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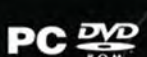
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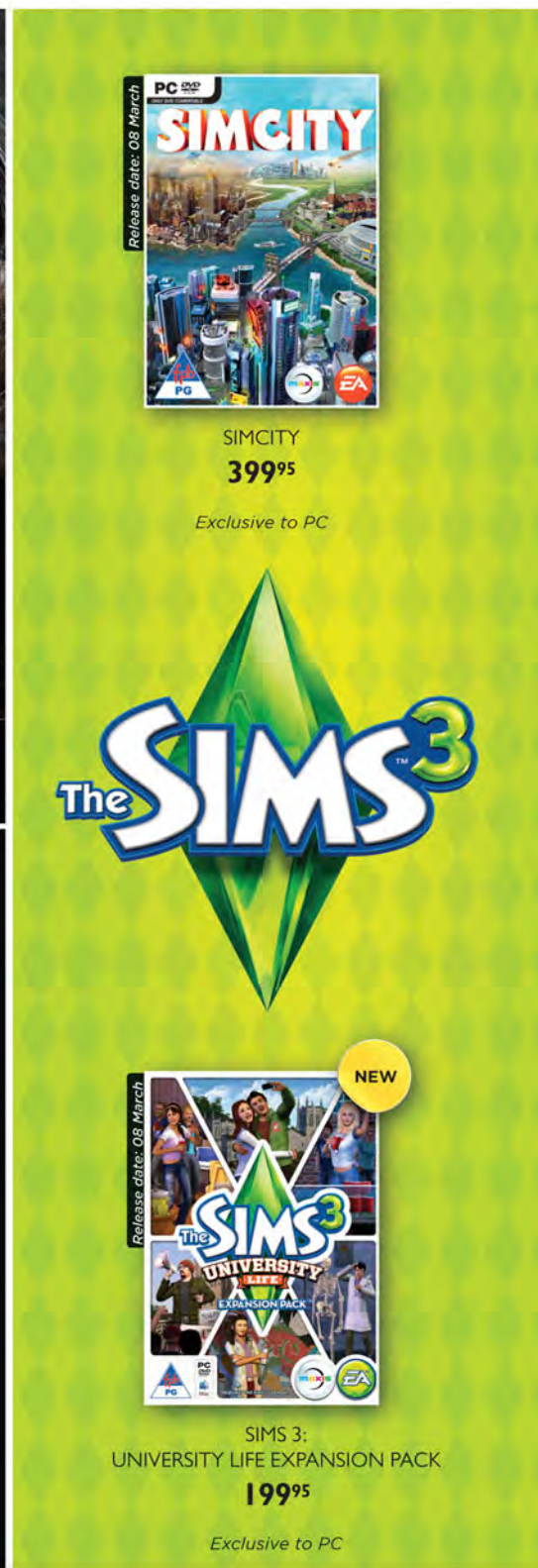
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Features

30 IT'S TIME TO GO MOBILE

If this mobile feature has its way, using your mobile phone purely as a means to make phone calls and send texts to your mom will be a thing of the past. Instead, you'll be introduced to the magical world of mobile gaming, where hours-long queues are made at least 55% less frustrating.

36 PREVIOUSLY, ON STARCRAFT...

Heart of the Swarm! It'll be upon us very soon, and in case you need some brushing up on your *StarCraft* history, we've brought you this handy synopsis to fill you in on where the story stands.

48 SIMCITY ▲

You know that thing bored gamers do in *The Sims* where they send their virtual people for a swim and then remove the pool ladder – and with it their only means of actually exiting the pool? Well, imagine doing stuff like that, but on a city-wide scale. That's *SimCity*, and we want to tell you all about it.



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CHANGE

I don't like too much change in the gaming industry. A little change is good but then it must be headed in a direction that I approve of or don't care about because it doesn't affect me. Here's the clarity: I've been gaming for a long time and over the years I've only ever seen improvement and changes for the better. Better graphics is the obvious one for most but for me it's really more about the types of games and complexity of the environments and the innovation and surprises we see occasionally. From then to now the industry has travelled light years (my perspective). I know that we're not saturated yet and there will be many more amazing things to see and do in the world of games for decades to come.

Trends I don't like and that have somehow just become acceptable to us gamers include the following: this idea that DLC is something to be charged for – you know, little bits of game that should have been included in the original box. Pay-to-win content is another. Electronic Arts thinking that it's okay to charge people for materials in a game (scrap metal and tungsten) to build better guns sooner is not cool. You don't have to do it, but "you can if you want to" isn't a good justification. Auction houses, "free to play" and DRM incentives preventing you from selling your property second-hand; I could go on. I do understand that companies exist to make money (thanks Tarryn), but I'm more banging on about how they're going about this. It just feels slimy and greedy to me sometimes and I'd like you gamers to resist it strongly before it becomes just how we do things and then shortly after that gets much worse.

AUGMENTED REALITY

In this issue of NAG we're going to try something and we're looking for feedback, opinions and so on. In four places in the magazine (indicated in the contents page) we added live content. Using your phone and the instructions on this page can bring NAG to life. We like where this kind of technology is headed and is pretty much free of silly gimmicks that don't work like they should. So give it a try and see if you like it. Please send all your comments to letters@nag.co.za.

The app brings the physical and virtual worlds together by using smartphones and tablets. Augmented reality works by recognising Trigger Images, which could be images in print media, objects or real-world locations.

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Look for this in the magazine »
(Not this page though LOL)



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3. Using the Aurasma app, scan any image/page/cover/advert where the purple "A" is located until the augmented reality content comes to life on your phone!
4. Double-tap the video to make it full screen and double-tap it again to return it to its original state.



Scan this QR code to subscribe to the NAG channel, or search for NAG Magazine within Aurasma, or go directly to this URL from your mobile phone: auras.ma/s/su2Ko/

Later you lovely people.
- RedTide
Editor



ALL THE THINGS

Michael Ragusi is also known as CaptainCanada (this is because that's where he's from). How do we know that? Easy – we invited him and a plus one to the NAG office to see where we work, meet the team, enjoy a free lunch and get free stuff (including a lifetime subscription to NAG). Why was he bestowed this honour? Simple – he completed the 60 Things challenge we set down for you readers in our December 2012 issue. If you want to read the article and see the results, everything is on this month's DVD (in the extras folder). The best way to experience it is to read each challenge on the .PDF pages and then see Michael's interpretation. We must say here again that we never thought in a million years anyone would actually get through these 60 tasks and send them to us. It's an impressive feat and we're sure it changed a life. Special thanks must go to Frontosa who kindly sponsored a 3D card and PSU for his efforts. Thanks guys – you are the best.




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INBOX

LETTER OF THE MONTH MARCH 2013

From: Rowan

Subject: Racism in gaming today

I hope the start of the new year has given you guys the strength to keep up the amazing work with, without a doubt South Africa's greatest gaming magazine. [More or less, Ed] So like the person I am, I'll be getting strait to the point: racism in gaming.

Quite recently I have purchased a copy of Call of Duty: Black Ops 2. First of all, it's a great game and worth anybody's time, but damn sometimes online gaming can really put a guy down. To me games are a way to forget about the problems we face in life and to escape into another world, and have a ton of fun while at it! Well, most of the time that is. Recently while playing Black Ops 2 online on my good old PlayStation 3, I've come across many types of people, old young and sometimes insanely weird, but never racist. That all changed a few days ago – this young kid (I would guess is about 12 - 13) started going on a rant about white supremacy and called me all sorts of names, all because I constantly beat him in our confrontations while

playing. The first thing I thought was, what would his parents do if they heard him talking like that? Did they allow that kind of behaviour? I really don't want this sort of thing spreading and becoming a norm, especially among the youth of this country and especially in our growing gaming community. I understood the implications of such behaviour but I just could not come to report him for what was said. I hope as the gaming community of SA we can overcome such hostility toward each other and move forward.

Report him. People like that have no place in our community and need to be pointed out and punished. I find it disgusting when I hear and see that kind of thing online. The sad part is that it's not just kids being ignorant but some adults too. The way to deal with them is to report them each and every time without fail. If everyone reported low life garbage like that they would eventually go away. It's just a small group of morons that bring everyone down not the majority thank goodness. Ed.

From: Lohan

Subject: Game tester

I am a 24 Year old gamer and dedicate most of my life to playing games. The reason that I wrote this email [uh typed] is because I wanted to know how I can get into Beta testing for games. I have done some extensive research on game testers and what the job requires off you. I have tried looking online for companies in South Africa that might hire people but could not really find any. It seems that most companies are situated overseas and that if I want to apply for such job I need to prepare myself for some flight time. If you maybe have any information on company/companies that might hire I would be thankful.

Every few months I get a letter like this and this is what I tell them. There is no such job as a game tester anywhere in

in South Africa. Game developers and publishers usually have in-house teams that beta test their games – a process that will destroy your soul, I promise you that. The only time gamers can test games is when they're released as public betas. I suggest getting a real job and giving up this fantasy. Ed.

From: Muhammad

Subject: Co-op campaign games

Why haven't there been many co-op campaign games being released lately. The best and most recent co-op campaign (where it's the same as the single player campaign) I've played was Call of Duty World at War (one of my favourite games) and Haze. Co-op campaigns brought that joy of killing people in a game with your friend. Those

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



LETTER OF THE MONTH

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

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

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Better mail: letters@nag.co.za

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games were the best and sold millions of copies. I'm not sure when Haze was release but I still play it every weekend. I know that there's multiplayer and stuff like that, but playing through the single player campaign with a friend is just amazing. If any new games come out this year with a co-op campaign I promise you now I will pre order it. Please could you tell me why big brands like Activision and Ubisoft have stopped making those awesome co-op campaign games? Also, on page 30 in the description of this month's bounty, valued is spelt valed. Just sending this message because I think your mag is awesome and I don't want people to say it's bad.

If Haze is your benchmark for a fun time then you really need to get out more and try some of the new games out there. Two examples that come to mind are Borderlands 2 and Dead Space 3 (although I feel playing co-op takes a lot away from the horror game experience). Dead Space aside, you simply can't beat Borderlands 2 for fun times with a few mates. Here's a site you might find useful: www.co-optimus.com. Good luck.

As for the spelling error, we try to catch them all each month but there's always something that slips past. Four people check the magazine each month for mistakes so any error that ends up in print really deserves to be there. Ed.

From: Hendrik

Subject: None given

I would. Like to know if your company buy's game idea's. I have an idea of a game of a competition we have at my work place. The game will roughly be like Olympics, winter games or summer athletics however more interesting and challenging. The game will be a seller as it has a kick ass story line and meaning behind. All countries worldwide participate in this event. I have videos showing every detail of the event.

As much as I like the sound of your well-constructed and highly detailed idea, NAG does not buy game ideas. We're a magazine about games and we do not make games. Game developers make games – not magazines. I hope this clears up the confusion and next time don't send mail to everyone at a company (without a subject line) because that's just annoying and immediately tells us you're about as sharp as a bag full of wet mice. Ed.

From: Zandre

Subject: An idea

Sense I was 9 years old and played games on floppy disks I had a dream to work with computers and it got worse with time but also games got a lot cooler. I made matriculated two year ago so is relatively new to everything out there but I have a dream and a idea no idea if it would work but would be awesome if it does. I want to start a lan network in each continent and country if possible. So if there is people join or whatever the case may be we can have an intercontinental competition and if we have other country's a world championship in categories witch a prizes for each of them like it suites them. The reason I haven't tried it is because I don't have the finance to do so and even if I did almost everybody has internet and I don't see why people cant do it over the internet. Well that's my dream maybe just a dream maybe you can make something with it would be pretty sweet.(sorry if the spelling sucks I'm originally Afrikaans).

...!/? Ed

From: Fanie

Subject: Sample

I love the NAG and I get it every month, but I just feel as if something is missing. I read in the February issue that you are remodelling the mag in April and I would like to nominate a change or two. Firstly, I couldn't help but notice the lack of hardware for gamers on a tight budget, maybe you could add like a budget section or page or something, something like a budget dream machine of sorts.

And secondly, how about doing an Afrikaans issue? I realised at Rage last year that there are a lot of Afrikaans speaking gamers. I think that it could

ON THE FORUMS

Before you got out and look for Easter eggs, give us a shout:

www.nag.co.za/forums

Q: What concept/event/sport/thing would you like turned into a simulation game?

“Unemployment Simulator. You just sit inside and play video games all day”

Acinixys

“Band Manager. The premise - You assemble a band, interview artists and put together the right group to get the correct synergy. You manage the band, find them gigs, venues, create merchandise and get them record contracts, etc. I would play the absolute doo-doo out of that game.”

Nfermo

“A chameleon simulator. And you have to play with two screens (or split screen), one for each eye. And I will name mine Karma.”

CrashHelmut



“I've never seen an educational institution sim. One that would let you run a Primary School, High School or a University would be cool. You'd compete with other schools to get the highest pass rate and release the brightest students, try to attract massive companies and let them invest in your school, or even try to form a branch of schools across various countries/continents.”

Cpt.Monde

open the eyes of people saying that gaming will never be a big thing (not that it isn't already.) but I think changes like that would alter people.

I recently had my first driving lesson, and I couldn't help but realise that I suck. I didn't even know how important a clutch was until that day. I am used to playing racing games such as NFS and DiRT, and I thought that this would at least give me a general feel of how a car should be driven, but boy was I wrong. All they ask you to do is to push the accelerator and brake once or twice on a circuit. It doesn't help young drivers even a little bit (even though it still is fun.)

I believe that developers such as criterion and Codemasters should think about releasing a driving simulator that would actually encourage young gamers to abide by the road rules and regulations and not curse like a Call of Duty player that just got killed. It should not be

anything major, just a F2P game that offers awards like wallpapers and cool skins or stuff like that for considerate driving. Something that could help learning drivers for the better, not get their hopes up and then crush them.

Furthermore I just want to say thanks for the great mag and keep being as epic as you have always been.

Cheap hardware: check out www.nag.co.za; we do a guide like that every month – mouse over the Technology menu item. As for Afrikaans, it's a great idea but will never happen. The costs associated with this are too high and then how many Afrikaans ones do we print versus English ones and then soon we'll have to do NAG in all 11 official languages. In other news, I'm glad you've figured out that real life and games are different. That whole realistic driving thing made me laugh. Ed.

From: Brodi
Subject: Easter Eggs

So being the 15 year old gamer I am, I never used to pay attention to Easter eggs, just the senseless killing of wave after wave of killing bad guys and playing FIFA... but then I came across a letter about Easter eggs in NAG a few months back. It changed my gaming life – forever. I now find myself looking for Easter eggs and secrets and finishing a game 100% before moving on to the next one. I bought myself the original Borderlands recently. WOW. Longest game I've taken to finish. I eventually (with the help of my older brother) finished the game with 100% completion. Now I find that finishing a game takes a lot more time looking for every secret and Easter egg and all that. I'm glad playing games has become even more fun now. Thank you random guy who wrote that letter. And thank you NAG for publishing that letter.

NAG and some random guy are happy to help. If we can improve gaming for anyone then our work is done. Ed.

From: Matthew
Subject: Umm...
 Who the heck is Shryke?

Shryke is Ramjet and Ramjet is Walt Pretorius – I thought everyone knew that. He asked to have his name changed in the magazine because he wants to use Ramjet for something else. I told him he is mad, we laughed a little and then looked serious again so I changed it. I really hope he didn't want this to be kept a secret. Ed.

From: Christiaan
Subject: NAG PDF
 So I was reading the NAG magazine and got a great idea: have you ever wanted to read the NAG without having to carry around the lumpy old magazine? How about you guys over at the NAG offices put a PDF copy of that month's magazine on the DVD. This way people can read the magazine on their tablet/eReader when and wherever they want. So think about it and maybe try it out this month and ask for feedback.

We are available on Zinio (www.zinio.com) as a digital magazine. You just don't get the DVD, but of course it is cheaper. Ed.

From: Rachel
Subject: CD Pictures?
 When I'm browsing the demos (on the DVD) I would like a picture like what the game looks like because I base my decisions on playing games on those. Okay, what I'm trying to ask is will you include an image of in-game play along with the description of the demo? Please tell me if you don't understand this e-mail. I'm not very good at explaining myself.



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.

creation102: "Have to say NAG has been an inspiration in my designing career with all the extras that you guys include on the DVD. So I thought it was time for me to submit some Fan art."

I understand you just fine. We have included images on this DVD because we're testing a new interface for the April issue of NAG. So magically your request has been granted. I do think including the images is a good idea but you should try all games before judging them based on what they look like. Just think of all the cool experiences you'll miss if you always judge a game based on its graphics. Ed.

From: Liam
Subject: Most games these days are getting boring...
 Hey NAG today I realized that games these days are getting kind of boring. I remember the first time I played a game on the Xbox 360 I was gobsmacked at the amazing quality of the games, they were so innovative, different and the graphics were unbelievable compared with the PlayStation 2 I had at the time. So fast forward a few years and I'm unwrapping my very own Xbox 360, spending hours and days into every game I got but now I play all the campaign missions a lot of side missions and just get bored with it. Most first person shooters I finish in a day, and everyone is pretty much the same as the last in terms of game play I can spend hours on a game and finish it then feel like playing it again and just end up doing something else. What happened to the innovation the creativity the differences? Another thing the over advertising and the hundreds of trailers for every game I was a bit disappointed in playing Far Cry 3 because in the trailers almost every scene that had Vaas in it I had already seen in a trailer shouldn't more information about games be kept under wraps by the developers? So there's actually a surprise when you play the

THE SHORTS

Extracts of n00b from NAG letters

"Ok I know this sounds really dumb but I need help on my gaming. I've been reading these magazines and they are awesome but I really never get to try what I want out because I don't have enough money to do so. So I was wondering if you guys at NAG could give me an overhaul on my gaming."
 - Deven

Any chance you guys could include an average price range for the games in your reviews in the future
 - Adam

In South Africa we like stuff, we like to hold it, stroke it and generally feel that tangible goodness
 - Simon

game not I already know every aspect of game play and a good portion of the story?

Please use more punctuation. Also, if you're sick of the mainstream try the indie scene. There are so many great games hiding in there and always something for all tastes. You'll be shocked. Ed.

ON TWITTER

Quack like a duck @nagcoza



Riccardo Bortolussi
 @nagcoza just got my dad to stock nag magazine at his shop!! Never going to miss another NAG again!!

Skye Renda
 @nagcoza you guys are my heroes. All you guys are awesome. Especially Miktar. He's my role model. I'm a straight guy, but I love him :)

Alexander Bossi
 Driving up to PE to start studying on Monday. BSC Computer Science. One step closer to my dream of developing games!

Jason Wills
 Gamer Confession, I have never finished Slender or SCP-087, oh the pixelated horror @nagcoza

Daniel Hallinan
 @nagcoza Hey guys, finally got the 25 days of giving parcel! Thanks a lot! Brownie points for the badger stickers :D



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I, Gamer

I played a JRPG, and I liked it

If you've been reading my column for any length of time (and if you have then you are my favourite person ever) then you'll know that I have this aversion to JRPGs. I've always reviled them, and in the twenty-five or so years that I've been engrossed in gaming I've secretly enjoyed wearing my heart on my sleeve when it comes to this subject. Since forever, I've had no qualms in stating that JRPGs are awful. I've thought this for a number of reasons, but the biggest for me is that the genre wrests control from the player. In the JRPGs that I've had brief dealings with (because I cannot bring myself to last longer than an hour or two before dying of boredom) gameplay is reduced to navigating linear environments devoid of engaging interactivity. Likewise, combat is reduced to a nest of menus and submenus. Character customisation is all too often absent, and in the average JRPG, your endgame character will be identical to mine. It's a controlled, clinical gaming experience from start to finish and I've yet to find a JRPG that has elicited anything in me other than nausea.

“Since forever, I've had no qualms in stating that JRPGs are awful.”

And then *Ni no Kuni: Wrath of White Witch* found its way into my PlayStation 3.

I know: for somebody so vehemently at odds with the genre, it's a weird sentence to write. I'd say that I tripped and fell and the disc just stuck itself in there, but that wouldn't explain why I had it in the first place. Like many, many geeks I juggled my high school and varsity free time between playing video games and watching anime; yeah I don't know how I'm married either. I don't think I got quite into anime as much as some people do, but I enjoyed stuff like *Fullmetal Alchemist* and fell in love with the short but captivating *FLCL*. What has continued to strike a chord with me, however, is the work of Studio Ghibli. I didn't know it was an anime at the time, but I remember renting *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* from a video shop when I was about seven or eight. Back then it was called *Warriors of the Wind*, and it was the bastardised American dub that Studio Ghibli would later ask fans to forget about. Still, it was my first taste of anime and the beginning of my love affair with Studio Ghibli – a love affair that would prove strong enough to stifle a 25-year-long loathing of a particular genre of video game.

Since I learnt of its existence, I had this inkling in the back of my mind that Studio Ghibli and Level 5's *Ni no Kuni* might end up being the exception to my “no JRPGs” rule. If I'm honest, I kind of hoped it would be more than that and end up becoming my gateway to JRPG nirvana. While I have enjoyed my time with the game (give or take a few boss battles and a rather boring section about midway through) I don't think I'm going to be diving into the *Final Fantasy* series any time soon. Still, the game's charms have won me over, but is that thanks to Ghibli's world or the game as a whole? It's probably the former but I'm willing to concede this one to any JRPG fans I may have offended in the past – you're right: there might be something to this genre. *Might be.*

- Miklós Szecsei

New PlayStation this year?

AMD CPU, multi-touch controller and biometric feedback a possibility



It's time to spin that rumour mill again, this time in the direction of the PlayStation 4, or Orbis as it's currently codenamed.

Much of the recent rumour-mongering surrounding Sony's next-gen console is centred around something that'll happen on the 20th of February, which is after the time of writing, so we'll wildly guess and look proud if we landed on some truth. If any of the rumours are to be believed, Sony will announce the price and this year's release date of the PS4 on that day, but it seems a little early if you ask us, and, judging by almost every console launch ever, even if it is confirmed then, much is likely to change before its launch. Regardless, Japanese daily *Asahi Shimbun* seems to think that the console will be announced with a launch price of ¥40,000 which is a terrifying R5,700 when converted.

Another rumour looks at the

new Dual Shock controller which is said to have a multi-touch screen integrated into its front, as well as biometric feedback devices on the back to measure bodily activities like temperature and heart rate. If this turns out to be true it'll be along similar lines of Valve's Gabe Newell's plans for the Steam Box.

Lastly, there's talk by Eurogamer's Digital Foundry that Orbis will sport an 8-core 1.6GHz AMD APU mated to a next-generation AMD GPU with power comparable to the Radeon 7970M. What's interesting is the remarkably similar rumour that also claims the next Xbox to have an eight-core, 1.6GHz AMD CPU. If it turns out that these two consoles use identical processors we'll be shocked, but it would make a lot of sense for both Sony and Microsoft to take a step back and make use of already available technology to cut down on costs, so anything is possible.

Elementary, my dear Cthulhu

Frogwares Games might be best known as the developers of the *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* series, but now a group of breakaways from the studio has formed a new company called 3 AM Games and is preparing to branch out into the realm of first-person physics puzzle Cthulhu action. You read that right.

