent (and noise levels to match), but even with the fan doing everything it can, the exact spot where you’d rest your left hand during gaming becomes uncomfortably warm within minutes. Add to that the fact that the keyboard is too small for any reasonably long gaming sessions, and it becomes clear that this machine is intended to be used with a separate keyboard. Of course, seasoned LAN gamers will already have their favoured keyboard, mouse and monitor, so this machine should fit in well with any LAN plans.

So, power – how much does this little guy have? Lots, as it turns out. We put it through its paces in a variety of games and were very impressed. *Crysis 2* managed to chug along at a cool 30 frames per second during the game’s opening scene at the extreme setting; *Tribes: Ascend* (which comes preloaded on this machine, along with a few other free-to-play titles – a nice touch) scooped 48 FPS on ultra; *Resident Evil*’s benchmark tool spat out an average frame rate of 86.7; *Hard Reset* managed 31.1 at ultra; and *Sniper Elite* could handle itself on its high graphics setting at 27.1.

- Geoff Burrows

8

SPECS

CPU
Intel Core
i7-3610QM @
2.3GHz
GPU
NVIDIA GT 650M
2GB
RAM
8GB DDR3
1,600MHz
(upgradeable to
16GB)
Display
11.6" LCD @
1366x768
Storage
Kingmax XM13
120GB SSD
(upgradeable to
larger SSD or 1TB
hybrid HDD)
Optical drive
External USB
DVD-R
Connectivity
2x USB 3.0, 1x
USB 2.0, Wi-Fi
802.11 a/b/g/n,
Bluetooth, 9-in-1
memory
card
reader

PLUS

- Performance
- SSD storage

MINUS

- Lots of heat and noise

BOTTOM LINE

A highly capable small gaming notebook that could fry an egg as well as it runs *Crysis 2*.



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GG



These are the DayZ of our lives

What makes a game, a game? It's one of those ostensibly disingenuous questions that almost inevitably leads to some sort of drab checklist of this, that, and the other totally obvious thing - rules, context, objectives, maybe narrative, a definitive start and a game over¹. The *DayZ* zombie survival sim mod for *ARMA 2* has none of these things. It doesn't even have a proper user interface, although I can't decide if that's part of its whole zombie apocalypse vogue or simply an egregious failure of design.

Anyway, the point is that in an FPS catalogue preponderated by the been-there, done-that predictable, *DayZ* is entirely unique and - more than anything else, perhaps - defies our expectations of what exactly a game should be made up of.

At the time of writing this, I've survived six days in Chernarus, approximately 99.8% of that time spent prone. I've got myself a ghillie suit, night-vision goggles, and a backpack stuffed full of antibiotics, morphine, and baked beans.

I've killed around 80 zombies, some with a hatchet, but most with a sniper rifle I found in a tent on a hill about three clicks west of Petrovka. It's better to avoid close confrontation. In fact, it's better to avoid confrontation altogether. I've learned that lesson the hard way, several times over now. I've also learned that it's safer to move around in darkness, to avoid urban zones unless it's absolutely necessary, and that closing doors the wrong way can break my legs².

And maybe that's the most significant aspect of the game - it's not what makes it, but what you make of it. Without any predefined purpose to it besides staying alive, it's up to the player to decide what to do, and how best to go about doing it, and if you mess up, you'll probably die. Just like a real zombie apocalypse, right down to my boyfriend shutting himself up in a house and abandoning me as shrieking bait for the three shamblers who'd suddenly turned up because I



didn't get there in time³.

Is this the next big thing in games? Whether or not it's actually sustainable in the longer term remains to be seen, but if nothing else for the moment, it's an extraordinary exercise in emergent gameplay that discards all established convention and forces the player to think for themselves rather than adhere to a script. Drama and tension are created through contingency with real consequences instead of cutscenes and artificial checkpointing, and that's something I want to see more of. **NAG**

- Tarryn van der Byl

1 I would also have added spaceships and chainsaws, but that's more of a personal preference.

2 I'd definitely put that last one down to an egregious failure of design, though.

3 It's a legitimate strategy, I suppose. He was eaten a bit later, so it all worked out.

Extra Life

By Scott Johnson - ©2012 All rights reserved - Myextralife.com



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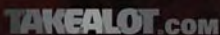
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