Courtesy of new crowd-funding website Gamesplanet Lab, 3 AM recently secured sufficient funding to complete their ambitious project entitled *Magrunner: Dark Pulse*, with the support of Frogwares. The game takes place in a cyberpunk future where competitors in a futuristic sport involving the completion of a series of challenging puzzle rooms using magnetic manipulation are trapped in the arena by the forces of the tentacle-muzzled demon-god Cthulhu. Players will have to navigate through the rooms and somehow face off against the monstrous creature. We sort of lost the plot at this stage but hey – cyberpunk visuals, puzzle-shooter gameplay and every Lovecraft-quoter's favourite deity; you can't go wrong. Well you definitely can, but this one looks like it won't. Yay indie!



Flash back to the future



Often described as *Prince of Persia* with guns, the 1992 classic platform game *Flashback* is reportedly making a return in the form of *Flashback Origins*. Now, before you get too giddy, we cannot confirm this information but its source seems strong enough so we'll file this under "ohboyohboyohboy I hope this is real" until further notice.

If the rumours are to be believed, *Flashback Origins* will retain its 2D roots (for traversal, at least), and may be as simple as a remake for modern systems. It's reportedly being developed by VectorCell – the studio behind the dismal *Amy* – and will be published by Ubisoft for release on PSN and XBLA sometime this year.

XNA IS DEAD

Despite being used to develop the hugely successful indie titles *Fez* and *Bastion*, among many others, XNA has begun its steady decline into death.

It was initially suggested in a personal blog by XNA's development head Promit Roy and later confirmed through a report by Polygon: Microsoft has will no longer develop new versions of XNA, effectively sealing its fate and ensuring that by time the next Xbox launches there won't be a single person bothering with the indie-friendly development framework. This move has lead indie development communities to worry that the next Xbox won't include any support for XBL Indie Games, but this has neither been confirmed nor denied by Microsoft.

EXPECT A LOT MORE FAR CRY

Good news: *Far Cry 3* did exceptionally well, shipping over 4.5 million copies worldwide since its December 2012 release! Hooray! Bad news: Ubisoft's CEO Yves Guillemot has said that he intends to milk the series to death based on this success. Awww...

Okay, his exact words were "we now have greater visibility in terms of future revenue and profitability for this franchise," which means we can expect to see a lot more from this series in the coming years. Heck, this could even be Ubisoft's *Call of Duty!* Try to act excited, because this could actually be a half decent thing.



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Hyper 212X introduces new features to the incredibly popular 212 series - New Smart Fan Engine, 4th Generation Bearing and the fin array with a new Tunnel Effect Technology. The redesigned fan-blades and aluminum fin-blades have both been optimized to create micro vortices that boost the airflow and circulate it around the heatpipes. Hyper 212X is compatible with all current socket types, including Intel LGA 2011 and FM1.



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The Game Stalker



Those were the days my friend...

In the days before DRM...

In a time when developers didn't constrain your game licence to a single console... We used to borrow games from our friends. Now before I get into this topic more substantially, I need to take a quick detour into my lending policy. I'm very protective over my things and I absolutely hate lending something to a friend only to receive it back in appalling condition. This applies not only to games, but to books as well. If a game comes back scratched, I will get upset. If a book comes back torn or the cover stained by your coffee cup, I will get upset.

After being burned on more than one occasion, I have taken to lending things only to my closest friends in the understanding that if it comes back damaged, especially if it's unapologetically (I'm not a complete tyrant, I understand these things do happen accidentally), you will never borrow things from me again.

Ever.

Don't misread this and think I'm being selfish [I'm with you on this 100%, I actually lie and tell people I don't have what they're trying to lend, Ed]. I will happily lend things if I know they will be returned in the condition in which they were received. I respect your things, you must respect mine.

With the launch of the next next-gen consoles on our doorstep, buying second-hand games or even borrowing them from our friends might become a thing of the past.

And whilst I sadly understand why things are going this way (even though I don't entirely agree with it), it does make me reminisce about the days where games used to do the rounds among friends on a floppy disk.

Yes, I am that old. And I still giggle a little at the words floppy and stiffy disk. It's inevitable. You can't really say those words without cringing slightly in embarrassment.

I was flabbergasted (yes that's right, flabbergasted) to hear from a friend the other day that he discovered people that don't even know what the save file icon actually is. If you're equally shocked then you join me in what I'm now beginning to think of as the "Golden Oldies" club.

I remember playing games where the entire game came on a series of seven or eight disks, and as you changed environments you would need to change disks accordingly. The game would freeze and a message would pop up instructing you to "Insert disk 97 to continue". As you changed disks you would then hear the drive reading the file (with a *clrrr clrrr clrrr* sound) and the game would miraculously jumpstart once again.

Perhaps this is why we still grumble when Xbox games come on more than one disc. Yes we all know that Blu-ray holds more information than DVD-ROMs, but it reminds me of my first PC gaming days of changing disks. Sure it doesn't take long, but somehow I still resent it. It breaks my immersion and the illusion that everything is seamless.

I remember the days that games used to come with both floppy and stiffy disks in the box because there wasn't an industry standard. The box was just smaller than A4 and used to occupy a massive amount of space on your shelf. In fact I think I still have a couple of those somewhere (I might have to go and dig those up).

I guess if the developers have their way I will no longer have to worry about lending games to friends and receiving them back damaged.

Then why does that make me sad?

- Pippa Tshabalala

Ex People Can Fly devs working on "weird fiction horror" game



A bunch of former People Can Fly (they responsible for *Painkiller* and *Bulletstorm*, and have most recently worked on *Gears of War: Judgment*) developers have gone on to form a new studio called The Astronauts, and they've announced their first project. Dubbed *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter*, it's described as a "weird fiction horror" game that draws inspiration from disturbing tales of the 20th century. The Astronauts say the game is designed to be played alone at night, with nothing but a set of headphones to keep you company. They also say their goal is to "evolve immersive storytelling in games".

You play the role of a detective with the unearthly ability to visualise the scenes of lethal crimes. Your current case involves a kidnapped boy, and your priority is to save him before it's too late, using a combination of detective tools

and your supernatural skills.

According to Adrian Chmielarz, the game's designer, it will be devoid of combat and focus instead on exploration. "Take *Dear Esther*, add gameplay, murder and corpses," said Chmielarz in an interview with *Eurogamer*. "That's the closest to what *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter* is." He also added that it'll have a greater level of interactivity than *Dear Esther*, and that "the focus is not on mind bending puzzles, but on unsettling discoveries."

"What we care about the most is that the players feel like they're really there. Immersion is our number one priority," says Chmielarz. "It's a game about exploration and discovery. We're not abandoning the gameplay – on the contrary: we're trying to strip it down to the bone and make sure it's always meaningful and truly makes the experience better." The game is set to launch sometime this year on PC.

Ouya refresh expected annually



The fist-sized, Android-based home console Ouya made a lot of big promises when it punted its way to \$8.6 million in Kickstarter pledges last year, but they failed to mention one tiny detail that might put off prospective buyers: there'll be a new Ouya every year.

"There will be an Ouya 2 and an Ouya 3," said Ouya CEO Julie Ehrman in a recent interview with Engadget. "We'll take advantage of faster, better processors; take advantage of prices falling. So if we can get more than 8GB of flash in

our box, we will."

At its current rate, Ouya will already be old tech when it launches this June, running on NVIDIA's Tegra 3 chipset just as Tegra 4 launches, but Ehrman assures customers that all Ouya games will be backwards-compatible, and you'll be able to take your game-laden account with you to any future console. Still, it's a bit of a blow to those who expected to get the typical 3-5 years of life out of this little \$99 machine, but then again, perhaps that was just wishful thinking.

A vocal minority on Borderlands 2's Tiny Tina: "THAT'S RACIST!"



What did you think of our "Best and Worst of 2012" feature in the January issue? We had a laugh putting that together, but not as much of a laugh as we all had when we encountered Tiny Tina in *Borderlands 2*. This is why we felt compelled to award her the prize for "Best New Character in an Existing IP". Little did we know that we were being *totally* racist for doing so.

The Internet provides vocal and opinionated people with a handy soapbox to voice whatever the hell just popped into their pea-brains. In this instance, somebody decided to take offense at the character of Tiny Tina, because she's a little white girl using "African American lingo". Said offended person then hopped onto Twitter to accuse *Borderlands 2* writer Anthony Burch of being racist because he wrote the character and dialogue for Tiny Tina.

Because it's the Internet, many other people realised that they were also offended and so they rallied to the side of the first offended person. Eventually Burch had to issue the following statement: "The last thing I want to be is exclusionary or prejudiced so if Tina truly is problematic I'll change her. I'm just not convinced that a character using lingo like badonkadonk/crunk is inherently racist. If I'm wrong I would like to know why."

Home-made horror

We're all about the indie love around these parts, and sometimes that love extends to film, especially where video games are concerned. *What Remains* is an upcoming fan-made, independently produced horror film based on Naughty Dog's survival adventure *The Last of Us* that follows the lives of a few survivors living outside the safe zones. There's a trailer doing the rounds and it looks the business – filled with tense moments and monsters with fungus on their heads. We have no idea how much input Naughty Dog has on the project but if we were to hazard a guess, we'd say none.



SKYLANDERS: SWAP FORCE ANNOUNCED

Activision's not yet done scraping mountains off the back of the *Skylanders* series' immense success (over 100 million *Skylanders* figures have been sold to date), having recently announced *Skylanders: Swap Force* as this year's toy-laden offering. Toys for Bob is stepping aside for this instalment, leaving development of *Swap Force* to Vicarious Visions: which Activision says will give Toys for Bob breathing room to come up with their next big thing.

The game will be compatible with figures from *Spyro's Adventure* and *Giants*, but will also introduce 32 new figures: half of which are new core characters, while the remaining half are Swap Force characters. These characters will be made up of two parts, which are interchangeable to create up to 256 different combinations, each with their own attributes and abilities depending on the combined figures. In addition, levels will now feature elemental zones that will benefit *Skylanders* that match the element in play. Also, your in-game *Skylanders* will finally be able to jump.

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The Indie Investigator



Boarding pass

Occasionally, game developers seem to forget about board games as a viable design platform. That's understandable: for players, video games can be cheaper, more widespread and easier to set aside time for. And from the developer's side, it's often easier to publish and distribute an independent videogame with a satisfactory audience.

Regardless, board (and card) games are worth looking at as a design avenue, especially given the following:

Back in January, several dozen game developers took part in the Global Game Jam. South Africa had two venues (Cape Town and Johannesburg), and those familiar with the Jam will know that teams around the world were given two days to create a game focused around a specific theme (this year, oddly enough, the theme was a sound clip of a beating heart).

"... it's often easier to publish and distribute an independent video game with a satisfactory audience."

What fewer people realise is that board games were *also* accepted as entries in this competition, and there's always been at least one South African board game entrant in the past couple of Jams. As a participant in the Cape Town leg of the Jam this year, I noticed some interesting things about the board game group compared to everyone else:

(1) It was easier for them to prototype and dump board game ideas. There was no overhead, no code to be written, no sprites to be drawn. Even the most sensibly-minded video game prototype still had to put in a fair bit more effort than a squad who could build up and test an entire rule set with a few tokens and some scribbles on paper. The board game crew burned through one or two dud ideas before hitting their main product. And they still managed to fit in extra testing time.

(2) On-the-fly adjustments could be made far more easily. Core rule set changes were introduced often (even on the last day) and they ended up working well. Board game designers cannot "code themselves into a corner" as easily.

(3) The board game category allowed the involvement of one or two designers who were intimidated by the long hours and specialised skills of making stuff dance on a computer screen. This was great, especially in a local context where the industry is still so small and a lot of people become intimidated with development.

(4) Most importantly: this year's board game group did exceptionally well overall. They won several prizes in the final judging process (this was not a broader Jam feature, mind you, just something organised by our particular venue). Their game was played by most of the other Jammers at some point or another, and actually served as a great way for many to relax and take a break from their own projects. Score!

Board games don't have as flashy a presence as video game development in South Africa, but there are still several inroads that are supported by groups such as MGSA. It's just important to realise which avenues you should take if you want to get exposure. Submitting rule sets and layouts online isn't always the best way to do this, but participating in Jam events or bringing your work to developer meet ups will almost guarantee you a lot of exposure and (more importantly!) a very useful bout of play testing. If you're intimidated by the idea of learning *How To Computer*, board games are a fantastic alternative route to take.

- Rodain Joubert

Crytek will "transition entirely" to free-to-play games within 5 years



Ask any PC gamer which developer is currently pushing the platform to its limits, and chances are they'll say Crytek. The German-based developer has given us eye-candy like the original *Far Cry* and all of the *Crysis* games. When one thinks Crytek, one ordinarily thinks AAA shooters. It's therefore a little disconcerting to hear CEO Cevat Yerli say that his company has plans to abandon the traditional retail model in favour of free-to-play titles.

This shift in focus is part of what's become a ten year plan for the company, Yerli recently revealed, but the real shift began with the development of their upcoming free-to-play title *Warface*. The online, military multiplayer shooter is entirely free-to-play and will use Crytek's new social network and distribution platform GFACE as a springboard. This, Yerli believes, is the start of a new business identity for Crytek – one that marries "the quality of triple-A games with the business model of free-to-play".

A few years ago, Crytek was content to allow a few of their games to transition to free-to-play.

Now, however, Yerli claims that his company has been "observing, plainly – and we see this already with *Warface* – that the free-to-play market is on the rise. I think over the next two to three years, free-to-play is going to rival retail with quality games like *Warface*."

Yerli aims to have Crytek leading the charge in the free-to-play revolution. This is where GFACE comes in. You could think of GFACE as a sort of Steam for free-to-play games. Obviously that means it won't be reserved for Crytek titles only, but will be open to any third-party developer who has jumped on board the AAA free-to-play bandwagon. Yerli hopes to corner the market with GFACE, before another company like Valve fills the niche. Obviously, this means that Crytek's evolution will also require them to "transition from a developer to a service company." That's not to say that Crytek's development days are numbered; quite the contrary actually: "We are always going to be a games-first company. We will always have our own development because we are all about making games."

"Think about what you're leaving behind. This is not just about making money. I used to be embarrassed to say that we create art; I am no longer embarrassed to say that."

- Warren Spector, creator of *System Shock*, *Deus Ex* and *Epic Mickey*

Legen... wait for it...



If you crawled out of your comfort zone to buy the Wii U purely because *Rayman Legends* had you by the squishy bits, then we've got some sad times for you: just three weeks before its launch (which would've been about the same time you're reading this), Ubisoft announced that *Legends* has been pushed out to September to coincide with its release on PS3 and Xbox 360.

Yup, after making claims that *Rayman Legends* is only doable with the Wii U's Game Pad, the company has gone back on its word and subsequently angered flocks of raging Nintendo fanboys on the Internet. You should have seen it: things got messy. We sat on the wings and laughed at them, but not at you, not if you're the type who's now feeling betrayed or something. Anyway, it sucks, it's lame and the game was technically done so it's also rather dumb, but there you have it regardless.

Valve, J.J. Abrams hoping to collaborate on a movie



At DICE 2013, a keynote discussion between Valve co-founder Gabe Newell and acclaimed film director J.J. Abrams (*Star Trek*, *Super 8* and *Cloverfield*) pondered the essential storytelling differences between games and movies. Using scenes from their respective works (as well as the creations of others), the conversation ranged from how player agency can be a powerful method for conveying video game stories, to the ability of films to subtly guide the viewer by foreshadowing events.

It turns out that it was all merely a recap of talks Newell and Abrams have had in the past, which they now want to discuss more seriously. The talk wound down with Gabe saying, "We're going to try and figure out if we can make a *Half-Life* movie or a *Portal* movie together." Abrams added, "And we have a game idea we'd like to work with Valve on." Gabe ended the discussion with this gem: "It's time for our industries to stop talking about potential and really execute on it."

EPIC SHUTS DOWN IMPOSSIBLE STUDIOS, SHELVES INFINITY BLADE PREQUEL FOR INFINITY

Remember last year when *Kingdoms of Amalur* developers 38 Studios and Big Huge Games imploded due to mismanaged financials? Epic Games actually ended up hiring a lot of the staff members who had been let go during those closures. The newly hired group went on to create Impossible Studios under studio director Sean Dunn. They were given the project of developing *Infinity Blade: Dungeons* which was to be a prequel to the successful iOS series of the same name. They also got the coolest company logo in the universe of a horned grizzly bear sprouting wings as he roars majestically at the world.

Sadly, Epic Games has felt that things "weren't working out" and as a result they've closed Impossible Studios and put *Infinity Blade: Dungeons* on indefinite hold. You've got to feel bad for these poor people who just lost their jobs for the second time in a few months.



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Miktar's Meanderings



In your image quality

Skill, passion and pride alone are no longer enough. What gamers need is a spiritual package they can believe in. One that rewards faith with headshots and dedication with improved damage-over-time – we need technology-focused dogma to aim-assist morality, lifestyle, and spirituality.

Playganism: Playgans practice an ancient sin: enjoying themselves anywhere, with almost any type of game. They rarely refer to themselves as gamers, and simply turn to a readily available, convenient casual game when bored.

Installation Ritual: Playgan life does not actually have one, but an Internet connection is required.

Squclopiroth, Deity of JRPGs: A terrifying god able to summon a supermassive black hole from the centre of the galaxy that takes like five unskippable minutes and will kill your entire party because you didn't cast every defensive spell.

Installation Ritual: Squclopirothians must collect 9,999 of everything, and thus are likely to survive the inevitable apocalypse.

Latter-Day Neo-eSportarianism: Shifting to whatever game is currently getting the most viewers on twitch.tv, this movement's clergy is occupied by only a small fraction of gamers who can actually earn a living playing games.

Installation Ritual: An eFan only needs an Internet connection, but the Devout know the top players of the three most popular eSports and can speak fluent Korean.

The Cult of Technicore: Distinguished by their lack of interest in gameplay and over-enthusiasm for technical innovation. Technicore don't actually enjoy playing games, it's a wonder that they're still called gamers at all.

Installation Ritual: Completely snub a game simply because it doesn't have a specific technology.

Versudian & The Sainted Knights Of Block-Punch-Kick:

A goddess of togetherness, wishing to bring people together and have them beat the crap out of each other. The Fifth Commandment of Versudian: *Do not movespam others, lest they movespam at you.*

Installation Ritual: Induction into the hall of New Challengers is achieved by winning an entire match using nothing but counters. Or, losing to nothing but counters without rage-quitting.

The Gemini Frag: Related, but always at odds, are the twin deities of FPS. Rokkitbonce is hyperactive, the ever-bunnyhopping. Hedswat is considered, waiting for the perfect shot, setting up ambushes and conserving ammo.

Installation Ritual: Most Fraggers find worshipping only one of the brothers tiresome, and so alternate. The will to slag all other genres is needed to "Sit Between Thrones", as the inducted say.

The Lady: Her followers claim her divine works visible in the folds between turn-based and real-time, the micro and the macro. You must never invoke The Lady's true name, for she will abandon you mid-battle with a haughty "kekekekekeke".

Installation Ritual: Practice your micro every day. Watch every replay. Know the names of every stream caster. And perhaps then, the Lady will make you part of her Control Group.

- Miktar Dracon

So long, THQ

A few predicted this would happen but nobody really thought the day would come: THQ has officially been dissolved. Despite securing funding from investment company Clearlake following the publisher's Chapter 11 Bankruptcy filing, the rescue attempt apparently came in too late (and too cheap), and when THQ's assets went up for auction in January it was made clear that there's no future for the company.

Selling for a combined \$72 million, THQ's assets have officially been sold as such: having narrowly outbid Zenimax, SEGA has taken ownership of Relic, including the upcoming *Company of Heroes 2* (and is now the sole Warhammer video game publisher); Koch Media (aka Deep Silver) now owns Volition and the in-progress *Saints Row 4*, as well as the rights to publish *Metro*:

Last Light; Crytek has purchased the *Homefront* licence, which makes sense considering that's what they're currently working on; and Ubisoft has picked up THQ Montreal as well as the licence for *South Park: The Stick of Truth*.

As for Vigil Games, they were left out in the cold. Perhaps seen as a liability following its cancelled *Warhammer 40K MMORPG* (which THQ's former CEO Jason Rubin cites as a major contributing factor to the demise of THQ, along with the failed Wii uDraw system), the studio was torn apart: core members were scooped up by Crytek to form a new studio called Crytek USA Corp and the rest were employed by various other studios including *Bayonetta* developers Platinum Games. *Darksiders* will be added to a list of legacy titles to be auctioned off separately at a later date.



"I have seen so much chaos in the last 35 years. This may seem like an especially chaotic time, a uniquely tumultuous time, but really not so much. A lot of us here lived through when the 'end of arcades' meant the end of games, when the 'end of Atari' meant the end of games, when the PC supplanted the Apple II as the primary gaming platform – that was the end of games."

– Deus Ex creator Warren Spector on why you needn't worry about the future of the ever-evolving gaming industry

Rumour: LittleBigPlanet 3 is happening



If a report by VG247 is to be believed, *LittleBigPlanet 3* is in development right now at British developer Sumo Digital – recently responsible for *Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed*. According to VG247's anonymous sources, Sony and original *LBP* developer Media Molecule approached Sumo to make the game, which has supposedly been in development for "well over a year".

It's not like Sumo has no experience with *LBP* either, what with the studio having been outsourced to create *LBP 2*'s Cross-Controller Pack, which allows players to use their PlayStation Vitas to interact with the game. With Media Molecule having announced back in July 2011 that it was moving away from *LBP* development to create hyper-cute Vita exclusive *Tearaway*, it's no surprise that Sony immediately went on the prowl for a new developer to continue Sackboy's ever-charming adventures.

A good year ahead for Wii U

Nintendo knows better than anyone that software is what counts for a console, and this year's line-up is looking pretty good for the Wii U after its somewhat shaky start these last few months.

At a recent Wii U Direct conference, Ninty announced a ton of upcoming games from both first- and third-party studios. The big in-house gun Mario is set to make an appearance this year with more info coming at E3 along with *Mario Kart*, *Yoshi's Island* and *Smash Brothers*. There's also been confirmation of a new-ish *Zelda* title in the form of an HD remake of the highly successful *Wind Waker* on GameCube which looks fantastic in all its current-gen glory.

Titles from outside Nintendo include *Bayonetta 2*, which we already know a bit about, and a mysterious hint at something from Monolith Soft that is very likely to be a new game in the *Xeno* series. Most interesting was the news that the Wii U will see an RPG collaboration between *Fire Emblem* and *Shin Megami Tensei* from Atlus. How exactly the studio plans to marry dark fantasy with the demon-infested high school tactics seen in the *Persona* series is anyone's guess, but you can be sure it'll be weird.



SECOND HITMAN MOVIE FINDS ITS AGENT 47

Did you know that the first *Hitman* movie managed to rake in \$100 million worldwide? We've no clue how that's even possible, given that many people feel the film amounts to nothing more than a steaming mound of poop. Still, a reboot is in the works, and *Deadline* is reporting that Timothy Olyphant is to be replaced as Agent 47 by Paul Walker of *Fast and Furious* fame. Obtuse casting decisions aside, word has travelled down the news-vine that the movie (supposedly called *Agent 47*) will be written by the people behind *A Good Day to Die Hard*. Direction will be in the hands of first-time feature film director Aleksander Back. To be on the safe side, we'd advise that you not expect much from this at all.



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Resident Evil snaps back to reality

Praise be: Capcom has figured out that they were on the wrong track with the *Resident Evil* series. To be honest, we're fairly impressed: instead of blaming gamers for misunderstanding the series' ill-fitting action focus in *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City* and, to a slightly lesser extent, *Resident Evil 6*, producer Masachika Kawata has stated that he has "started to revise [his] opinion" after looking at "user feedback from the last couple of games". We'll have our hat with a dash of mustard, please.

As a part of his newfound sense, Kawata has announced that the return to form will begin with the HD port of the excellent and very



successful 3DS title *Resident Evil Revelations* to PC, Xbox 360, PS3 and Wii U, which should be available in May this year.

"It's a game that contains classic *Resident Evil* elements but it also has features that modern gamers expect in a game," said Kawata

It's certainly a start, but a new core game will be what really convinces the series' now rather disillusioned audience. Kawata said that it's possible that that will come in the form of a reboot, but there's no confirmation on that just yet. One thing is for sure and that's a return to "horror and fear". We like the sound of that.

CASTLESTORM OUT IN APRIL ON XBLA, WINDOWS 8

CastleStorm – Zen Studios' curious blend of tower defense and physics-based destruction – will be out this April on XBLA and Windows 8. In it, you'll be defending your castle from an onslaught by attacking waves of enemies in 12 different environments. You've got access to ranged weapons like ballistas, or you've got the ability to spawn troops who'll take the fight to the enemy.

There'll be online multiplayer and cooperative play, along with a castle editor which lets you alter the look and loadout of your castle, or test weapons to see how they work. It all sounds mighty interesting and looks wonderfully charming. About the only thing that's got us sad is that the PC version is bound to Windows 8 – an operating system that deserves to be dragged out back and shot to save people the annoyance of ever having to use it.

GTA V delayed, Internet screams conspiracy theory

Rockstar has announced a delay in the release of *Grand Theft Auto V*. Originally slated for a "spring 2013" release, the game has shifted to 17 September 2013.

The moment Rockstar announced the delay, their website lit up with nearly 10,000 comments, many of them laced with a lot of anger at the news. That's typical Internet knee-jerk reaction so no news there; the thing that piqued our interest was the sudden flood of insane conspiracy theories.

Some of the theories claimed that the delay was due to Rockstar porting the game over to the next generation of Sony and Microsoft consoles, which are expected to be on sale by this festive season. Other theories claimed that the delay was to avoid clashes with the release

of *BioShock Infinite* (as if Rockstar would have to worry about any other game releasing alongside a new *GTA*). Our personal favourite conspiracy theory claimed that Rockstar delayed *GTA V* because they wanted to distance the game from the recent resurgence in the debate over violent video games; a debate that was reignited by the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings from earlier in the year.

Rockstar has said, however, that the only reason the game has been delayed was because they needed more time to make it even better: "literally the only reason we've delayed the release is because we want the game to be as good as it needs to be."

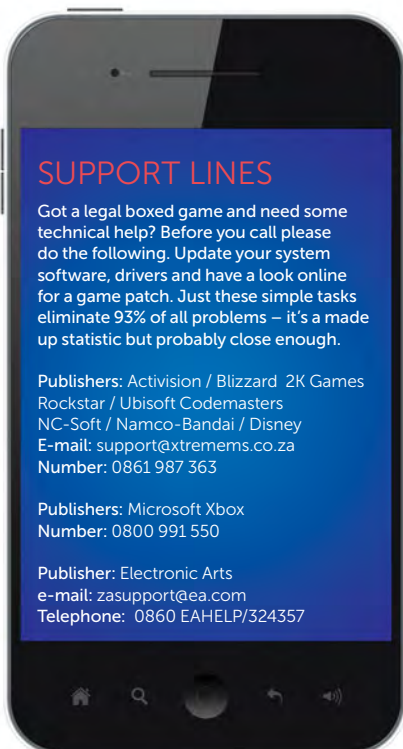
We're pretty sure that's what they want you to believe...

PS VITA'S PROJECTED SALES TAKE A KNOCK

Things aren't looking good for Sony, as the company recently came clean that the PS Vita is horribly underperforming in the market.

"One thing is clear for us," said CFO Masaru Kato, "in terms of profitability we have to do a better job of promoting the Vita."

As a result of poor sales (which were actually up a tad from the previous financial year), Sony has dropped its sales forecast of the tiny PlayStation from 10 to just seven million units worldwide, although home console projections have remained steady.



SUPPORT LINES

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

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Obsidian wants to have Disney's Star Wars babies



Obsidian Entertainment's *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II – The Sith Lords* may have been a bit divisive when it launched back in 2005 (particularly because it felt rushed and incomplete), but general consensus these days is that it's one of the most impressive RPGs ever made. It's good news for fans then that, with *Star Wars* now in its new home at Disney following the LucasArts acquisition, Obsidian is eager to punt a new *Star Wars* RPG (set in a different time period to *KotOR*) to Mickey Mouse and company. And according to Obsidian CEO Feargus Urquhart, it's "within the top three pitches [they've] ever come up with."

"We pitched a between-*Episode III* and *Episode IV* game [to LucasArts]. Because we think that timeframe is super interesting," revealed Urquhart in an interview with *Rock, Paper, Shotgun*. "It's the fall of the Republic, the extermination of the Jedi, it's Obi-Wan going off and making sure Luke is OK. You have the Sith, but you have the extermination of all Force users except for very, very few. So it was an interesting time to set a game, and you know, Chris Avellone came up with a really cool story."

While LucasArts seemed to like the idea when Obsidian originally pitched it to them, they've yet to actually send it Disney's way. "We haven't [talked with Disney yet]. We're kind of waiting for the smoke to clear. But that's one of my next big things to do." Disney, if you can hear this: please let this happen.

Look & Listen

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PC

Star Trek	April
Resident Evil: Revelations	May 4th
Splinter Cell: Blacklist	May

Xbox 360

Injustice: Gods Among Us	April 19th
Remember Me	May
Lost Planet 3	June

PS3

Soul Sacrifice	April 13th
The Last of Us	June
Grand Theft Auto V	September 17th

NOTCH WON'T FUND PSYCHONAUTS 2 AFTER ALL

When Tim Schafer put out a call last year for some benevolent benefactor to invest a few million dollars in getting development of *Psychonauts 2* underway, Markus "Notch" Persson was quick to point out that he has millions of dollars, and was plenty eager to help fund a sequel to Double Fine's beloved classic. After raising initial concerns, Notch made it clear that nobody should get their hopes up – which, it turns out, he was right to caution.

"I somewhat naively thought 'a couple of million' was two million. I had no doubt in my mind that a *Psychonauts 2* would earn that money back easily. Turns out [Double Fine] wanted 18 million dollars, haha," revealed Persson on Reddit. "I don't have the time at the moment to even try to get educated enough to make an 18 million dollar deal. Perhaps in some distant future when I'm no longer trying to make games, I could get into angel investing. I've made one private investment into a game so far, at \$100K, and it's frankly a lot more work than I thought."

Double Fine, meanwhile, has told *VentureBeat* that it's currently focused solely on *Double Fine Adventure*, putting all *Psychonauts 2* considerations firmly on the backburner. They've not budgeted for a sequel yet, and will "likely explore alternative funding methods that will require multiple sources to make it a reality."

Microsoft has sold a lot of Xbox 360 consoles and Kinect peripherals

Microsoft has provided some updated lifetime sales figures for their gaming hardware.

Since launch, the company has managed to sell 76 million Xbox 360 consoles worldwide and 24 million Kinect sensors. In addition to hardware figures, Microsoft has revealed that there are now more than 46 million people on Xbox LIVE, which indicates a 15% growth in LIVE accounts since 2011. Collectively, those 46 million accounts accumulated a total of 18 billion hours of online entertainment (be it games, movies, TV etc.) on Xbox 360 throughout 2012.

Microsoft is set to continue their drive to make the Xbox 360 the dominant entertainment device in your living room. In an attempt to continue developing new content, Microsoft has recently set up a new division called Xbox Entertainment Studios, which will be responsible for developing "true interactive content" for the console, including "voice-controlled, customized TV and entertainment apps".



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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.

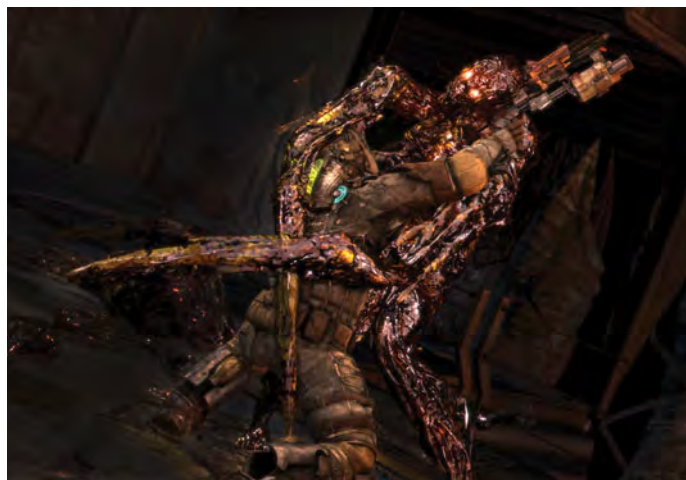
Every month we'll hide her somewhere in the magazine – your mission is to go find her.

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



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 *Sniper Ghost Warrior 2* for PC from Apex Interactive. Send your captions to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line "March caption".



NAG's lame attempt at humour

"Life was going to be tough for Isaac in necro prison..."

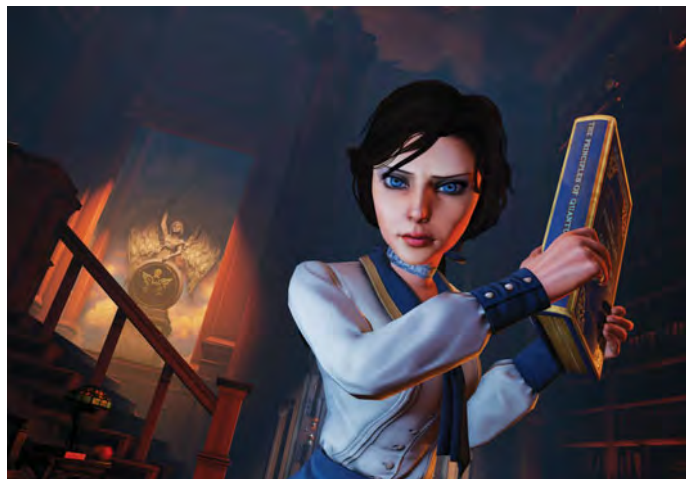
February winner



Justyn Dunstan, page 34

THIS MONTH'S BOUNTY

A PS3 Phenom Wireless Controller valued at R449.95. Sponsored by Musica and dreamGEAR,



Last months winner

"Mike finds out that a Dictionary is NOT a valid anniversary present." -David Edwards

AGE OF WONDERS III DEMANDS NEW REPRESENTATION FOR GOBLINS

Age of Wonders III has been announced, its delightful fantasy 4X sensibilities in development over at Overlord developer Triumph Studios. It's a "modern reimagining" of the series and aims to sneak some RPG elements into its strategic fiddling – stuff like the ability to choose a class (classes like sorcerer, theocrat and rogue will be available, among others) for the leader of your fantasy civilisation. There'll be a variety of races to choose from as well. We'll let development director Lennar Sas explain:

"For example: as a Goblin Theocrat you can build your own holy empire, recruit little goblin crusaders or cute winged goblin angels equipped with flaming weapons, and wage war on your heathen enemies. We want players to be able to choose between lots of different play styles, without being restricted by fantasy clichés, like All Goblins Are Evil."

There's also talk of more in-depth tactical battles, great replayability (thanks to randomised maps, various difficulty settings and user-created content) and a single-player campaign focused on two playable factions.



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The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt is happening, Geralt's beard approves



With *The Witcher* and its sequel firmly entrenched in RPG-loving gamers' minds as Very Important Games, there's no shortage of exciting reasons to be over the moon that developer CD Projekt RED has announced a third game in the franchise. Going by the name of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, it's being built with the studio's shiny new REDengine 3 – and it promises an open world that's 30 times larger than that of *The Witcher 2*. It's even larger than *Skyrim's* massive world.

The *Game Informer* reveal brings word of a much less linear adventure than what's been offered in this series' past, but within its open world (which you can traverse via horse or ship)

you'll find more of the same mature fantasy adventuring that the series is renowned for. There's talk of features like monster hunting and deeply interwoven storylines riddled with the sort of far-reaching consequences to difficult decisions we've come to expect, while the combat system is reportedly being improved.

It'll be the last game in the current *Witcher* trilogy, bringing an end to Geralt of Rivia's tale, but there's already talk of the franchise being open to further titles in the future. *The Witcher 3* is due for release on PC and "all high-end platforms available" (which we're assuming means it'll be on the next generation of consoles) in 2014.

Next Assassin's Creed to get new face, new setting

An earnings call with Yves Guillemot, Ubisoft's CEO, has revealed that the mega-popular *Assassin's Creed* series will set off on another outing in fiscal year 2014 (which rests between April 2013 and March 2014). It'll be centred on an all-new hero, within an "all-new team" (which we assume means a new group of assassins) and

time period. Guillemot says Ubisoft expects it "to be another major leap forward for the franchise."

It's due to be developed by multiple teams once again, each designated their own chapter to work on. "It is the benefit of multiple teams, working on multiple chapters of the brand, each getting several years to make their versions of an *Assassin's Creed* game."

Release list

Dates subject to change without notice

March week 1

Hitman HD Trilogy	360 / PS3
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March week 2

Tomb Raider	360 / PC / PS3
The Amazing Spider-Man	Wii U
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 3	360 / PS3
SimCity	PC
The Sims 3: University Life	PC

March week 3

StarCraft II: Heart of the Swarm	PC
God of War: Ascension	PS3
Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2	360 / PC / PS3

March week 4

Gears of War: Judgment	360
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	Wii U
Resident Evil 6	PC
Total War: Rome II	PC

March week 5

BioShock Infinite	360 / PC / PS3
Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time	PS3 / Vita
Army of Two: The Devil's Cartel	360 / PS3
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	360 / PS3
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	360 / PC / PS3 / Wii U
Dead or Alive 5	Vita

JANUARY HITMAN COMPETITION WINNERS:

1st prize

Ryan Walsh of Bryanston

2nd prize

Elisca Coetsee of Doornpoort

3rd prizes

Rodney Morhem of Witkoppe Ridge, David Basson of Paarl
Brent Falkenberg of Durbanville, Jonker Coetzee of Upington

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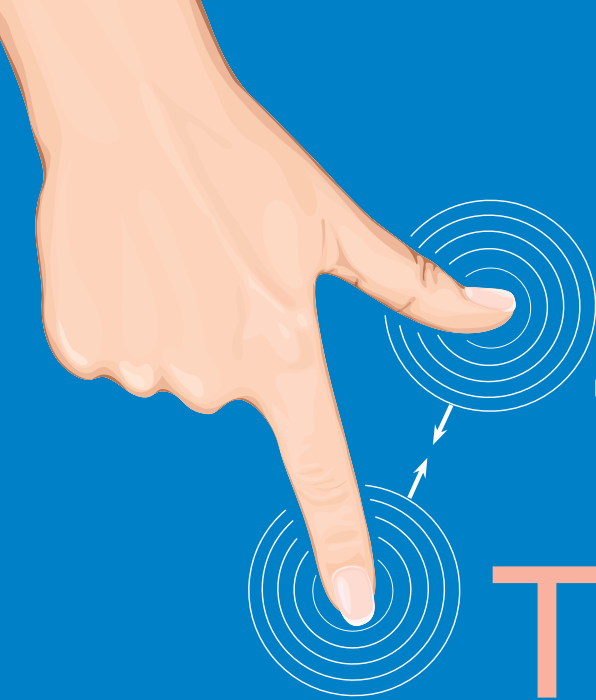


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IT'S TIME TO GO MOBILE

Yes, it's a bomb, just because I felt like it.

As fairly serious, “hardcore” gamers, we here at NAG take pride in the ritual of gaming: sitting down on a comfy office chair or couch, booting up our console or PC, loading up a game and dedicating ourselves to it for the next few hours until real life calls us to do something more pertinent. But mobile gaming tells that ritual to bugger off. Gaming can and should happen at any time and in any place: on the loo, in a queue, at your school or in a pool. With that shift from a dedicated device (handheld or otherwise) to one that you’ve always got with you came a lowering of standards from both the suppliers of these games and the players. Mobile phones couldn’t handle the sort of complex gameplay and visuals we demand of a game, but in recent years, all of that has changed.

Smartphones and tablets of today are highly-capable mobile computers. High-resolution displays are powered by multi-core GPUs from primarily desktop manufacturers like NVIDIA or chipset bigwigs like Qualcomm and PowerVR. A typical high-end smartphone runs a quad-core CPU paired with a gig or more of RAM. These are beastly machines by anyone’s standards and today’s game designers are getting to grips with just how capable they are. Game creation software has caught up with the hardware: Unity and Unreal Engine allows indie developers to build a mobile game with almost the same ease as its desktop equivalent; even 2D suites like Game Maker and Construct allow garage developers to release mobile games without too much challenge.

For this feature, we’ve decided to just lightly touch upon the subject of mobile gaming. We’ve given you a variety of game types to look at, from the ports of hardcore console titles to neat little puzzle games that could only ever work on mobile. This is an industry that’s growing, and it’s growing quickly, so some of these games might be a little bit old but, hey, we’ve got a lot of catching up to do.





RAYMAN JUNGLE RUN

Developer: Ubisoft
Platforms: Android / iOS
Price: R35 (Android) / \$2.99 (iOS)

With its addictive rhythmic gameplay, *Rayman Origins* would've been a good fit for mobile, but *Rayman Jungle Run* manages to distil its already simplistic gameplay even further.

Played in bursts of around 30 seconds, *Jungle Run* varies from simple and cute to the kind of frustrating that could be bad for the health of your phone. Easy to learn, near-impossible to master, it's the perfect way to get through a boring queue or waiting room, but keep the retries to a minimum unless you want to look like you've come down with a nasty case of Tourette's.



ANOMALY KOREA

Developer: 11 Bit Studios
Platforms: Android / iOS
Price: R35 (Android) / \$3.99 (iOS)

Tower defence is a genre well suited to mobile, but 11 Bit decided to flip the concept on its head and give us "tower offence" in this fantastic looking strategy game. You'll take control of a squadron of upgradeable vehicles that snake their way through each level in the attempt to destroy all enemy towers and ultimately reach some sort of objective. Tactical thinking is required with the plan-and-go system, and quick reactions will ensure your team survives some of the more challenging levels.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY 10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Developer: Rockstar Games
Platforms: Android / iOS
Price: R45 (Android) / \$4.99 (iOS)

Rockstar surprised everyone with the release of *GTA III* on mobile in 2011, and now *Vice City* joins the fray with its own celebratory 10th anniversary edition. Almost the entire game has made the transition, save for a few cars, but some of the textures are awfully low-resolution. *Vice City* wasn't the prettiest game when it launched a decade ago, and this mobile port is even uglier. Still, the controls are surprisingly fitting and highly customisable, which makes playing this now classic title a pleasure on a phone or tablet.





DEAD SPACE

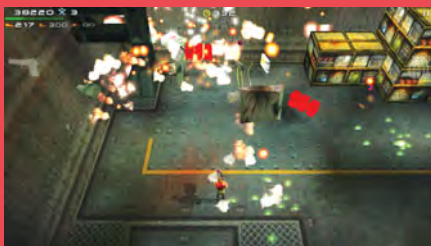
Developer: Electronic Arts
Platforms: Android / iOS
Price: R35 (Android) \$0.99 (iOS)

With control issues being the greatest challenge mobile developers have to overcome, you'd expect that a *Dead Space* port to this platform would struggle in that regard but, impressively so, it doesn't. The action is toned down and simplified a tad but, for the most part, the mobile version of *Dead Space* has all the features of its bigger counterparts, and even manages to expand the narrative with its own story and characters. It's got some great visuals, too.



Score

82



EXPENDABLE REARMED

Developer: Retrobomb
Platforms: Android
Price: R28

If the name *Expendable* doesn't ring a bell, we wouldn't blame you. The original PC-based game made a small splash due to its fun but brain-dead action, which it turns out is perfect for the mobile platform. The whole game has been faithfully recreated here and runs smoothly despite throwing around a stupid number of visual effects. The controls are okay and the camera sucks, but overall this game is well-worth the money if you're on the hunt for a quick, silly romp through an alien base with a gigantic gun or two.



Score

70



THE ROOM

Developer: Fireproof Games
Platforms: iOS
Price: Free (iPhone) \$1.99 (iPad)

While not the hardest puzzle game on mobile platform, *The Room* is by far the most elegant. You're tasked with opening increasingly intricate puzzle boxes in order to solve a mystery steeped in supernatural happenings. Backed up by some of the most lavish visuals you'll see on mobile, *The Room's* puzzles consist of hidden switches, sliding panels, cranks, code wheels and a smattering of light cryptography and physics puzzles. It's thoroughly enjoyable even though it's over a little too quickly.



Score

82



TEMPLE RUN 2

Developer: Imangi Studios
Platforms: Android / iOS
Price: Free

Infinite runners are nothing new. They're designed to be quick to play and impossible to put down; *Temple Run 2* is no different. Guide your runner along precipitous floating pathways, swiping and tilting your mobile device to avoid obstacles and chasms. There are power-ups and coins to collect that are designed to help you collect more power-ups and coins. This is a twitch-reflex game so no grey matter required – that, however, doesn't stop it from being silly amounts of fun.



Score

80



WONDERPUTT

Developer: Damp Gnat
Platforms: iOS
Price: \$0.99

Did you ever play *AdverPutt*? Well, *Wonderputt* is from the same people who first put out the online marketing experiment *AdverPutt*. Featuring a single putt-putt course that continually evolves to make new holes, *Wonderputt* is a treat to behold and difficult to put down once you see the course morph into something new. It's over a little too quickly, but the developers have added extra objectives for subsequent playthroughs – like collecting rainbow drops to fill a giant rainbow over the course.



Score

85



SUPER HEXAGON

Developer: Terry Cavanagh
Platforms: Android / iOS
Price: R28.00 (Android) / \$2.99 (iOS)

Tough as nails doesn't even begin to describe this one; digital crack cocaine doesn't either. *Super Hexagon* is ridiculously difficult and you will fail a trillion times. You rotate an arrowhead on a 2D plane in order to avoid rapidly spinning barriers. There's almost always only one correct path to take and hitting a wall is instant game over. The longer you last the faster the barriers spin. It's hypnotic, trippy stuff that can sometimes result in sudden bouts of nausea. We're not kidding.



Score

75





PUNCH QUEST

Developer: RocketCat Games
Platforms: iOS
Price: Free

Part hardcore arcade brawler and part tongue-in-cheek take on tired RPG elements, *Punch Quest* is definitely not meant to be taken seriously. The game is almost like an infinite runner, only instead of dodging and jumping your way through the terrain, you're punching and upper-cutting enemies that get in your way. There are tons of skills to unlock so don't be fooled by this game's OTT appearance – some technique is actually required if you hope to nail the trickier combos.



Score

70



DEAD TRIGGER

Developer: Madfinger Games
Platforms: Android / iOS
Price: Free

Dead Trigger is exactly what it says on the box: a zombie apocalypse-themed first-person shooter with some of the most impressive visuals you've ever seen on a mobile phone or tablet. It controls surprisingly naturally, affording you quick access to actions like aiming down the sights, switching weapons and using items while simultaneously moving. It gets repetitive and the game is heavily geared towards forcing you to pay real-world cash for guns, items and upgrades, but it's a fun way to kill time. And zombies.



Score

80



ROBOTEK

Developer: Hexage Ltd
Platforms: Android / iOS
Price: Free

Robotek's formula is perfect for mobile phones. In it, you and your mainframe are pitted against an enemy mainframe, using a combination of robotic units, special abilities and powerful attacks to fend off a similar onslaught from your foe and eventually destroy them. The catch is that it's partly randomised: each turn, you spin a slot machine-style gadget and pray that it lands on what you need most. Your enemy does the same, interspersed with bouts of attacking. Battles are frantic and end quickly, and there's even online multiplayer.



Score

85



NUN ATTACK

Developer: Imangi Studios
Platforms: Android / iOS
Price: Free

Four gun-toting battle nuns set off on a quest to defeat the Fallen Nun and restore balance to the world. As you've likely guessed by that plot description, *Nun Attack* is very tongue-in-cheek. It's a tactical action game in which you select your squad of nuns, each with their own weapon of choice, combat style and special abilities, and then battle various demonic denizens by directing their movement, attacks and special abilities. Along the way, the nuns grow in power and unlock new weapons, which can then be upgraded.



Score

75



WIND-UP KNIGHT

Developer: Robot Invader
Platforms: Android / iOS
Price: Free

Every bit as adorable as it is addictive, *Wind-up Knight* sees you charging across a variety of cleverly designed side-scrolling levels. As your knight automatically runs through the level, you've only got four controls at your disposal, each controlling your ability to run, jump, roll and raise your shield above your head in order to overcome different obstacles – like jumping over spikes or shielding yourself from flames. Fail, and you start from the beginning of the level. It's brilliantly challenging, requiring you to memorise each set of challenges for maximum reward.



Score

85



CHRONO TRIGGER

Developer: Square Enix
Platforms: Android / iOS
Price: R115 (Android) / \$9.99 (iOS)

The beloved SNES-era JRPG that even JRPG haters can't help but love can now be enjoyed on your phone or tablet. As a port of the Nintendo DS remake, the extra Dimensional Vortex and Lost Sanctum areas from the DS version are included. Lauded for its excellent story and deep, tactical gameplay, *Chrono Trigger* is well worth getting lost in. The only problem we have with it is that the game has been optimised for touch control in certain aspects, but inexplicably not in others. Be warned that it requires additional downloads as you progress to certain areas, so you may want to play it while connected to Wi-Fi. **NAG**



Score

90



Previously, on StarCraft...

With *Heart of the Swarm* on shelves any day now we thought we'd give you all an update of what's been going on in that other galaxy far away. A quick poll in the office told us the following: not all of us have finished the campaign of *Wings of Liberty* (warning: there are spoilers below); none of us can remember what the hell happened in the original *StarCraft* (release 15 years ago) and some of us did finish the game but don't really know what happened. Oh, and one of the ladies in accounts thinks a zerg is another name for what lands on the grass when you blow your nose on a farm. Our confusion has resulted in the following feature.

Terran colony at Mar Sara is overrun by Zerg, and the Confederate government abandons it. A terrorist group called the Sons of Korhal, under Arcturus Mengsk, evacuates the colonists to Antiga Prime. The Protoss fleet arrives to burn the planet to a crisp.

Confederate flagship battlecruiser *Norad III* goes down under Zerg assault; Mengsk's forces rescue and flip it.

Duke, surprised: "What's your angle?"

Raynor: "Our angle?! I'll give you an angle, you Confederate son of a-..." "I can't believe you're going to trust that snake."

Mengsk: "Don't worry, Jim, he's OUR snake now."

Rebels lure Zerg to Antiga Prime using a Psi emitter. Again, the Protoss arrive to incinerate.

Mengsk targets Confederate capital world Tarsonis using another Emitter, again luring in the Zerg. This is a turning point: Tassadar of the Protoss opts to spare the human population. Mengsk abandons Kerrigan on the planet's surface, and the Zerg Swarm captures her and takes her to Char, to undergo a transformation. Raynor, disillusioned, splits from Mengsk, who founds the Terran Dominion – the revolutionary becomes the tyrant.

During a Protoss attack on a Cerebrate,

Zeratul's mind touches the Overmind's, revealing the location of the Protoss homeworld, Aiur, which the Zerg then overrun, redeploying there. Praetor Fenix falls in this battle, and is later brought back as a Dragoon.

The Protoss Conclave brands Tassadar as traitor for not sterilising Tarsonis, and for siding with the Dark Templar, leading to civil war. However, once it is determined that Dark Templar energies are required to harm the Overmind, all is forgiven. Shortly thereafter, Tassadar channels Light and Dark Templar energies through the flagship carrier *Gantrithor*, and kamikazes it into the Overmind in the ultimate sacrifice, killing it, and freeing Kerrigan from its control, unwittingly unleashing yet another threat.

As Aiur is plagued by mindless Zerg rampaging across it, the Protoss withdraw to Shakuras, Dark Protoss home planet – only to find Zerg there. After Protoss forces kill two Cerebrates, Kerrigan arrives, telling of a new Overmind forming, and proposes an alliance of convenience. At the same time, the United Earth Directorate's fleet arrives from Earth.

On Char, Protoss forces fight to allow Zeratul and Artanis to channel the energies of two crystals at a Xel'Naga temple. A massive explosion scours Char, eradicating the Zerg there.

The newly arrived UED fleet claims control of the Koprulu Sector. The UED steals 18 Dominion battlecruisers, turning them against their own garrison. A Confederate Psi Disrupter is located, and Stukov is ordered to destroy it – which he does not, instead secretly taking possession of it. The UED goes on to attack the Dominion throne world, Korhal, and wins, but during the arrest, Mengsk is whisked away by Raynor and the Protoss.

After some intrigue, Admiral DuGalle of the UED realises the usefulness of the Psi Disruptor, takes it to Char, and attacks the Overmind, subjugating it.

Kerrigan wangles another alliance with Raynor, Fenix, and Mengsk. In exchange, she

promises to help Mengsk retake Korhal. After Mengsk helps her destroy the Psi Disrupter, she betrays her allies.

Needing the Dark Protoss to destroy the enslaved Overmind, Kerrigan abducts their Matriarch in order to coerce their cooperation. Once the Overmind is dead, Zeratul manages to elude Kerrigan's Zerg.

Kerrigan finds three fleets converging on her: Mengsk's, Artanis's, DuGalle's.

Mengsk: "Have I caught you at a bad time? You'd be amazed how many special interest groups in the sector want you dead."

Kerrigan's forces defeat all three armies, and run down and eradicate the UED fleet; the others barely make it home, badly beaten...

Four years pass in relative quiet: oddly, Kerrigan and her Zerg have kept a low profile; unsurprisingly, the Dominion has retaken control of the Koprulu Sector. The now hard-drinking Jim Raynor, driven by bitterness, anger, and a desire to revenge himself on Mengsk and his Dominion, establishes Raynor's Raiders, a freedom-fighting band of outlaws. And he knows: the Zerg will be back, it's only a matter of time.

He is found by a friend from his distant past, Tychus Findlay, who has been released from prison in exchange for future services. Together, they embark on a number of raids against the Dominion, as well as gathering up pieces of a powerful Xel'Naga artifact.

Just as Raynor predicted, the Zerg return. And so does his old friend Zeratul, psychically imparting important knowledge to Raynor. The Terran forces band together to assault the Zerg stronghold, but things don't go so well, and they find themselves desperately holding their position until the now assembled Xel'Naga artifact is charged up to deliver its power. Kerrigan's humanity is restored by this, but Findlay had been commissioned to kill her, and Raynor is only barely able to save her life... **NAG**

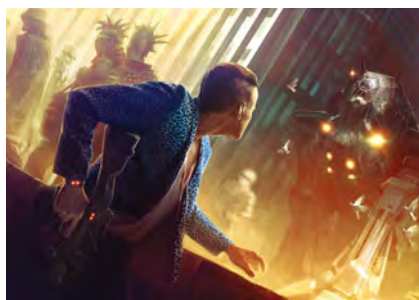
Franken-Preview

A preview made from the pieces of lesser previews

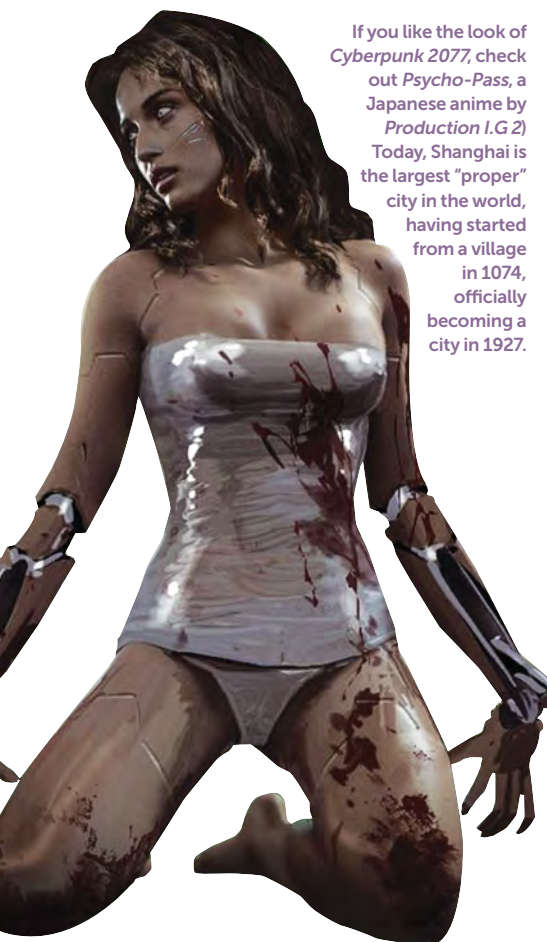
Cyberpunk 2077

Website: cyberpunk.net

Awesome-sounding role-playing game from the developers behind *The Witcher*. It will use the fresh new RED engine CD developed for *The Witcher 3*, and takes place in a *Ghost in the Shell* style decadent future where ultra-modern tech lulls humanity into degenerate squalor. Not much else is known, other than it will be mature, with character customization and non-linear story. Expected around 2015.



If you like the look of *Cyberpunk 2077*, check out *Psycho-Pass*, a Japanese anime by Production I.G. 2) Today, Shanghai is the largest "proper" city in the world, having started from a village in 1074, officially becoming a city in 1927.



Dark Souls II

Website: www.darksoulsii.com

Unveiled during the Spike Video Game Awards last year, *Dark Souls II* will have no direct connection to the story of *Dark Souls* but is set in the same universe. Very little actual information has been released so far, but based on developer interviews we know this: it will have a larger world, a better engine, no DLC weapons (a jab at Capcom's *Dragon's Dogma*), and you're going to die a lot until you get better at the game. Expected around 2014.



Battlefield 4

Website: www.battlefield.com/battlefield-4

According to DICE and EA, *Battlefield 4* will remain in the modern warfare setting. They've been listening to fan feedback, market research, and almost as an afterthought, "what we want to build ourselves". There is a beta planned for late 2013, but EA is also planning to unveil more specifics come April. Due to the poor sales of *Medal of Honor: Warfighter*, it's likely EA will put extra oomph into making *Battlefield 4* a success.



Dragon Age III: Inquisition

Website: dragonage.bioware.com/inquisition

Better combat, improved customization and equipment handling, more of an open world, and less environment reuse. That's what BioWare is promising, anyway. It's been confirmed that players will be able to import their *Dragon Age I & II* save files for "world consistency", and that choices made in previous games will "matter". We've heard that one before, but okay. You'll be playing a new character, who may meet up with your previous heroes. Everything still takes place in Thedas, with "one area being four times the size" of the entire first game's map.

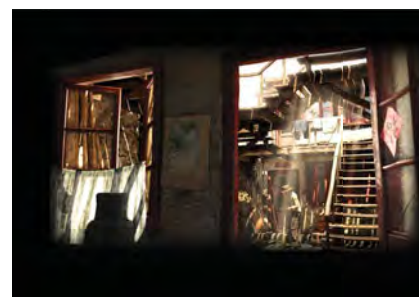


Whore of the Orient

Website: N/A

In development for next-generation consoles and PC, *Whore of the Orient* comes from the development team behind *L.A. Noire* and *The Getaway*. You'll follow "a group of Western cops hopelessly trying to keep the lid on" in a 1936 Shanghai, "the most corrupt and decadent city on the planet." It's safe to say *Whore of the Orient* will be a "narrative action adventure title" like *L.A. Noire*, and uses the same MotionScan technology that gave its characters expression. Expected in 2015. **NAG**

- Miktar



TOY BOX

Toy Box is a sandbox mode where all characters and objects are welcome. Not unlike the opening sequences in the *Toy Story* movies where Andy plays with different toys but they still "work" together, the Toy Box mode is for creativity.

Much expanded in scope and concept from its first appearance in *Toy Story 3: The Video Game*, the Toy Box mode is now more like a fully-featured game maker. Drawing inspiration from the likes of *LittleBigPlanet*, *ModNation Racers* and even a touch of *Minecraft*, players sculpt terrain, place objects and define interactions. There are special Adventure missions you can play which teach you how to build, and are always visually themed around the character you're using on the Infinity Base.

The size of the space you're allowed to build in, and the sheer amount of objects and interactions you can place, is pretty amazing. In the free-for-all test map we were allowed to build in, four of us were building our own structures – racetracks, buildings, paintball arenas – with plenty of room to spare. The logic editor lets you set up basic "if this then

that" actions, which can do things like spawn enemies, change the wind direction or adjust the camera and more. There are prefab "blueprints" of large structures you can unlock by playing the Play Sets, which let you instantly place fully-built castles and such.

ONLINE COMMUNITY

Players will be able to upload their custom Toy Box creations to a central server, where Disney will of course moderate each one. Contests will be held, centred on themes like "make the best race track" or "build a level that looks like a giant sandcastle", and players can download and vote on their favourite maps. Aside from local split-screen for two players, *Infinity* supports up to four people playing together online, each earning experience and currency for their own figure. You can even build things together in Toy Box mode.



Disney Infinity characters use Near Field Communication (NFC) to communicate with the Infinity Base. NFC tags in the baseplates of the figurines draw their power from the base, acting as transponders.



HOW MUCH FOR INFINITY?

Infinity is set to launch with an initial line of 40 collectible pieces, which includes 17 character figures and 20 Power Discs. The Starter Pack, which includes the game disc, three Play Sets, an Infinity Base, and three figurines (Mr. Incredible, Sully and Jack Sparrow), will retail for \$79.99 (R710). [Please note these are not final. Ed]

According to Disney, later Play Sets will be sold for \$34.99 (R310) and, we hope, come with a figurine to use in that Play Set. Three-packs of figurines will go for \$29.99 (R266), individual figures for \$12.99 (R115), while blind packs of two random Power Discs will set you back \$4.99 (R44). South African prices are estimate, based on the US exchange rate at the time of writing, and not representative of what they'll actually cost here. **NAG**

- Miktar

I remember you.



DETAILS

Release date

May 2013

Platforms

360 / PC / PS3

Genre

Third-person / action-adventure / stealth

Developer

Dontnod Entertainment

Website

www.dont-nod.com

Publisher

Capcom

Remember Me

The forgotten PlayStation 3 exclusive returns with a new publisher and platforms

There's no doubt that at a glance, Dontnod Entertainment's *Remember Me* is reminiscent (lateral pun not intended) of *Uncharted*. As cyberpunk anti-heroine Nilin climbs and leaps through future Paris, all the markers are there: guided, colour coded platforming and wall traversal. Frequent in-line streaming cut scenes with no harsh break in presentation. Slightly less frequent arena battle set pieces with large groups of assailants. The cinematic action-platform adventure is a genre unto itself now, so what sets *Remember Me* apart? Primarily two things. First, a well-realised technological dystopia which avoids merely clicking cut-and-paste upon *Blade Runner*. Second, the opportunity to go inside people's heads and move the furniture around.

Nilin is a corporate sponsored "Memory Hunter": a mercenary who suffers a somewhat predictable fate in these mega corporate future worlds: betrayed by her employers, her own cerebral cortex is wiped clean. Her quest to figure out why this happened does involve a lot of climbing and a lot of martial arts (as opposed to Nathan Drake's preference for gunplay), but it appears the set piece of *Remember Me* are sequences in which targeted subjects have their memories re-written. In order to manipulate others into doing what is required of them, a virtual environment playing out key memories is examined; events are run forward and backwards and the player must decide on which elements to change in order to fool the subject and even alter their personality. One example: convincing a woman that her husband was killed due to the negligence of

"One example: convincing a woman that her husband was killed due to the negligence of a hospital physician, by altering memories of which drugs were administered."

Originally titled *Adrift*, a PS3 exclusive in development since 2007, Sony dropped the project for reasons.



a hospital physician, by altering memories of which drugs were administered. But if the scenario is constructed in the wrong way, an incompatible memory is created, forcing one to begin again.

These sequences are executed stylishly and not just a bit unsettlingly as a target's mental space is taken apart and put back together again. (Perhaps intentionally raising the classic question: are people nothing but the sum of memories.) Outside this aspect, *Remember Me* relies on the exact opposite of an intellectual challenge, with a complex fighting system constructed around building custom combo strings designed to exploit weaknesses in different types of enemies. Insert the inappropriate attack into a string, and that strike may fail to stun an attacker. Fortunately, four different attack suites can be kept available at the same time.

It's a pretty game, predating its aesthetic on a kind of setting that is still relatively uncommon in games, though that may not be true for much longer. Just how engaging *Remember Me* turns out to be will depend on its story and characters, as we have learned with the charming Mr. Drake, progenitor of all his game-kind. **NAG**

- Miktar



Amnesia is usually caused by brain damage, disease or psychological trauma.

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Ascension Collector's Edition:

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✓Kratos Sack Boy key ring

✓God of War: Ascension T-shirt

✓PS3 cap

✓PS3 lanyard





TO ENTER SMS THE WORD KRATOS TO 33115

- SMSes charged at R1.50 (no free SMSes/bundles apply)
- Winners will be notified by SMS by the 15th of April
- Judges decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into
- Competition closes 31 March 2013





DETAILS

Release date
April 2013
Platforms
3DS
Genre
Strategy Role-playing game
Developer
Intelligent Systems
Red Entertainment
Website
www.fireemblemawakening.com
Publisher
Nintendo

Fire Emblem: Awakening



Fight, love, have kids, make them fight too

Unless you're already a fan of the turn-based strategy genre, games of this type have always seemed difficult to approach. The recent reboot of *XCOM* did much to simplify the game flow while retaining the rich strategy and tactics that made the series popular in the first place. Now, *Fire Emblem* is doing the same. By improving accessibility in such a way that even complete newcomers can get into the experience easily, without sacrificing anything in the process, there's never been a better time to try this lauded franchise. There's a decent demo up on the Nintendo 3DS eShop as well.



"Losing characters is also a natural part of the experience, which is why it's possible to recruit your own kids."

the grid map fades away to reveal a detailed 3D scene in which you play out the encounter (which you can

slow, fast-forward or even skip). The transition between battle map and encounter is near-instant, a huge improvement over previous entries.

When two characters are next to each other, they perform a Dual Strike. This may cause both characters to attack the enemy, or one coming to the aid of another, depending on their Support Level. All characters can form emotional ties with each other by fighting side-by-side, which raises their Support with each other, and opens up the possibility of romance. Some characters, when paired up, have kids, which can then be used in battle.

TURN-BASED TACTICAL ROLE-PLAYING

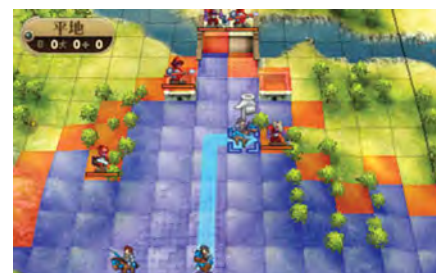
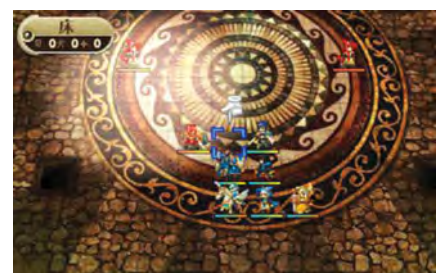
In your quest to assist Chrom, prince of the Halidom of Ylisse, you'll need to master battle tactics, learn new skills, recruit and equip warriors to your cause, and have kids. But more on that last part in a bit.

During a battle you move your characters within a grid, trying to position them in such a way that you get the drop on enemies or lure them into a trap. When you move next to an enemy and choose to attack,

In Awakening, you create a customized player character, a feature last seen in Fire Emblem: New Mystery of the Emblem, which was never released outside Japan.

PERMANENT DEATH = FUN

It is possible to play "Casual" mode, where characters killed in battle will be automatically revived after. But, like in *XCOM*, the "Classic" mode is really the way to go. It may seem harsh to lose a character permanently if they die in battle, but removing the threat of this only encourages lazy tactics. Losing characters is also a natural part of the experience, which is why



it's possible to recruit your own kids. You can also get characters from other players via StreetPass tags, and special series characters via the (free) DLC.

FEATURE RICH

A local multiplayer mode called "Dual Tag" lets you pair up with a friend to fight enemies and earn renown (a currency used to buy special items) and items not easily found in the main game. The world map you explore, with travel nodes unlocking as you progress through the story, is constantly changing: bandit attacks, zombie outbreaks, and StreetPass tags will populate your map at random. **NAG**

- Miktar



If there's somethin' strange



In your neighbourhood



DETAILS

Release date
March 2013
Platforms
3DS
Genre
Action-adventure
survival horror
Developer
Nintendo / Next Level Games
Website
luigimansion.nintendo.com
Publisher
Nintendo

Luigi's Mansion 2

Mo' mansions mo' problems

Luigi's Mansion 2 was one of the very first post-launch Nintendo 3DS games revealed at E3 2011. It was a pleasant shock after a decade of Nintendo ignoring the original GameCube launch title save the infrequent reference in *Smash Bros.* or *Mario Kart*. And while a follow-up has long been on some fans' wish lists, the question was: what else can you do with *Luigi's Mansion*? By design inventive, but also a bit limited in its premise: Mario's bro Luigi explores a haunted manor equipped with his ghost busting (or sucking) device, the Poltergust. There's no leaping around on platforms — the game fuses careful and fearful exploration of darkened chambers with aspects of twin-stick shooting when a ghost is flushed from hiding. Luigi wrestles with the spirit in literal *Ghostbusters* style, until sufficient stamina drains from the ghost. Then they're tagged and bagged for storage.

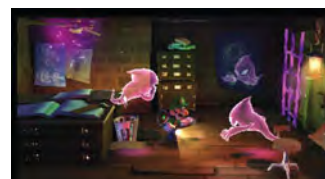
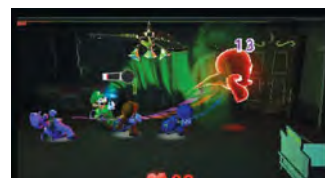
Co-developed by Next Level Games, previous partners with Nintendo for the well-received *Mario Strikers Charged Football*, the sequel suggests the trick to expanding on the formula is a change of scenery: rather than taking place in one ornate but admittedly repetitive mansion, *Luigi's Mansion 2* expands into five worlds. Each haunted and full of locked doors and gates, requiring keys obtained from key ghosts to proceed. Besides the classic haunted manor, elements of a

"Rather than taking place in one ornate but admittedly repetitive mansion, *Luigi's Mansion 2* expands into five worlds."

Fans responded greatly to Luigi, whipping boy of the Mushroom Kingdom, starring in his own game with *Luigi's Mansion* for GameCube. Even then, he only acted as a hero under protest. But in the Mario & Luigi RPG series, Luigi is more assertive about being the secret Better Brother



Who ya gonna call?



Miyamoto has observed that there is a greater emphasis on puzzles in comparison to *Luigi's Mansion*. That's promising, as exploring the detailed and spooky rooms of the mansion was the highlight of the game — less so, forays into heavy action and not overly fun boss fights.

Fortunately, Nintendo has allowed Next Level time to massage the game rather than put a rush on it to fill in earlier gaps in the 3DS release schedule. A frequently appearing title at trade events, every build of the sequel has markedly improved visual effects and frame rate, resulting in what is also one of the more technically ambitious games on 3DS to date. It probably doesn't hurt that the 3D effect itself is kind to a game based around exploring set piece rooms that each fill a single screen.

It all adds up to an interesting hook. While one is unsure if the *Luigi's Mansion* concept could support as sprawling a franchise as the more super Mario brother, there's definitely an attraction to a second pass on the original game which has been allowed to lay fallow for so long.

NAG

- Miktar

haunted forest and an Egyptian tomb have been given a peek, without spoiling the final locations in the campaign. In addition, speaking of design focus, Shigeru



Also, it's official: his name is not Luigi Mario.

DETAILS

Release date

TBA

Platforms

PC

Genre

Massively multiplayer
online first person shooter

Developer

Red 5 Studios

Website

www.firefallthegame.com

Publisher

Red 5 Studios



Firefall



A lesson in trying to do too much and succeeding at nothing

There are a lot of ideas going into *Firefall*. It's a science-fiction massively-multiplayer first/third-person shooter.

There is a lot of emphasis on cooperative play and eSports. The world is "dynamic", under constant threat from an alien race that can "establish patrols, build outposts, and lay siege to towns". And yet, the entire thing feels (and plays) like an uninspired mess.

We spent some time in the closed beta, so keep in mind that much of what we played might possibly change. It's not uncommon for free-to-play games, or MMOs for that matter, to get a drastic overhaul right before launch based on player feedback. Hopefully, players are giving Red 5 Studios a lot of feedback.

When you sign up you choose a Battleframe to use which acts as a template class: Assault, Recon, Medic, Engineer or Dreadnaught. Battleframes can be customized, both in form and function. As you purchase or craft new components you tweak your Battleframe much like "modifying cars in a racing game". You can buy more Battleframes, collecting the ones you think you might need in the future, and swap between them at special stations on the map. Each Battleframe levels up independently.

Combat revolves around using your jetboots to fly around the terrain, not unlike *Tribes*, but without the ability to "ski". To gather resources for crafting you're given a seismic hammer and the ability to call in Thumpers. The hammer lets you whack the

"Firefall feels like half of an idea, shoved out the door to try and cash in on the "freemium" trend."

Firefall uses a modified version of the Offset Engine, which impressed with teaser videos back in 2007. It looks, okay now.



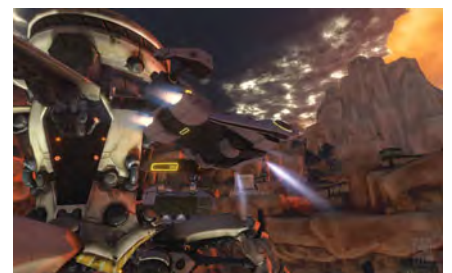
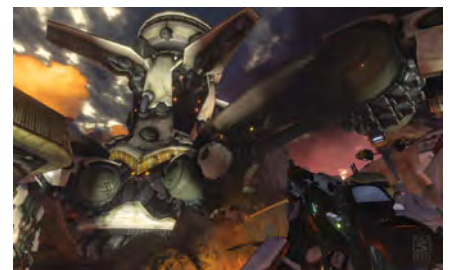
The lead designer on *Firefall* is Scott Youngblood, who was the lead designer of *Starsiege: Tribes* and *Tribes 2*.

terrain, sounding for buried materials. Once you find some, you call in a Thumper from orbit, which slaps down and starts to dig up resources you must collect. A side-effect of this process is the Thumper attracting nearby alien animals and bug-like creatures, making for an impromptu dynamic event that anyone nearby can participate in.

Sometimes, the alien aggressors known as The Chosen will attack towns using a massive dropship. Players need to fend off the invasion, while trying to destroy the dropship by taking out its shields. If the shields protecting the town are destroyed, that town is lost and will have to be retaken at a later time. We also encountered a weird seismic tornado once, which everyone shot at until it died, or something.

Firefall feels like half of an idea, shoved out the door to try and cash in on the "freemium" trend. It tries to straddle the line between *PlanetSide 2* and *Tribes Ascend*, incorporating the main idea from both, but doing neither well. Movement around the (impressively large and lush) terrain is a chore. The gunplay feels ethereal, the numbers floating up from enemies the only indication that you're actually doing any damage. And those are the two things you're going to be doing the most of. **NAG**

- Miktar





DETAILS

Release date

TBA

Platforms

PC

Genre

Action RPG

Developer

Grinding Gear Games

Website

www.pathofexile.com

Publisher

Grinding Gear Games

Path of Exile

If neither *Torchlight II* nor *Diablo III* did it for you, there is a third option

Now in open beta, *Path of Exile* is a scrappy hack and slash loot game from New Zealand. It's free-to-play, and it thumbs its nose at the other loot games. For good reason, too. Where *Torchlight II* is content to be a good-enough clone, and *Diablo III* aims to simplify things for its own ends, *Path of Exile* throws convention out the window and redesigns the core systems from the ground up. And it's not afraid to be hardcore about it.

PASSIVE SKILLS

All classes share the same massive passive skill tree, but their starting position on the maze varies. The Witch sits in the Intelligence area, Ranger in the Dexterity, and Marauder in the Strength. The hybrid classes, Duelist, Templar and Shadow, straddle the borders between. Because no part of the tree is blocked off for any class, you could theoretically (and with enough skill points), traverse through all three quadrants, picking up choice Keystones (powerful build-altering passives) along the way, for a truly unique build.

ACTIVE SKILLS

Classes do not have fixed active abilities, and rely instead on Skill Gems. You find these as drops off enemies, or receive them as quest



There are currently three acts to play through, with more planned for future release.



The game takes place on the island of Wraecast, a penal colony for undesirables [Similar to Australia. Ed].

"Path of Exile throws convention out the window and redesigns the core systems from the ground up."

rewards. You socket gems into weapons and armour (you can pull them out again at will), which grants you their skill. Skill

gems gain experience as you do, levelling up into more potent forms. Slam hits harder, Leap lets you go further, Fire Arrows fire more arrows...

Gem slots are sometimes linked, which allows for skill-altering Support Gems, which let you essentially build your own skills. Ice Shot + Totem + Fork, and you have a deployable turret that shoots ice which splits on impact.

COMPLEXITY THROUGH GRANULARITY

There is no currency in *Path of Exile*. Instead, selling items gets you other items in trade, such as "stones" that can be used to upgrade or randomize the stats on equipment. You're encouraged to build your own magical and rare items using these stones, taking a common "white" item with the gem socket configuration you want, and making it more worthwhile.

LEAGUES FOR LEGENDS

There is a Hardcore league where you can't be resurrected, but *Path of Exile* death drops you into the default league so you don't lose all your hard work. There are plans for more leagues, like Iron Man (no NPC vendors, no mana regeneration), Cut-throat (players can enter



other's instances to try and kill them), Attrition (lowest rank players are eliminated at regular intervals) and Paid (players can pay to have their own league with custom rules).

ETHICAL MICRO TRANSACTIONS

The game is free-to-play, supported by a micro transaction business model that eschews "pay to win". Instead, you can purchase only cosmetic/vanity adornments, non-combat pets, or more stash/character slots. **NAG**

- Miktar

Release date: March 2013

Platform: PC

Genre: Management / construction simulation

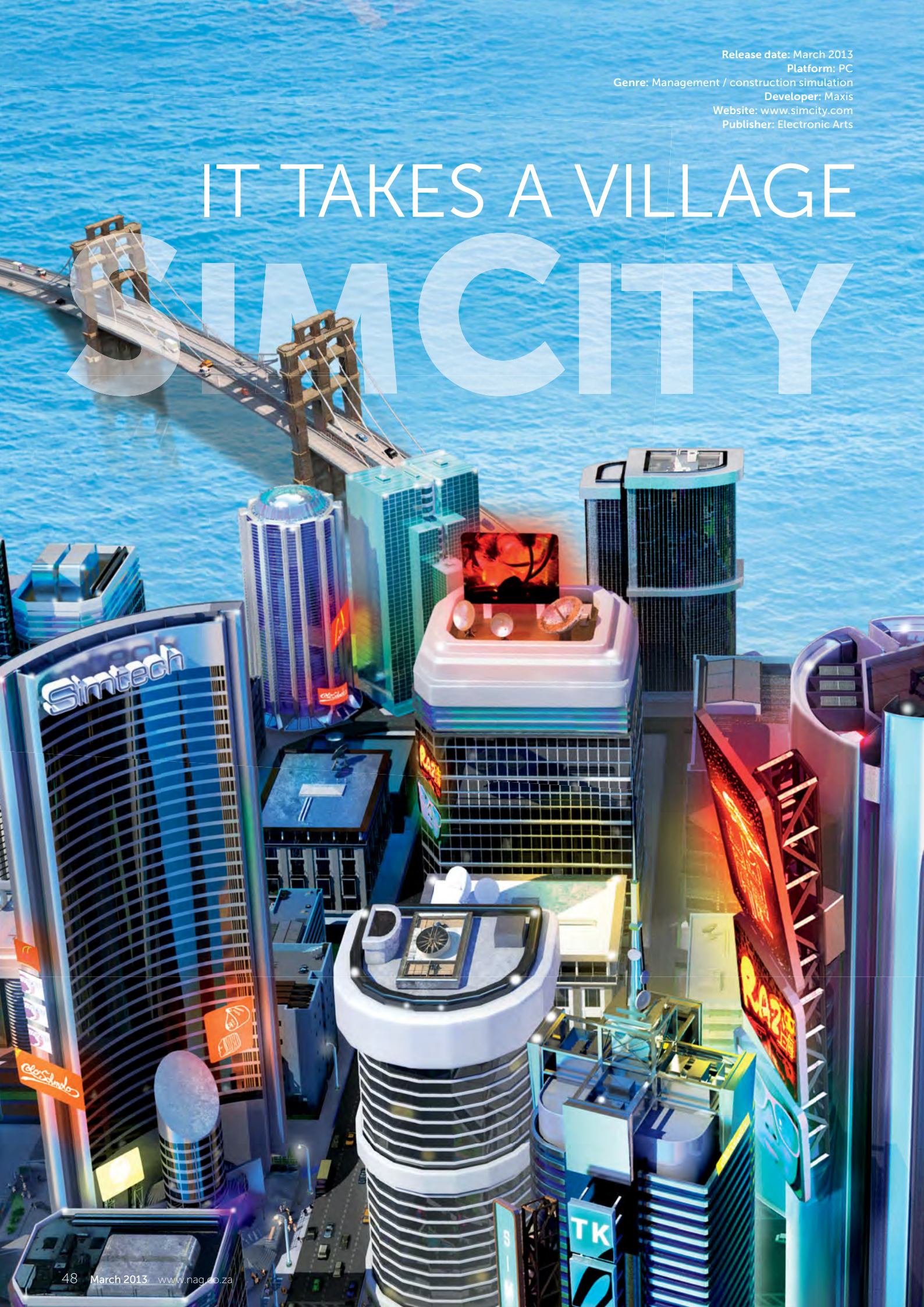
Developer: Maxis

Website: www.simcity.com

Publisher: Electronic Arts

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

SIMCITY





HANDS ON

When the first *SimCity* game was released in 1989 it challenged a world filled with thumb-murdering platformers and storytelling adventure games. It was almost purely sandbox in nature – a concept that was practically unheard of back then – and, along with *Populous*, helped to usher in an age that took the dream of running a world and gave its players the freedom to do so anyway they pleased. Children and adults alike gravitated to the now established genre to feed their egos and imaginations with its infinitely possible cities. *SimCity* is one of the most respected franchises in the business, and this latest addition to the series is a reboot. No pressure.

So what, exactly, makes this *SimCity* a reboot? Why isn't it called *SimCity 5*? "A lot of that links to the GlassBox engine" says Maxis producer Jason Haber. GlassBox is the technology that drives everything in *SimCity*, making it what he calls a "bottom-up simulation" that builds the entire city from the lowliest Sim, complete with personality, aspirations and even bodily functions, and scales it up massively. What this means is that elements in your metropolis aren't pretending to

be driven by data that's really just arbitrarily connected – everything is bound by a set of fundamental rules that flow through the roads and buildings of your metropolis. Collections of data called "agents" track everything that happens and represent that data visually: when Sims move into your city they arrive in a moving van; they shop at their favourite stores and go to their particular job; they drive their own cars or take up a seat in a bus; they spend money or complain when they don't have enough; they learn; they consume resources; they shout at you if they're not happy; they take anxious ambulance rides to the nearest clinic; they get sick and die. Picture that scaled up to the size of a city with tens of thousands of inhabitants and you're starting to get the idea of the scope of this game.

But GlassBox isn't limited to your Sims and their requirements: it starts at an even simpler level. Natural resources have now been made finite and every drop of oil or gram of coal is accounted for: fossil fuels and water must be carefully managed if they're available at all in a city's locale, and contamination of the water table by polluting buildings is a sure way to poison your city's population. This

» Gone are the days of micro-managing power lines and water pipes; now all utilities will simply run underneath the roads of your city, providing any zones alongside it with the necessary access.



means the placement of your buildings and the planning that goes into a city is more important than ever; even wind direction is taken into account for air pollution. This all ties into another significant change to the series: region-based, multi-city play. Gone is the concept of sticking to a single city plot and striving to make it a utopia; unequally distributed resources and challenging land formations mean some cities get lucky and others don't, but resources, services and even Sims themselves can be shared between city plots through a network of highways, railways, water-based and air transport. Regions can contain as many as 16 city plots or just a few, and all will be predesigned and hosted online by Maxis. Yup – city spaces will no longer be randomly generated, but multi-city brings with it its own unique feature: multiplayer.

It's entirely possible to play a full-size region on your own – set it to private and tell the rest of the world to bugger off while

you craft your very own modern Roman Empire (minus the crucifixions and other nasty things) – but the prospect of sharing a region with friends is an exciting one. Players will be able to trade goods and services amongst each other for mutual benefit, like coal for garbage collection or clean energy in exchange for high-paying jobs for your Sims, but the real meat of multi-city play lies in the city specialisations. Sure, you can attempt to turn each city (which is limited to a 2x2km plot – roughly the size of a medium plot in *SimCity 4*) into its own self-sufficient masterpiece, but some of the more challenging plots could present unique benefits, some of which may only become apparent once you pursue these specialisations. A seaside town lacks the space for hard industry but is perfectly positioned to make its money from tourism and gambling; a region without fossil fuels but with plenty of high plateaus turns to wind energy for its production and ends up supplying its neighbours with its excess



LOOKING GOOD

The first thing that you'll notice about the look of *SimCity* is the tilt-shift perspective and depth-of-field that gives the whole game its toy-like appearance. This lends the game its distinct scale – clearly separating the player from the city in a manner not dissimilar to the RTS *R.U.S.E.*

While graphical splendour has never been a selling point in the *SimCity* franchise, this latest title looks set to challenge that idea by throwing down some very impressive visuals. If you're on a low-end PC, however, don't panic: the minimum PC specs are some of the lowest we've seen lately, and the developers are keenly aware that *SimCity* isn't necessarily a game played by people with hardcore gaming PCs. On the other hand, those of you who do have beastly machines will be able to crank up the graphics and see a very impressive-looking game.

BRING THIS
IMAGE
TO LIFE



SHOW ME WHAT YOU'VE GOT

GlassBox isn't just a functional engine, but a visual one, too. Every agent within the system can be viewed through the large number of highly expressive data layers. Colours make it easy to determine where you've gone wrong in providing for your population in the fields of education, crime, healthcare, pollution, land value and any other data type you could be interested in.

But it's the interplay between these data types that makes *SimCity* a challenging game: education isn't only important to raise the tech levels of your industrial areas and generate specialised workers, but those Sims who don't even have a basic education are unlikely to find employment in anything but the most menial of fields. In a city with low education levels, don't expect to find much high-level work, and those Sims who can't find a job might turn to crime to support their families. You'll often find that low-income sectors of your residential zones that are too far from a school (or outside of a school bus route) are also crime hotspots. Establishing a police station in the area is good enough to resolve the immediate threat, but you'll need to think long-term if you want your population to empower itself to rise out of squalor. Likewise, Sims who live near a source of pollution will find that their drinking water could become contaminated, lowering health in the general area and even having a knock-on effect in industry when they're too sick to go to work.

» *While there are no missions as such, you can receive quests from either your city hall or random citizens. They might challenge you to erect a certain building or meet a service providing quota if they think you're falling behind. Not only is this a great way to add variety to an otherwise sandbox game, but it helps to highlight issues within a city of which the player might not be aware.*



power; a dry, mountainous city struggles to establish itself but eventually finds that its rich in oil. Specialisations also allow cities to produce unique goods and services like electronics, high-end labour or refined fuel, many of which are required to build Great Works. These massive undertakings are too big to fit into a city and are thus built in the region space where they benefit all local cities, but require specialised resources to be completed. Once they are, however, they can deliver unlimited cheap energy, bring in international tourists or even provide space-age housing for any Sim who can afford it.

Placing down zones is the best way to ensure that the basic needs of your population are met: housing, food, employment and a place to unwind by spending a couple of bucks, but just like regular people your Sims have much more complicated needs, and numerous utilities and services must be provided to your nagging population to keep them in

“Everything is bound by a set of fundamental rules that flow through the roads and buildings of your metropolis.”

good order. Simple services like electricity, water, health care and sewerage disposal should be your first port of call, but as your population rises you'll soon find that crime, illiteracy, refuse and fire will also need to be addressed. As you might expect from the epic GlassBox engine, every service and utility factors in to the daily lives of your Sims in small or large ways. Sims don't want to live near a sewerage treatment facility, but being near a school raises the value of the surrounding land because children in the area have easy access to education. Almost all of these service and utility buildings can be upgraded with what Maxis call "plobbables" – visual upgrades to the facilities that improve productivity, efficiency or provide new abilities. For example, a school comes with just a single bus (you can assign its route), but adding in more busses means you need fewer schools to service a large area. You'd need

more classrooms as well, then. Another service that you'll need to provide to larger or more demanding cities is improved transportation. Roads are good enough for a while, but eventually traffic will get to such a stage that it'll start affecting your Sims' productivity; you'll need to provide public transport services for your bustling metropolis, including bus depots, park-and-rides, train stations and even airports.

At first glance, the new *SimCity* looks much like the old ones, save for a visual overhaul, but after spending some time with this upcoming title it's become clear that so much has changed that it really does deserve to be called a reboot. Players who have been here since the beginning will find it to be a familiar yet challenging experience, and newcomers to the series are sure to be lured in by its vibrancy and social-friendly features.

- GeometriX



"As you might expect from the epic GlassBox engine, every service and utility factors in to the daily lives of your Sims in small or large ways."



BUILD BY NUMBERS

While the underlying technology that drives this new *SimCity* is entirely new, the familiar concepts of zoning, road and building placement are still your primary tools to maintain harmony and promote growth within your cities, although the overall idea has also been given plenty of tweaking. What hasn't changed is the purpose of these zones: residential zoning provides housing for your Sims; commercial areas generate modest amounts of income for the city by giving those Sims a place to spend their earnings; and industrial lots, which are the main breadwinner for most cities, employ the largest number of Sims while generally lowering

land value and spewing out various forms of pollution. Correct placement of these three zones to maximise efficiency while minimising traffic congestion and the negative effects of industrial zoning has always been the cornerstone of *SimCity* and remains so today.

The three zone types are made up of three levels of density and three levels of land value (or tech level for industrial). Zone placement is handled a little differently this time: instead of simply dragging out large blocks of green, blue and yellow, you'll attach zones to the edges of roads, which really just makes a bit more sense. This new system demands new tools, and *SimCity* players will finally have

access to an assortment of road building features including arced roads as well as squares, circles and free-form building. To help the obsessive city planners out there, smart guidelines will appear to help you keep things logical while still allowing you to manoeuvre around irregular or complex landmasses and surface water.

Roads also serve as the only way to increase the density of an area, and come in a range that supports all levels of traffic, from cheap dirt roads to multi-lane avenues that can support a light rail system. Increasing the density of the roads means their attached zones can expand to

accommodate more people or shops, growing from a collection of free-standing houses to an apartment block; or from a group of humble family stores and restaurants to a massive shopping mall. Land value is another concern: not all Sims can afford luxurious accommodation or high-end shopping, but those with the Simoleans to spend will have need of larger housing and penthouse suites. You'll have to carefully manage land values by placing down parks, service buildings and other niceties to draw in the fancy crowd and their big spending, or see their backs as they head out in search of a city that can better provide for their needs.

INTERVIEW

with Jason Haber, producer on *SimCity*

NAG: GlassBox is the big thing in the new *SimCity*, or at least the most exciting one. Tell me about your intentions with the development of this engine.

Jason Haber: We actually made GlassBox first and built it to be the next big simulation engine for Maxis. It was really the vision of Ocean Quigley, our creative director, and Andrew Willmott who's our chief architect, to create this simulation with detail and integrity where everything is simulated within the game. And then once they created that we decided to start building *SimCity* on it.

NAG: Multi-city play is also a big deal, but what about perfect city kind of people who like to build a single, amazing metropolis that's perfectly self-sustaining; where do they fit in?

Jason: You do of course have the option to play an entire region on your own. You can make it private. In doing that you're playing multiple cities within the region, so there's still this idea of multi-city play, but you can strive to have a perfect region or set of cities. A lot

of your knowledge from previous *SimCity* games will definitely come into play here, and having that new multi-city element will add another twist to it.

NAG: What sort of communication features do you have between players? With the gameplay being generally asynchronous you face some challenges.

Jason: Yeah, it is asynchronous gameplay. One of the ways you can communicate is through Origin, just like a live chat, but we also have within each region what we call the Region Wall. It's sort of like a message wall that each person who's playing within that region can post to. So anyone can communicate and coordinate within that region.

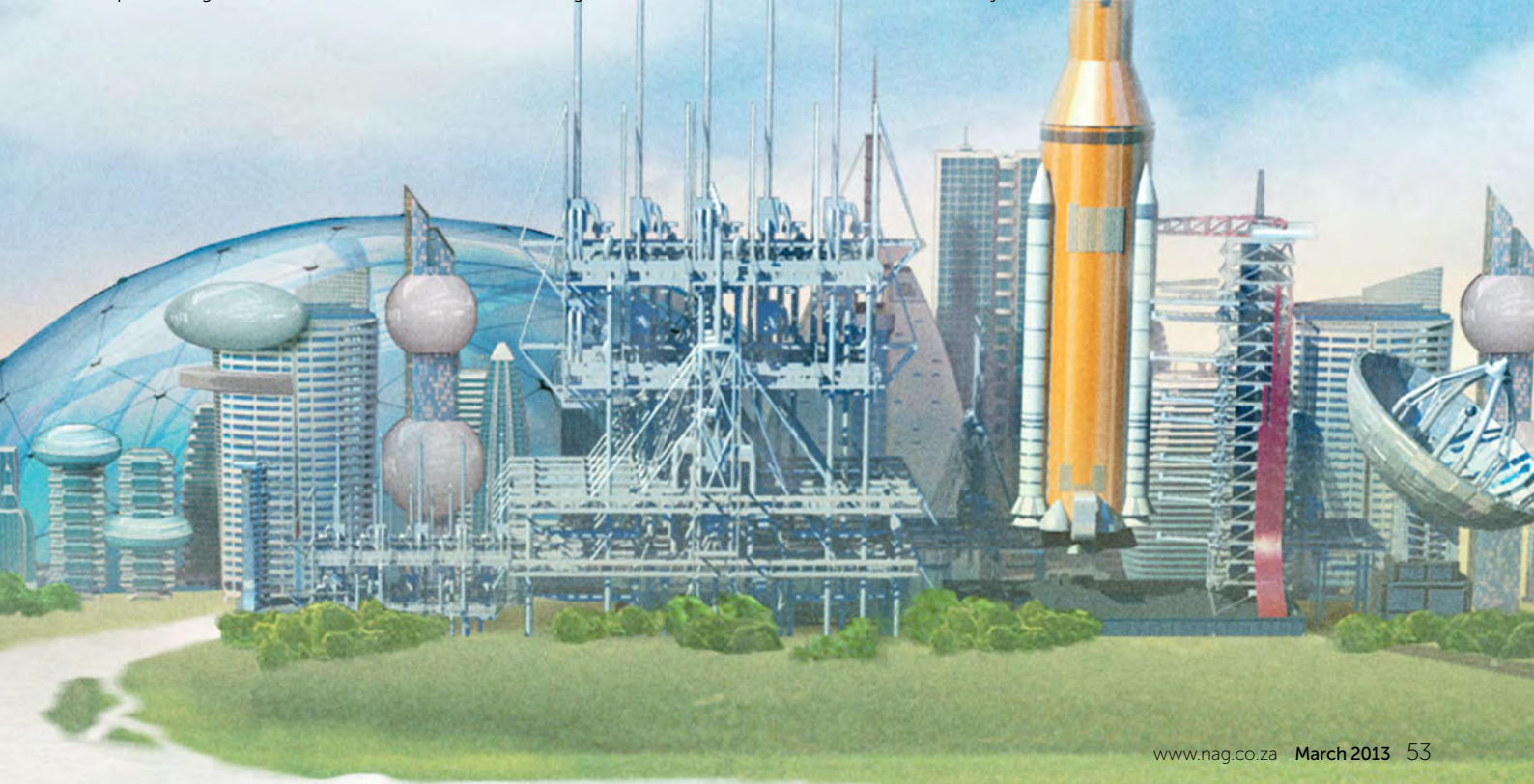
NAG: What's your stance on modding? It's always been a part of the series and PC gaming in general, but this hosted solution seems to indicate that you'll hold all the cards at all times.

Jason: We know that modding is really important to our community and our fans, but right now we're really just focused on finishing the core game and getting it out. But it's something that we're very aware of and we're talking about it but we don't have anything on it yet. We actually brought in [SimCity modding website] Simtropolis to our studio and brought them in to show them the game and how we build the game to get their thoughts, but for now we just want to finish the game.

NAG: Another feature that's new to the series is the concept of finite resources. Would you say that's a commentary on global issues and the green thinking of today?

Jason: I would definitely not call

SimCity a green game. I think it's just about trying to simulate another aspect of something that's in the real world, and having limited resources is certainly a part of that. Some of the resources can be replenished, like rain clouds can come through the city and they'll actually replenish the water table. There are resources that are more or less scarce in different cities in different regions. Part of what that'll do is create a natural dynamic between the cities of who has what and who doesn't. **NAG**



REVIEWS INTRO

There are floaters and sinkers. We scooped the NAG reviewers from the top. Meet your reviewers.

If you could have one wish to change the gaming industry right now – what would that wish be? No wishing for more wishes or the black witch will skewer you.



RedTide

I wish that every new game would be a new idea, new genre or new innovation we've never seen before (graphics be damned). You know, like in the early days of gaming.



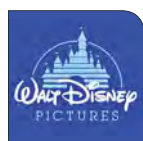
Miktar

That everyone involved in game development, from top to bottom, plays them. Big Game Development exists in a bubble, where those that fund and market don't understand what they're selling.



Azimuth

I'm sure the politically correct answer would be something about DLC or online passes or Bobby Kotick's new fortress on the moon, but I just want a new *Unreal Tournament*.



Mikit0707

For IP ownership to stay with the original creators and not the publisher. I mean really, WTF is Disney going to do with the *Monkey Island* and *Maniac Mansion* licenses anyway?



GeometriX

I'd wish for publishers to spend more resources cultivating new IPs instead of pushing developers to shovel out endless sequels and annualised releases.



Barkskin

I wish people would stop buying *Call of Duty* so that other developers/publishers wouldn't feel the need to chase its ludicrous sales figures with every one of their games.

MINIREVIEWS

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

FTL: FASTER THAN LIGHT

You're a starship captain, desperately fleeing relentless rebel forces because of *Throwaway Storyline*. To get to your final destination, you have to travel through hazard-ridden sectors of the galaxy, recklessly jumping from node to unknown node. With any luck, you'll find decent upgrades to your ship's weapons, systems and assorted capabilities along the way. Your crew is counting on you to make the tough calls that'll keep them from being unceremoniously blown up, or jettisoned into space, or slowly suffocated while simultaneously flash-fried in a rogue fire. It's a pity for them then that *FTL* is bound to make a bumbling buffoon out of even the shrewdest space-warrior. Over and over again.

A curious mix of roguelike and simulation, death in *FTL* is permanent, but each individual run through its sectors is short and bittersweet. Every jump is a calculated risk. When you don't simply run into enemy ships that quickly proceed to make a mess of your "foolproof" plans, you'll often be greeted by a multitude of randomised, sticky situations, and the choices you make in them could leave you with



everything from a new crew member to an asteroid-sized chunk missing from your hull. You'll gather scrap as you go, used as currency to buy better weapons, upgrade your ship's systems (along with its reactor, to keep those systems powered) and repair any damage you sustain. Juggling weapons control, crew management and the various systems in your employ is as exciting as it is terrifying when everything inevitably goes to hell.

85



It's a fiendishly addictive game, every minor victory a prelude to sudden, crushing doom. Play it. It's great.

[I would just like to add that you play this game knowing full well that you'll probably want to kill yourself after each session. It teases you with possibility then stabs you in the face when you lean in for the kiss. You'll hate it and then hate yourself even more because you can't leave it alone. Ed]

“Dane did you see the Pope has the same problem as you? He’s retiring cause he’s frail”

- SAVAGE



Shryke

A better level of gaming journalism... less sensationalist rubbish, more ethical reporting.



SAVAGE

I wish that Void Rays moved at the speed of Phoenixs and had the range of Brood Lords.



ShockG

Sorry you were asking what about hardware again?

REVIEW SCORES GUIDELINE

1-39 This game is broken. 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 you'd play it for a bit if you got it for free, but it's not something you'd recommend to friends.

50-59 Acceptable, but nothing special. It's generic or uninspired, but playable, and might be worth spending some time hunting for achievements.

60-69 Now we're getting somewhere. This game has something interesting about it, and fans of the genre or series should enjoy it, but something significant holds back this game from greatness.

70-79 This game is very good. Anyone who enjoys this type of game 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 An excellent game; one that you'd happily play through multiple times and recommend to friends. It adds interesting, if imperfect, advancements to the genre or series.

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.

home_coded

Exposure for South African indie developers...

Cape of Good Games

WWW.COGG.CO.ZA

For hobbyist game developers the prospect of advancing to full-time professional development is a daunting one, and this move is one that Cape of Good Games' sole employee, Stefan Dieckmann, knows all too well.

Former "regular programmer" at a small IT company in The Mother City, Dieckmann one day realised his calling and made the move to game development, having been an avid gamer since a young age. He also made a call to stick to mobile development (and it's there where he sees the company staying for the foreseeable future) due to their smaller scope. Since it's just him, a lot of artwork and extra programming is currently outsourced, so being able to get through a game without being bogged down is important. "Start small" is Dieckmann's own advice to intrepid developers and is a method that's worked well for him thus far. Cape of Good Games is currently working



on two new titles for iOS and Android: a tower defence game similar to the PC-based *Defense Grid*, and a children's game in which players get to build their own world, inspired by his own love of development. "I have so much fun level designing I thought it would be a great to create a game where kids can experience the joy in making their own levels," said Dieckmann.



Some of COGG's previous titles include *Maze 100* (which reached the top of the App Store in Australia) *Mini Golf Adventure* and *Ludo 3D Extreme*.

If you have an established local game development company or project and would like to be featured in NAG, send an email to geoff@nag.co.za.

Dead Space 3



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Momma always said: life is like a vent of necros, you never know what you gonna get

For a third game in the series it's a cracker – a planet cracker (a little in-joke). The essence of the *Dead Space* series is all about exploring dark locations and killing necromorphs. You play Isaac Clark, an engineer who has a talent for killing these things and sometimes almost saving humanity. This time around Isaac will be fighting soldiers a quarter of the time and necromorphs for the rest of the time. There were some rumblings on the Internet about this new *Dead Space* turning into an action game and abandoning its "roots", but that's all nonsense. *Dead Space 3* is more action orientated and the soldier bits are honestly a welcome break from the monsters eating all your face parts. Of course dead soldiers do sometimes come back as necromorphs, but that's a bedtime story for another night.

Isaac can now do a combat roll, climb ladders and rappel down mountains – he still can't jump however – but this doesn't matter thanks to snappy level design. The weapon crafting is a very cool addition for the adventurous. Results may vary, but essentially players can craft their perfect necromorphs slaying toys. For example, you can attach a plasma cutter to the top

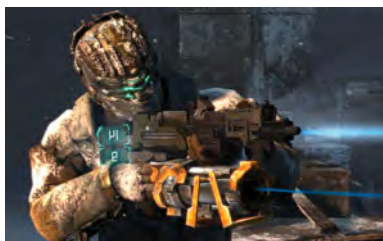
mounting of a weapon frame and a grenade launcher to the bottom mounting – the trigger shoots the top weapon and R1 shoots the other – this is great for all the different situations you might find yourself in. Of course this means you'll be searching the levels looking for components and upgrades for these weapons – some harder to find than others. If you suck at finding things and are short on, let's say, Tungsten, you can always give EA your credit card number for a little help. The game can be played and finished without resorting to a pay to win strategy, so again, don't believe everything you read on the Internet.

The feel and, let's see... taste of the game are spot on and returning players will relish the familiarity. It's frantic and terrifying and fresh and interesting and different and brilliant. It's *Dead Space 3* and you should play it.

[This review is shorter than normal to make way for our patented Michael and Tarryn Google chat review style presentation reserved exclusively for all Dead Space games. Tarryn even wrote a severed opinion. So now we keep everyone happy – game reviewing by committee – challenge completed. Ed]

DETAILS

Platforms	360 / PC / PS3
Genre	Action / survival horror
Age restriction	18
Multiplayer	
Local	None
Online	2 players
Developer	Visceral Games
Website	www.deadspace.com
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Distributor	Electronic Arts South Africa



25 JAN

Michael: So *Dead Space 3* – pay to win and co-op; should we do our special brand of review for this one again? I'll be honest and say I'm not too keen on playing co-op with you because you'll make me look bad. How I see it: while I'm still poking around looking for "what made that noise" you would have already sliced, diced and served up the necro scum for dinner and found time to chill the wine... :)

Tarryn: Hahaha. I'm keen to do the review again – it's totally a tradition now – but I'm happy to play it with my boyfriend. :)

Michael: Sweet. Just don't do any mushy girl stuff while he's watching...

Tarryn: Dude, I'll be in max necro slaughter mode you gonna organise me a pre-launch review copy? :3

Michael: I shall try for early copies.

Tarryn: MOST EXCELLENT.

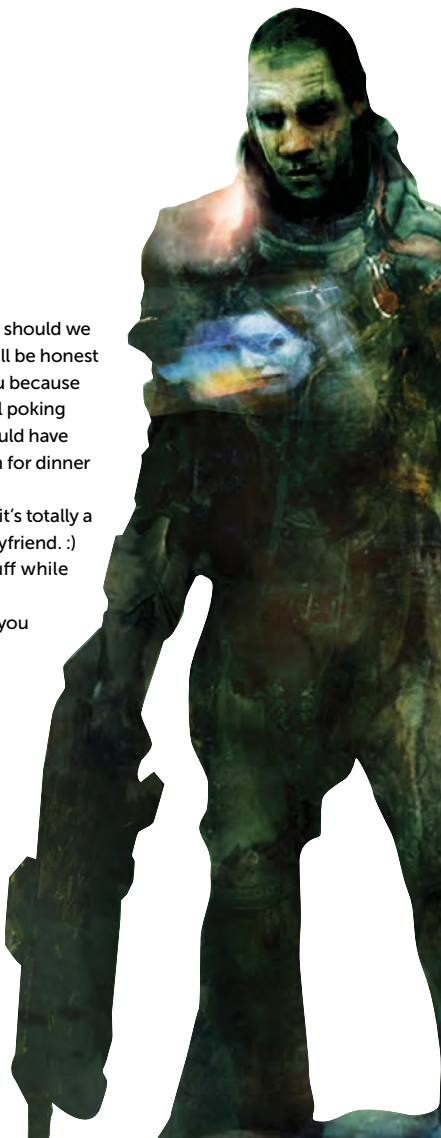
5 FEB

Michael: Sending for Thursday morning... You will get it. *DS3*

Tarryn: I see the review embargo just went up online. 7/10 on Eurogamer, 4.5/5 on Joystiq, 80 on Destructoid. So, apparently it's good. Squeal. DISMEMBER ALL THE THINGS

Michael: Well I'll start playing it tonight – then I'll have a head start on you that will mean nothing a day later.

Tarryn: Hahaha.



DEAD SPACE 3 SEVERED OPINION

The [REDACTED] only turned up around [REDACTED]. But – and this is the important part so pay attention – that doesn't mean I wasn't anxiously watching my back, the corner, that vent over there on the wall, and pretty much everywhere else for them from the start. That's the thing about [REDACTED]. You never know when or where they're going to turn up, and that's what makes *Dead Space 3* totally terrifying. It's not about cheap scares or limited ammo supplies or moving at slug speed (okay, that's still in it) anymore – now it's about tension and suspense and those f***ing [REDACTED], and when it all goes down, that's probably going to include the contents of your lower intestine. Bums will be clenched.

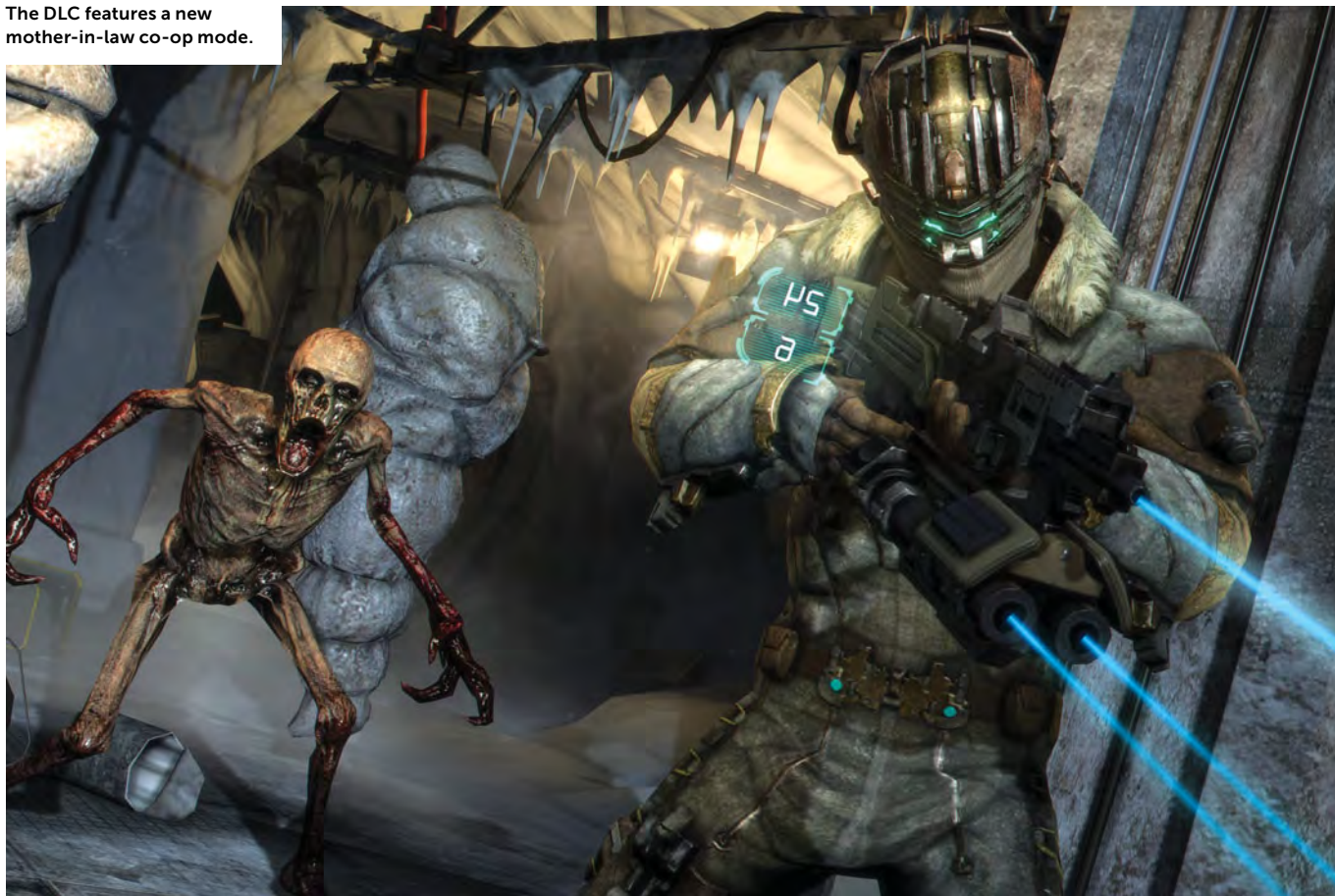
So yes, technically, *Dead Space 3* is somewhat more of an action-oriented experience than previously, but did anybody really want to spend another whole game slogging around a grimy, derelict, space zombie-infested spaceship and/or space station, pushing buttons and recalibrating big machines that don't serve any obvious purpose besides moving the narrative from one increasingly improbable plot point to the next? I mean, it was fun before, but I was ready for something a bit different and the series has moved on with me.

Special mention must go to the addition of co-op to the series – what it might take away from the One Man Versus His Monsters theme, it more than makes up for with the extra firepower and a hand to clutch in the dark. Simply, *Dead Space 3* is a must-play.

-Azimuth

90

The DLC features a new mother-in-law co-op mode.



“Oh man, the opening level (after the intro) is like wandering around the set of *Blade Runner* again, the lighting design is superlative.” - Tarryn

LATER THAT DAY...

Michael: Excitement level at 11 out of 10. Installing game to Xbox only at 14%. :(I also accidentally saw the menu screen because my Xbox automatically plays when a disc is inserted. Also realised something cool – this is the last time we’ll be playing *Dead Space* on the current generation of consoles! And technically this is the start of the proper Google talk review so keep an eye on the spelling and looking smart.

Michael: 89%. 3MB Update? You also have to enter a code for co-op. You get an unlock for your *DS2* saves... and *Mass Effect 3*.

Tarryn: *Mass Effect 3*? o_O

Michael: Yeah some armour. What is it about frozen worlds that are so terrifying – The Thing is a good starting point.

Tarryn: I think because cold and emptiness go together.

Michael: Could He climb ladders in 1 and 2?

Tarryn: I don’t think there were any ladders... I know the movement has been changed quite a bit, there’s a combat roll now, I think.

Michael: I just did a combat stomp – LOL – you forget to stomp something it comes at you later.

Tarryn: I wonder if the raptor things are back.

Michael: I don’t think my heart (or underpants) can handle them again!

Tarryn: Lutz. They were terrifying, but in a totally awesome way.

Michael: I’ll go with awesome in a terrifying way.

Tarryn: The way they’d peek around crates.

Michael: Don’t remind me.

LATER

Michael: Damn good so far... Been shooting dudes though – I’m only in this for the necros. But it’s justified.

Tarryn: Gawd, I can’t wait to play it!

Michael: I really love this franchise – perhaps we’re not the best people to be doing the review? ;)

Tarryn: I think it’s a bit of both, really. Sure, we’re somewhat biased, but then, so are a lot of people who would consider buying the game, a lot of noise on the internet from game nerds who probably never even played the first two right now is all, like, “F**K *DEAD SPACE 3* BECAUSE DLC,” and those readers who are actually fans of the franchise deserve a review that’s somewhat more grounded in reality.

Michael: True all that... those dumb nerds. LOL. Oh, just died – that wasn’t supposed to happen – got jumped by three f**kers...

Tarryn: I’m so bored of people complaining about “corruption” in the gaming industry. NEWSFLASH: companies exist to make money.

Michael: Terrifying encounters – check. Stomping with little war cry – check... Oh god – an elevator...

LATER

Tarryn: Oh man, the opening level (after the intro) is like wandering around the set of *Blade Runner* again, the lighting design is superlative.

Michael: Wait until he puts the suit on – I was posing him while some guy was welding something later on. Getting that blue light

to shine at me – I felt special.

Tarryn: I really like it so far, it's good to have a plasma cutter again. Did you also get caught in the ship's engine falling down the slope at the start? Failed so hard.

Michael: I lucked that bit out... Nothing hit me. I enjoy it though. I like how 3 games in – it still feels just like a *Dead Space* game. The sounds, movement, perspective – everything.

Tarryn: Yeah, it's kind of funny actually. A lot of people griping about how it's "different" and has lost whatever it is that made *Dead Space*, *Dead Space* – I wonder what exactly defined the game for them. Sure, the space zombies and scares were some part of it, but *Dead Space* for me is all about the lighting, sound, and level design. Everything else is just extras. It's like the *Alien* movies – they're all quite different, but still quintessentially *Alien*. I'm not including *Alien 4*, obviously. Spit.

LATER

Tarryn: I'm absolutely loving the environment design, btw, there's so much detail.

Michael: Yes – like number 2 – cool interesting shit EVERYWHERE. I don't know why but fully lit rooms are scarier for me because you know how to deal with the monsters in the dark – but in a bright room – GULP.

Tarryn: I keep getting distracted by random objects because I'm sure it's something I can pick up or interact with in some way, except it is just set dressing. I find the open space the most terrifying thing. I was looking out of the windows of that derelict ship, and its enormous bulkhead overhead with black infinity beyond. GULP.

8 FEB

Tarryn: OH GOD NO A REGENERATOR.

Michael: Yeah – not happy about those buggers.

Tarryn: Did you do the conning tower stash side mission? So many necros.

Michael: That's for tonight. I wonder what the best weapon to construct is. I feel the optional missions are like bait. You go for the gold and you get it up the bum.

Tarryn: BUT TUNGSTEN, MAN. I really like my double plasma cutter. It's like having one plasma cutter with a HUUUUUGE clip. Also, I added a rapid fire upgrade to the secondary cutter for max chewing.

Michael: Well you can always buy some tungsten from EA? I mean sell your soul.



"I wouldn't mind being the robot sometimes. Take a break from shitting in my pants." - Michael

Tarryn: I'm ashamed to admit that I've seriously considered it... You can also use those ration seals collected by the scav bot, but that's slow going.

Michael: Don't cave in – if people support this rubbish it'll only encourage them. You got the bot?

Tarryn: That was my thinking too. Yup.

Michael: I like the idea of a little robot working on collecting stuff for me while I deal with the big boy stuff.

Tarryn: Yeah, I think it's a cool complement to the crafting system.

Michael: I wouldn't mind being the robot sometimes. Take a break from shitting in my pants.

Tarryn: Haha. You should be able to swap.

Michael: Yeah – imagine all the interesting places you could go as a robot in that game. I guess EA is saving it for the DLC.

9 FEB

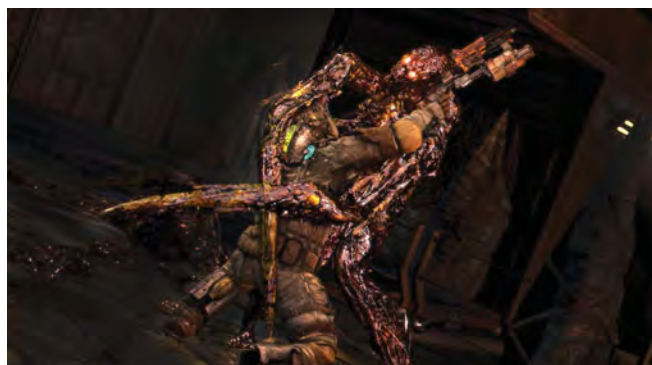
Tarryn: Ha, I only know this because my boyfriend and I have our TVs right next to each other, but when playing in co-op, Carver has hallucinations that Isaac doesn't see. We actually see different stuff in the same places!

Michael: Nice...

Michael: Where are you solo – or has co-op consumed you? I must also say I'm enjoying the shit out of this game. 41% complete apparently and 11:29 minutes in.

Tarryn: I think we're in chapter 6 or 7. We've landed on the planet and we're looking for snowsuits. Those creepy crawly skeletal necros are gross. Only playing co-op now. some of the puzzles are a bit more complicated.

Michael: There is this one room that you can power up – "Radio





Don't ask Jason about his wood cutting accident.



Aloha" or something plays. It's in the snow planet – a room that connects two sections of the map. There is a random drop there that keeps reappearing each time you open the door. I secretly think Visceral have left these "opportunities" for us so we don't hate the EA money making machine too much.

Tarryn: Oh dang, we're way past there now.

Michael: Oh well... I didn't farm it too much – but it did drop Tungsten occasionally. I enjoy/hate the under pressure puzzles or activities when you must do stuff while getting your face chewed off.

10 FEB

Tarryn: Those parts are a bit more manageable in co-op, although the bit where you have to rearrange cargo loads was insane. I think we both died twice. I'm kinda ambivalent about the puzzles, though. Like, they're not really that bad or anything, but I don't see the point of them either. I just don't think they really add anything to the game except a very easy obstacle. One thing, though, is that there are WAY more necros in this game than either of the previous games.

Michael: I've just seen plastic dust on my Xbox controller – this was generated while I was running away from one of the big spider necros – the ones that you must shoot the limbs then those pods before it regenerates. The first one I did I must have gotten lucky because the second one I didn't know how to kill it. *Dead Space 3* – creates plastic dust. As for the puzzles – I agree. I see why they're there – add a little variety – but they're not really integral.

Tarryn: I think the weapon crafting system adds so much to the game. We've been putting together some really crazy stuff. I'm

finding that the hunt for components is a whole game unto itself.

Michael: The weapon crafting for me is a little hit and miss. I've got two guns that work well so I'm not inclined to experiment. So I've got stacks of components not doing anything.

Tarryn: Oh, we've been building all sorts of weapons. :P Also, I think I've glitched the Peng. :(

Michael: You HAVE TO get the Peng – I saw a sign for it in a room but nothing more. I've got three scavenger bots also now – doing my bidding.

Tarryn: Yeah, that's something else that glitched in my game. I had the first scav bot in single player, but when I restarted on co-op, I didn't get it again when my partner did. Now, much later in the game, he has three bots but I have only two. I asked on Twitter, and other people say they both have three. So, bug. :(

Michael: It is a little buggy, I had a necro stuck behind a grate – he couldn't figure out how to walk around. Then I showed him the way of course – to hell. A few Necros have also seemed stuck for a while before figuring out where I was. Nothing major.

11 FEB

Michael: You finished it yet?

Tarryn: No, that's our mission plan for tonight.

Michael: Okay so tomorrow we can discuss it. Also – I'd like to hear what you have to say about this: I have a theory that playing co-op in a game like this takes away 84% of the terror because you're not alone... in the cold and dark with a thousand teeth waiting to tear you apart.

Tarryn: It's definitely different in co-op, but it's not a bad sort of different, and the thousand teeth are always under

the bed anyway...

Michael: These side missions are bloody hard – can't see how you'll do it on insane.

12 FEB

Tarryn: make sure you watch to the end of the credits

LATER

Tarryn: Did you finish it?!

Michael: So close... I get distracted by side missions – tonight.

Tarryn: That second last side mission – the one in the disposal area – was a clusterf**k. Holy s**t. I don't think this game is possible on insane.

Tarryn: No, I'm not even going to try. It was HAAAAARD on normal difficulty. Also, you really are very close to the end. You might as well have pushed on. :P

Michael: S**t! I knew it

Tarryn: It's a very, very long game. The previous two were both around 6-7 hours, and our final time on *Dead Space 3* (co-op) was over 17 hours. We did all the side missions, though, and spent a lot of time crafting weapons. But still, much longer game is much longer.

Michael: I feel that the inclusion of the enemy soldiers is a much needed break from the necros – that game is really tense. So fighting men with beards is a welcome respite... Also, those raptors – every time – I get so tense.

Tarryn: Oh god, towards the end, we got rushed by raptor necros so many times. They really are f**king terrifying and they're seemingly even stronger this time around – I must confess, I died on the business end of their claws many times.

Michael: Especially that one section when them and other necros are coming at you... holy s**t.

Tarryn: Play it in easy :P

Michael: LOL. Good idea actually... With my kit I'll turn those necros into pets.

Tarryn: I'm farming all my leftover 'chievos in easy. No way am I doing another stalker rush in normal. Ugh, that side mission with, like, the six regenerators at the end. I was in such a panic.

Michael: LOL

Tarryn: I was screaming at Gareth, "RUN! JUST F**KING RUN!"

Michael: You know you can't kill them so you just run. I went down those stairs not checking my waypoint and it was a dead end –

holy mother. That was bad.

Tarryn: Yikes.

Michael: Yeah – three of them between me and the ladder... imagine. All for a stupid circuit.

Tarryn: Hahaha.

Michael: I whimpered a little.

Tarryn: I must say, although it's not exactly a survival horror game anymore, it was super tense and suspenseful. Even in co-op. I loved the complete change of scenery from both previous games.

Michael: Why you say that? It feels like a survival horror. Clarify?

Tarryn: Well, the first game had that *Resident Evil* feel where ammo and med packs were quite scarce so you have to be really careful. That's classic survival horror. Now supplies are abundant, and the focus is more on enemy rushes. Even right at the end, the sound of necros growling and screaming in the vents was enough to set us both on edge.

Michael: I liked the variety of enemies – almost like you never knew exactly when they were going to do.

Tarryn: MOMMA ALWAYS SAID: LIFE IS LIKE A VENT OF NECROS, YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU GONNA GET.

Michael: Haha – I think that will be the heading.

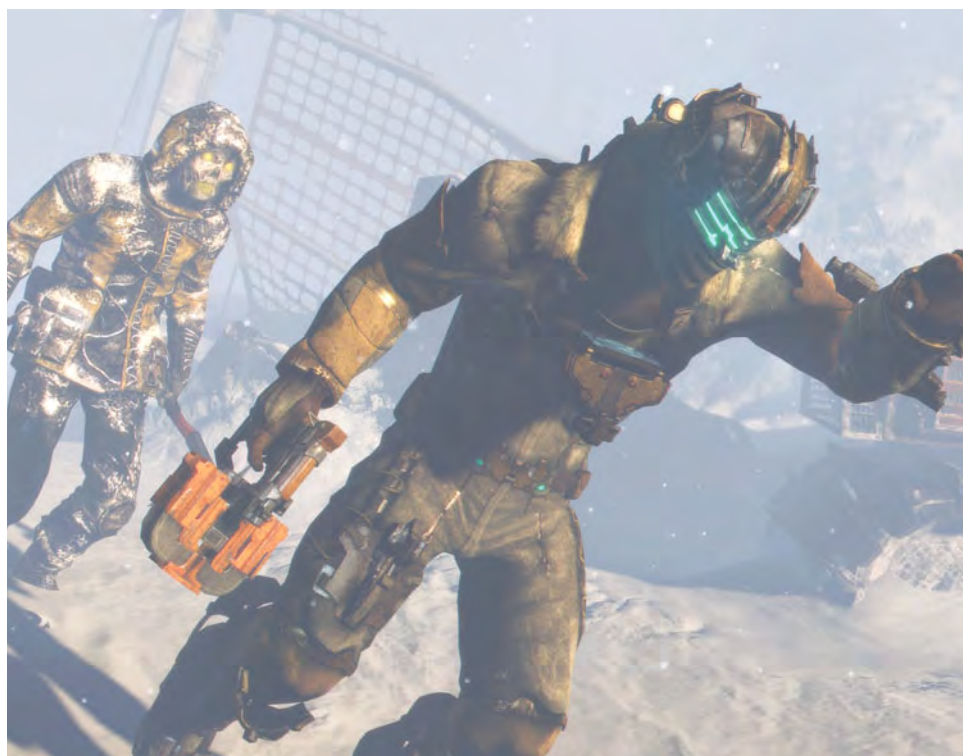
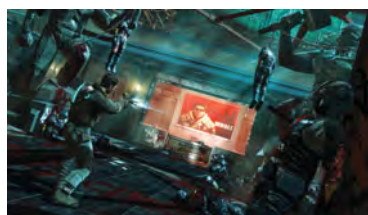
Tarryn: Yeah, in the final room of that disposal side mission, there were vents everywhere. There was NO safe space in the room to back into. The first time, we both backed into the one corner, not noticing there was a vent above us. That ended abruptly when one of those exploding necros dropped on our heads.

Michael: Hahaha – the best kind of drop. I used their bags of explosives sometimes to kill other ones – I actually enjoyed getting them.

Tarryn: Yes, they're like "free dynamite!"

Michael: Or Biomite

"It's definitely different in co-op, but it's not a bad sort of different, and the thousand teeth are always under the bed anyway..." - Tarryn





Tarryn: Necromite

Michael: LOL. You can't pay for comedy this good. So what didn't you like, go:

Tarryn: Too many doors. It felt like half the game was waiting for doors to cycle and open. I realise a lot (maybe even most) of them are actually loading screens, but man, there were too many.

Michael: Yeah – It added something but wasn't consistent. Better than LOADING..., pause, black screen... game on. I felt the weapon crafting wasn't essential – it needed to be essential for me to use it. I always got meh results so I stopped using it.

Tarryn: I also wasn't totally wild about the rappelling sequences.

Michael: Oh – I liked those – but perhaps two rappels too many – felt like I was in a mountain climbing simulator for a while there.

Tarryn: I loved the weapon crafting. Made some really interesting gizmos, by the end, I have this gun that ultra-rapid-fired acid-coated bolts and bolas grenades. I called it The One-Shotter.

Michael: Nice – I've used that lightning javelin gun. I recently got a repeater with grenade launcher and a mod to protect the shooter. I often get swarmed so now I aim into the nearest one and boom – all gone. The bolts are very good. Acid means damage over time.

Tarryn: The bolas grenades are great, lots of red mist.

Michael: I like me some red mist in the morning. I don't get red mist I get a chunky necro shower. It's like my stomping boot in a gun.

Tarryn: Hahaha

Michael: I appreciated the fact that when you backtracked here and there the enemies didn't reset – full marks to the designers for that.

Tarryn: The planet-side setting was definitely a much-needed change of scenery. I mean, the first two games were superb, but I'm not sure I'd have loved slogging through another derelict spaceship the entire game.

Michael: Spot on, and of course an ice world is the perfect choice. Next we need a steamy jungle setting and necro alien animals?

Tarryn: Like the predator home world? I'd play that.

Michael: Yeah – imagine desert. Sarlacc necro!?

Tarryn: D:

13 FEB

Michael: Took me 22 hours and 36 seconds for 91.9% complete.

Tarryn: Wow. We finished it in about 17.5 hours or so. I'm at 98% complete. :P

Michael: I see I missed an optional somehow. :(I take my time – do things right. Still five odd hours more seems like a lot. But you had help – I took it all up the butt – solo.

Tarryn: Yeah, we did all the optional missions and missed very few collectibles. You can check what's what in each chapter from the options menu so you know what to look for. Oh, I'm sure playing co-op makes it a bit faster. We didn't really get stuck anywhere.

Michael: I struggled at school so some of the puzzles took me forever. ;)

Tarryn: Lulz

Michael: Anyway – damn good game again. Now we wait for DS4 on the Xbox 720...

Tarryn: Not that I had low expectations for the game, but... it was better than I'd expected by the third game in a series, it's either great or really s**t.

I'm calling my second opinion a "severed opinion". GET IT LOL?

Michael: I sense greatness in you... No wait, it's gone.

Tarryn: ... aww. **NAG**

91

This is a game you must play – especially if you enjoyed the first two. From then to now it has lost nothing and gained much. Ignore all the doomsayers on the Internet – there's nothing wrong with *Dead Space 3*. It's still fresh and imaginative and we can't wait for the next one.

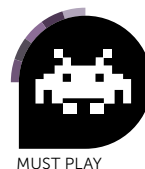
PLUS

Nice change of pace / Crafting weapons / Varied environments

MINUS

Too many doors / Resources can be bought with real money

Ni no Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch



The good old days

To say that Japanese role-playing games have lost their way would be an understatement. Too many recent releases from this genre have tried to straddle the line between Western desires and their Japanese roots in the attempt to please an audience that doesn't actually exist. But *Ni no Kuni* knows what it is; it knows what its players want and it gives it to them by the boatload.

The premise is a familiar one: a boy by the name of Oliver has been brought to a magical world where he's told that he's a wizard and The Pure-Hearted One: a human destined to save the world from the dark forces of Shadar. Naïve but determined, Oliver is unprepared to face Shadar and so must journey throughout the land, learning new spells, meeting people who can help him and mastering his powers. He'll do so with the aide of his sidekick Mr. Drippy (a doll turned fairy who sports a thick Welsh accent and a razor-sharp wit; better known as Lord High flippin' Lord of the Fairies, thank you very much), as well as a few others who will join in along the way. It's pretty predictable stuff, but this safe storyline is only there to provide a conduit to discover this beautifully-rendered world filled with charming characters and an overwhelming sense of nostalgia for anyone who's ever longed for the days of yore JRPGs.

Ni no Kuni starts off slow – too slow for some, but fittingly gentle for those who might be drawn to this game for its art and heritage more so than gameplay – but in true JRPG style it will grow as you progress through the story, unlocking new abilities, menu items and places for you to explore. The game constantly tantalises you with peeks into the future: inaccessible menu items are greyed

DETAILS

Platforms

PS3

Genre

Japanese role-playing game

Age restriction

12

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Level-5
Studio Ghibli

Website

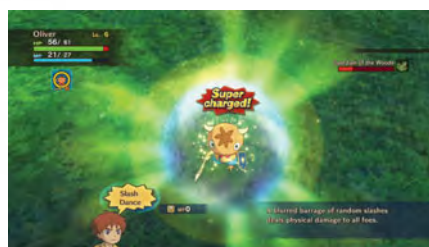
www.ninokunigame.com

Publisher

Namco Bandai

Distributor

Megarom



// Oliver's Wizard's Companion is a dusty old tome that will slowly be filled with pages as you progress through the game. It's a combination of stories, alchemical recipes, spell descriptions and monster listings, and it's quite easy to find yourself lost within its pages.

// Once you unlock the ability to do so, Oliver will be able to craft together ingredients found throughout the lands into new weapons, equipment and provisions.

// Without a doubt, *Ni no Kuni* boasts the finest implementation of cel shading we've ever seen in a game. The visuals are bright and expressive – a welcome change from the greys and browns that dominate the industry these days.

out; chests that you know to be filled with delicious treasure lie just out of reach; and sparkling points of interest on the world map are tucked away in isolated locations. As you journey through the seemingly ever-growing world you'll visit cities and dungeons – the latter of which you cannot actively save within unless you get to a save point – filled with wild and interesting creatures and NPCs. Many of those NPCs will have quests for you to complete in exchange for cash, items and "merit points" – *Ni no Kuni*'s secondary currency redeemable for unique abilities that will help keep you out of trouble when you're out and about.

As a wizard, Oliver has access to a wide variety of spells that are used both in and out of combat in a manner remarkably reminiscent of *Quest for Glory*. Unfortunately, the use of non-combat spells is limited to very specific circumstances, and most of the time Drippy is there to tell you exactly when to use a very-strongly-hinted-at spell to solve an NPC's needs. *Ni no Kuni* is immensely charming, expertly written and, despite featuring a group of children and a fairy as the main characters, is never irritating or patronising for those reasons, but in terms of quest design and the blatant hand-holding it's hard to not lose patience during some of the more cumbersome interactions that any even vaguely experienced player should be able to

BRING THIS
IMAGE
TO LIFE

breeze through. The same can be said for much of the UI – it’s bulky, animation-dependent and too keen on throwing confirmation messages at the player for repetitive tasks.

JRPGs love their combat and *Ni no Kuni* embraces that legacy. Oliver and his friends won’t do most of the fighting themselves, however; you’ll enlist familiars (which are either captured in the wild or given to you during certain quests) to do so instead. Each of your three party members can store three familiars, with a couple waiting in the wings and the rest drifting in some sort of cosmic holding pattern from where they can be retrieved at certain locations. Battles are the active sort, with attacks, spells and item use running on a cooldown timer, and you can move around the confined arena spaces of each battle to gain better positioning or pick up the now-popular health and mana “glims” that fall to the ground as reward for well-timed defences or critical hits. Combat is a largely repetitive affair, as you’d expect from this genre, and during the first 10 or so hours could even be considered to be rather boring, but as you progress through the game you’ll often encounter massive spikes in difficulty that, while frustrating, at least serve to sharpen your senses and force a more tactical approach to battle – this is especially true of the boss battles. Sadly, again *Ni no Kuni* suffers from a poorly-implemented user interface that extends into the field of battle; it’ll take you some time before you’re comfortable with this system and even then only begrudgingly.

Ni no Kuni is mechanically flawed but utterly delightful to play, if a bit of a pain at times. But it’s filled with magic – no small part of which is courtesy of Studio Ghibli’s



“Ni no Kuni starts off slow – too slow for some, but fittingly gentle for those who might be drawn to this game for its art and heritage more so than gameplay...”



input on this project – and it is quite simply easier to get over the issues than it is to get bogged down by them. It’ll transport you back to a time when life was simpler and games wanted to be played for the sheer joy of letting you discover what lies inside. If you’ve ever found yourself intrigued by the idea of picking up a JRPG then let this be your introduction, and if you’re a veteran of the genre and snarl every time someone mentions the fall of *Final Fantasy*, let this be the game to remind you why you fell in love with the genre in the first place. **NAG**
- GeometriX

82 *Ni no Kuni* combines a simple children’s tale with well-crafted traditional JRPG mechanics. It’s rewarding, peaceful and utterly charming, but there are a couple of snags along the way.

PLUS
Beautiful and vibrant visuals / Excellently written and voiced
Filled with well-executed JRPG staples

MINUS
Cumbersome user interface / Not fully voiced / Can be repetitive and frustrating at times

DmC: Devil May Cry

So nice they named it twice

Let's be honest. Ninja Theory's *DmC: Devil May Cry* may be the best game nobody ever wanted.

A child of well-publicized controversy, *DmC* arrives with the stigma of a sell-out attached, whether fair or not. Capcom's stated desire to appeal to "Western gamers" does commit a few sins that justifiably anger an existing fan base. Not only was *Devil May Cry 4* the best-selling game in the series to date, it also opened narrative and combat character threads that this reboot title jettisons to the Land of Unresolved Cliffhangers. Not cool, bro.

The irony is that at the end of the day, *DmC* is a pretty good game anyway, and arguably the best action-combat title produced by a Western studio (sorry, Kratos). Capcom's tutelage of Ninja Theory in the game design and combat department proves to be no joke. Dante has all his signature combos, can combine his various weapon-based moves with flair and function, and everything feels remarkably solid for an Unreal Engine 3 game of this nature. Massive combos are easier to perform than in previous entries of the series, and on normal difficulty the entire game is actually pretty easy to finish. Those looking for the "real" experience, that requires becoming intimate with the combat system and how the various weapons interact, will find it in the



WHERE'S MY BLOODY PALACE?

At some point after launch, Capcom will release free downloadable content that (re)introduces the Bloody Palace Mode. As in previous *Devil May Cry* games, Bloody Palace is a gauntlet of enemies and bosses, with global leaderboards for ultimate bragging rights.



additional difficulties unlocked after your first play-through. With no claims to being a superior game, system-wise, to *DMC4*, *DmC* nonetheless does pull together a satisfying hack, slash, and shooting experience.

Even though *DmC* does not (and did not aim to) match *DMC4* in terms of gameplay, it more than compensates with a fresh visual and environmental theme. What Ninja Theory has managed to accomplish with the warping, twisting, mutating, dynamic environments in *DmC*, is something every developer should take note of. The storytelling is also genuinely well done, with cut scenes managing to tread that weird line between being sophisticated and interesting for their own sake, and still be intentionally cheesy Japanese cinema. Ninja Theory knows how to make a cut scene look good, and have ample experience in telling tales. Their previous titles, *Heavenly Sword* and *Enslaved*, while perhaps not great games, were still good stories.

Those that never tried *Devil May Cry* before, or did not like the previous games, will likely find *DmC*'s fresh take on the idea much more appealing, or at the very least, not as punishing. **NAG**

- Miktar

82

There's a lot to love about *DmC*. The plot wobbles between deadpan and charmingly retarded, much like Dante himself, making both oddly likeable. The combat is about as high-octane as you can get, and as easy or hard as you like it. Valid gripes aside, Ninja Theory, against all expectations, actually did well on this one.

PLUS

Incredible visuals / Compelling story / Best QTE implementation seen yet / Bitchin' soundtrack

MINUS

Steals a lot from *They Live* / Bosses are kind of easy

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / PC / PS3

Genre

Action

Age restriction

16

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Ninja Theory

Website

www.

devilmaycry.com

Publisher

Capcom

Distributor

Ster Kinekor

Games

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EA GAMES

Anarchy Reigns

Brawl-tastic budget-priced beat-'em-up

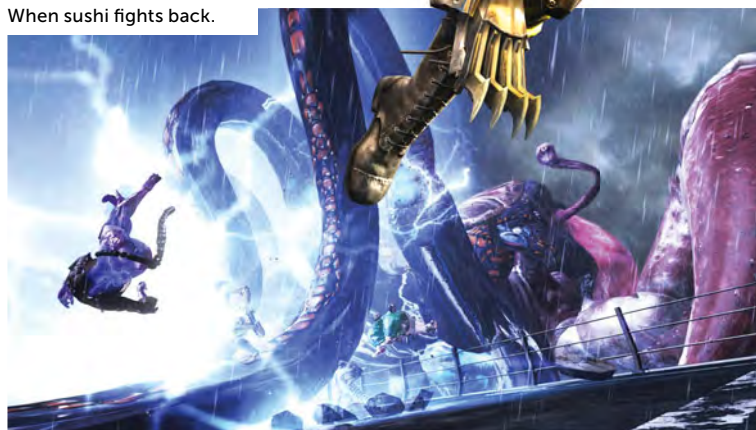
It's grindhouse gaming. Cheap, gaudy, straight to the point. *Anarchy Reigns* is a budget priced PlayStation 2 game made for the modern era. With a strange sense of revisionist nostalgia, it's perhaps a caricature of the kind of game it's based on.

Without claiming it lives up to legendary underground titles such as *God Hand*, what *Anarchy Reigns* does achieve is fielding a chunky brawler with a cast of nearly 20, and a punchy combat system that is a bit of a lightweight *Bayonetta*. This is understandable, with the focus on 16 player melee matches. While the surprisingly deep campaign mode offers up a series of random missions branching off arena stages with plenty of mooks to bash, the long-term point to the game is Battle Royal. Online or offline with bots, the biggest multiplayer mode is a legitimate achievement for chaos in a multiplayer game. It can be difficult to understand what's happening, yet this learning curve is also akin to a game of the prior generation. But there is a payoff for learning to play well. Initially clunky controls shift into context. Kills begin to rack up, and combos of surprising scope reveal themselves. It can be exciting, with hyper violence and gore sufficiently stylized to avoid it becoming too grating.

This is wrapped up with a throwaway plot about an AWOL cyborg super-soldier in a post-apocalyptic urban sprawl. It's elevated to a higher tier of Japanese schlock by characters so bizarre they become memorable whether you'd prefer it or not. For those who recognize the leather-clad, chainsaw-



When sushi fights back.



armed Jack, *Anarchy Reigns* is in fact a stealth sequel to the underappreciated *MadWorld* for the Wii. The black, white, and red graphics are exchanged for a conventional full colour palette. (But a reference to *MadWorld*'s stark presentation remains in the naming scheme of this game's story mode – telling would be a spoiler.)

The visuals are technically competent with most of the effort focused on large and nicely detailed characters. But here again, you'll be reminded of a PS2 title in both art direction and texturing. Rounding out the package is an offbeat soundtrack mostly comprised of "Japanese Dystopian Electro-rap" – *who knows* what else to call it.

What *Anarchy Reigns* tries to do, it does flawlessly. It's an unpretentious affair, standing shoulder to shoulder with the likes of guilty pleasure games such as *Earth Defense Force*. Without an outstanding quality to recommend it, it becomes an unremarkable yet very *interesting* game. You have to be in the mood for that; to seek an unusual distraction rather than sit back to be amazed at the latest spectacle.

And one must admit, there hasn't been anything *quite* like it in a long time. **NAG**

- Miktar

75

If someone had only heard of *Power Stone* (1999), and decided to make a 16-player version of it after playing a lot of *Bayonetta* and *MadWorld*, you'd end up with something not unlike *Anarchy Reigns*. It's an eclectic proposition, but one to make purveyors of its exacting genre very happy.

PLUS

Decent single-player campaign / Many offline modes with bots / Large and varied cast / Budget price

MINUS

Online matchmaking sketchy / Rough learning curve

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / PS3

Genre

Beat-'em-up

Age restriction

16

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

16 players

Developer

Platinum Games

Website

www.sega.com/anarchyreigns

Publisher

SEGA

Distributor

Ster Kinekor Entertainment

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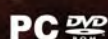


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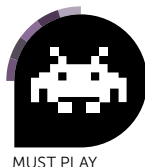


*Based on metacritic average rankings across available platforms.

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The Walking Dead



Everything's going to be okay

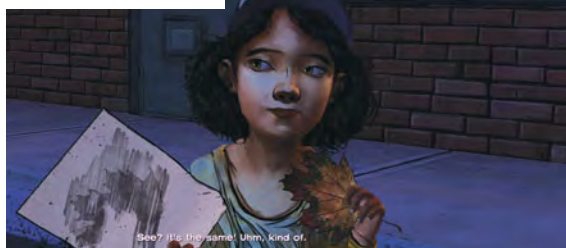
If I had to point out one aspect of *The Walking Dead* that's resonated with me throughout my time playing it, I'd have to say that I have never before had as consistently miserable a video game experience. It's a bizarre accolade to pin to a game, but when I think back on the incredible journey within, it's the perpetual bleakness of it all that makes it special. We've had some wonderfully thoughtful video game narratives appear in the last couple of years, but I think *The Walking Dead* stands a cut above the rest, purely because it determinedly ventures into deeply human territory with all the confidence of a zombie shambling into a campsite lavish with tasty, sleeping brains.

True to Telltale tradition, it's an episodic point-and-click adventure game, split into five episodes. While not a "game" in the strictest sense, because there's very little by way of actual, challenging gameplay, you'll still have things to think about. There are choices you'll make in each episode that will eat at you; not strictly moral choices, but believable, incidental choices that you might not even know you're making until you feel their sudden, awful consequences. It may be something you say to one of the game's characters, or a split-second decision (because much of the game's dialogue and choices are pressured by a timer rapidly whittling away) you make in a desperate situation. And while a large chunk of them don't actually affect the story's path, they make enough of an impact that they will come back to haunt you later.

There are many sub-plots to talk, light-puzzle and explore your way through, and chief amongst the game's various plot elements is the relationship between player character



This is a drawing of my mommy. She's dead.



Mark had a rough night.



Mark?! What the hell happened?!

Lee and a young girl you rescue early on named Clementine. Watching their bond strengthen from awkward beginnings to tender, emotionally wrought exchanges later on is very endearing. This is a little girl forced to witness all the traumatic horrors of the zombie apocalypse, and the writers leverage the resulting attrition of her innocence to great emotional effect. Clementine represents hope in a world devoid of it, and it makes for some of the most engaging fiction in all of gaming. Other characters in the game might not be as immediately affecting, but they're nonetheless important and manage to be intensely human and believable in an industry full of 'roid marines with armour for their armour.

My one gripe with it stems from the technical side, where you'll often spot glitches ranging from texture flashing to character models jarringly disappearing. In a game like this, they're somehow more detrimental to the experience. I think it's time Telltale starts using a new engine – partially because, while I like the visual style that's instantly reminiscent of a graphic novel, I find myself sometimes wishing that there could be more detail and visual dexterity, particularly to lend more weight to the characters' emotional displays.

This was always going to be a difficult game to review, because much of what makes it appealing can't be spoken of without spoiling it for you. I'll leave you with this warning: do not expect intense action, or mind-bending puzzles, or even much by way of zombie slaying. Instead, expect nothing more than a distinctly memorable story. **NAG**

- Barkskin

88

Staring squarely at its narrative, *The Walking Dead* is easily one of the most important video games you'll ever play. The impact of its relentlessly hopeless (yet still regularly tender) storyline cannot be denied. It may not be a "game" in the traditional sense, but it's nevertheless one that should be played by anyone craving a different breed of interactive entertainment.

PLUS

Truly incredible story / Believable characters / Cool visual style

MINUS

Suffers from some technical boo-boos

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / PC / PS3

Genre

Adventure / interactive fiction

Age restriction

18

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Telltale Games

Website

www.telltalegames.com/walkingdead

Publisher

Telltale Games

Distributor

XBLA / Telltale Games / PlayStation Store

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Omerta – City of Gangsters

Certainly not a wise guy

As a fan of both the management and tactical strategy genres, the prospect of playing a game that comprises of both is an exciting one, albeit a little worrying. See, the games of these genres that succeed do so because they're complex and varied: they offer the player the control that they need to take opportunities and exploit them. But they are, mechanically at least, wildly different genres and so to cram both into a single game requires some damn smart integration while retaining core gameplay on both sides. In the case of *Omerta – City of Gangsters*, that integration just isn't there, and even worse still each aspect of the game suffers from feeling incomplete.

The main campaign offering sees you taking on the streets, gangs and businesses in Prohibition-era Atlanta through a series of missions. Each will introduce new characters (some of which you can hire) and gives you enough to do to make you feel like you've been kept busy, but that's exactly where the problem begins: spend just a couple of hours in the game's sandbox mode and you'll discover the extent of its depth. Organising drive-bys on business owners and raiding banks or armouries is entertaining enough, but oddly the developers felt the need to "cap" each playable location, effectively having an end-of-level that you reach with sweet bugger-all to do past that point. While this would be acceptable in a campaign mission, even during those you'll hit a brick wall that comes far too soon. As a result, *Omerta* feels too stifling – too controlling – for a management game.

1 One neat feature is the ability to set one of your goons in the support role for a combat encounter. This has a chance of giving you some decidedly unfair advantages but puts that unit at risk of facing arrest if they fail.

2 Generated cash comes in the form of dirty or clean money, each with its own uses in your highly questionable and downright illegal business operations. And if you generate too much heat from the fuzz, be ready with a bribe on hand or be forced to deal with the threat like a real gangster.



Damn, I just had that decking bleached.



So how does it fare as a tactical strategy game? Sadly, not all that much better. During missions and free play you'll encounter a few opportunities to send in a squad of your finest thieves, hitmen and thugs to perform a combat mission to protect or expand your business interests. The same goons that you had running errands before now become distinct personalities with their own perks, weapons and abilities.

While it's not half bad on its surface, the turn-based combat suffers from being too limiting. Your objectives are always very simple; luck comes into play far too often; tactical elements like taking cover, flanking and reaction shots are inconsistent; there's no control over stances or alternate movement. Perhaps the best part of the combat missions is levelling-up and kitting out your units, but even that is a shallow, unsatisfying experience after the first few times. On the multiplayer side of things, however, customising units is actually a rewarding and fun task, but the mode in general suffers from balance issues that will prevent you from coming back after a few days. **NAG** - GeometriX

57

Omerta is a game that attempts to compensate for its lack of depth with its breadth. Unfortunately, even that breadth has its limits and those too are reached all-too quickly.

PLUS

Starts out with promise / Looks half decent / Multiplayer is okay for a bit

MINUS

Shallow gameplay / Lacklustre management and tactical strategy mechanisms / Lack of necessary controls in both game modes

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / PC

Genre

Management / tactical strategy

Age restriction

16

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

4 players

Developer

Haemimont Games

Website

www.cityofgangsters.com

Publisher

Kalypso Media

Distributor

Silverscreen Trading



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Batman: Arkham City Armoured Edition

Go B.A.T.

There are a whole bunch of games that were released within the last year or so that are now making their way onto Nintendo's Wii U console. One such title is *Batman: Arkham City*, which has appeared on the Wii U in the guise of the *Armoured Edition*. It's essentially the same game with all the DLC included and the game trimmed up to take advantage of the Wii U's Game Pad. If you have played this game anywhere else – particularly the Game of the Year edition – you're not going to find anything really new, other than that Game Pad implementation and the fact that both Batman and Catwoman now have a more armoured look. It works for Catwoman, whose original costume wasn't great, and for Batman... not so much. But still, at least there is a different main character visual. The game pad allows quick access to various gadgets and menu items, each of which has been integrated with varying degrees of success. A new combat mode, tritely called Battle Armoured Tech mode (yes, B.A.T. Mode) allows the player to do more damage when it is powered up, which makes some of the battles a bit easier. While it doesn't offer anything that could be called "fresh" or "revolutionary", it still is a revamped version of one of the better free-roaming action titles we have seen in a while. Worth it if you haven't played it before. **NAG**

- Shryke



85

Even if it's the same thing all over again, *Batman: Arkham City* is still a great game and a welcome addition to the Wii U collection.

PLUS

Decent Game Pad integration / B.A.T. Mode

MINUS

Not much new here

DETAILS

Platforms

Wii U

Genre

Third-person action

Age restriction

16

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Rocksteady Studios

Website

community.batmanarkhamcity.com

Publisher

Warner Bros.

Distributor

Ster Kinekor



Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge

A bit blunt

Ninja Gaiden 3 didn't get the best reviews when it was first released in 2012, and so the Wii U version gave Team Ninja an opportunity to improve things a bit. But, when you get down to it, it's the same game, only now you get to use a Game Pad with it. *Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge* presents the player with the same uninspired levels and repetitive game dynamics that the original game featured. If you're after tons of blood and gore, you'll find those here. But the way that the action is structured simply works out to a system of running through linear levels until you find enormous groups of enemies, which you then need to take out. Sure, the combat is fluid, and Ryu Hayabusa gets a bunch of new weapons and skill upgrades as the game progresses, but it really doesn't evolve into anything more than that. There are also massive, unforgiving boss fights to contend with, too. As for the Game Pad implementation, the developers really just give the player a different way to access menus. In fact, the game never commits to the Game Pad – the player can simply just ignore the game pad entirely, without any adverse effect on the game. Overall, the whole thing feels like a cash-in attempt, rather than a try to get the Wii U version to be a valid addition to the franchise. **NAG**

- Shryke



68

It's kind of fun for a while, but the repetitive game play has migrated from other console versions... and the Game Pad makes no difference here.

PLUS

Lots of action

MINUS

Gets repetitive / Poor Game Pad implementation

DETAILS

Platforms

Wii U

Genre

Third-person action

Age restriction

18

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

8 players

Developer

Team Ninja

Website

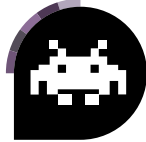
ninjadaiden3.nintendo.com

Publisher

Tecmo

Distributor

Core Group



Persona 4 Golden

One of the finest in the genre, made even finer.

When *Persona 4* was released in 2008, one of the last games for the PlayStation 2, it quickly gained recognition for its inventive take on the genre and depth of content. It's easily an exception to the rule of Japanese role-playing games, standing head and shoulders above its peers and even its predecessor.

The story follows a Scooby Gang of kids investigating strange murders occurring around their quiet small town. Things get supernatural fast, the kids learn to summon powerful alter-egos called Personas, and dungeons are randomly-generated. When you're not delving into the TV to fight monsters behind the static, you still need to attend school, do homework, perhaps get a part-time job or join an after-school club, and deal with social responsibilities. It sounds strange, but it all works together to create a unique and memorable experience.

Golden is a much-expanded version, and the ultra-definitive edition. New story elements, new characters, additional Personas, more spoken lines, new cut scenes, two additional Social Links to explore, a scene-skipping function that literally fast-forwards through dialogue, and more. Wireless functionality was added, allowing for "Vox Populi", a feature you can query to see what other players did during the current day. It acts as a mild guide, if you want to follow the popular choices. **NAG**

- Miktar

DETAILS

Platforms

PSV

Genre

Role-playing game / social simulation

Age restriction

16

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Atlus

Website

www.atlus.com/

Persona4/

personas4/

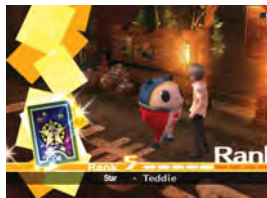
Publisher

Atlus / Square

Enix

Distributor

Ster Kinekor Entertainment



93

It's pretty insane how far Atlus went with this re-release for Vita, making it one of the best games for the platform, the best in the series, and arguably the best in the genre. If only all games had this much style, content, attention to detail, and were treated as well as Atlus treats their properties.

PLUS

Varied and funky soundtrack / Deep and replayable / Great battle system / Excellent story

MINUS

Nothing

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LittleBigPlanet Karting

Good intentions

Smashing together two huge franchises, under the stewardship of two great development teams, seems like a good idea, but this action doesn't always deliver the goods. *LittleBigPlanet Karting* borrows from Media Molecule's *LittleBigPlanet* and United Front's *ModNation Racers*. Principally developed by United Front Games, *LBP Karting* wants to be the kind of game that delivers excellent karting action with incredible customisation, but manages to be mediocre on both counts. The actual driving takes place along tracks that are uninspired and eventually feel repetitive. In addition, the weapons, defence and drifting systems leave behind all the best parts of *ModNation Racers*, opting rather for a dumbed-down mechanic that leaves the player at the mercy of an elastic AI and vindictive opponents. And the fact that score is based, like other *LBP* games, on collecting bubbles, the player is going to need to re-race tracks a number of times to capitalise on that. Okay, so, maybe making tracks is more fun? Not really. Unlike *ModNation Racers*' intuitive track building mechanics, this title feels clunky and demanding when it comes to creations. Instead of elements like automatic population of decorations and the like, *LBP Karting* will make you do everything.

With menus that are sometimes confusing, a race dynamic that feels off and a track building system that is disappointing, this game falls far short of what it wanted to be. **NAG**

- Shryke



65

The idea is great, but the execution of this title simply does not rise to meet its full potential.

PLUS

Good idea / Creation opportunities

MINUS

Clunky creation tools / Racing leaves lots to be desired

DETAILS

Platforms

PS3

Genre

Karting

Age restriction

7

Multiplayer

Local

4 players

Online

8 players

Developer

United Front Games

Website

littlebigplanet.com

Publisher

SCEE

Distributor

Ster Kinekor

Zone of the Enders HD Collection

In the old zone

The host of HD collections coming to the PS3 seems to be growing by the day. The latest title to be added to this library is *Zone of the Enders*. The originals came from the mind of Hideo Kojima – creator of the *Metal Gear Solid* series, and place the player in control of the rather lamentably named Jehuty, a giant flying robot that does battle with bad guys in a plot that will have anime fans howling with delight. Others may just ignore the plot, which is okay, because *Zone of the Enders HD Collection* is crammed with big-robot-smash action. Although the first game does leave a bit to be desired (largely due to its age) the second title is quite fun to play. The action is intense, and the combat system holds up well under the relentless button hammering that the game calls for. It doesn't feel like you're button mashing though, particularly not in the second part. It's actually quite a nice reminder that developers did go as far as they could in the days of the PS2, pushing the console to its limits whenever possible. This collection is great for fans of the series. It has translated rather well to the newer platform, and provides a decent amount of play time. Newcomers may feel that the games are a bit dated, but fans will certainly enjoy the improvements. **NAG**

- Shryke

DETAILS

Platforms

360 / PS2 / PS3

Genre

Third-person Action

Age restriction

18

Multiplayer

Local

2 players

Online

None

Developer

Kojima

Productions

Website

www.konami.jp/zoe_hd

Publisher

Konami

Distributor

Ster Kinekor



71

Fans of *Zone of the Enders* will certainly enjoy this retooled collection, but newcomers may feel that the games are a bit dated.

PLUS

Great for fans / Translated well

MINUS

Feels a bit dated / First game not so great

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Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!!

Finn & Jake are forced to conceptualize themselves as video game characters

Finn (the human) and Jake (the magical shape-changing dog), are just chillaxing in their tree house when suddenly the evil Ice King steals their trash. Much like the seemingly frivolous plots from the cartoon, it's a basic setup for something much more involved. Jake (who, due to being "lazy" that day) hops into Finn's iconic green backpack and the two set off to see what the "biz iz". Along the way they meet up with and help all the major characters from the show: Tree Trunks, Bubblegum Princess, the Door Master, the Duchess of Nuts, and more.

The whimsical and creative universe of the show is the perfect setting for a game, and while *Adventure Time* does make good use of the property, it never really attempts anything but the average with it. For an above-average show known for twisted ideas and dark-around-the-edges concepts, it seems a shame the game treads so lightly. As you explore the Land of Ooo via a top-down perspective, monsters may occasionally attack, dropping you into a side-scrolling beat-em-up/platformer. It's pretty much the *Zelda II* experience (though much easier). Jake and Finn learn new moves as the story ticks on, granting them access to new areas.

WayForward is not a bad developer, having created a lot of decent tie-in games. *Adventure Time* is decent, if nothing else. **NAG**

- Miktar



69

Intentionally modelled after *Zelda II*, the *Adventure Time* game has all the things fans of the cartoon would want, except a challenge. It's clear the game was designed for a very young audience, even though the show is most popular with older viewers.

PLUS

It's Adventure Time! / Delightful music / Humorous

MINUS

Very little voice acting / Very, very easy / Too much backtracking

DJMax Technika Tune

Out with the buttons and in with the touchy feely

Unlike the music "simulation" fad in Western gaming from a few years ago, *DJMax Technika Tune* is more of a pure rhythm game. An evolution from things like *Parappa the Rapper*, it doesn't try to pretend it's an instrument, but rather, it represents your interaction with the music in the abstract.

You pick a song, its music video starts playing and you tap, press-and-hold, or slide little widgets in time to the music, or on the beat, or to match a melody, backbeat, whatever. An element that did make the transition from the original *Beatmania* inspired *DJMax*, where scrolling notes corresponded to buttons that needed to be pressed at the right time, is that failure on your part to get the timing right will cut those notes from the music. Lower difficulties are, of course, easy. Simple taps and slides, letting you enjoy a mild zen-like synesthetic interaction with the song. At higher difficulties, you're playing a piano strapped to the back of a cat with a rocket in its ass. Also quite the zen-state, if you can reach it. Not for the metaphorical cat, though.

Tune is very much a rhythm game for its own sake, placing emphasis on presentation, a large selection of music, and some cunning note placements that require finger-jitsu to manage. **NAG**

- Miktar



81

A portable adaption of the large two-screen *DJMax Technika* touch-based arcade cabinet, *Tune* packages up the whole experience to be nice and mobile without much sacrifice. The only difficult aspect is playing comfortably: on harder difficulties, you need to use both hands to tap violently (and deftly) at the screen.

PLUS

Great presentation / Online leaderboards / Lots of tracks

MINUS

A lot of K-pop. Perhaps too much K-pop / Vita's back touchpad continues to be a dumb idea

DETAILS

Platforms

Vita

Genre

Music

Age restriction

12

Multiplayer

Local

None

Online

None

Developer

Pentavision

Neowiz Mobile

Website

www.technikatune.com

Publisher

Pentavision

Distributor

PlayStation Store

SiNG Party

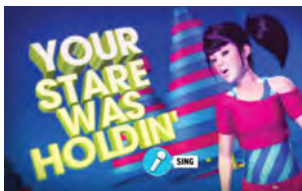
What by who?

Karaoke games are great fun if you're not easily embarrassed, or have achieved the right level of inebriation – somewhere between not caring anymore and falling down in a pool of regurgitated potato chips and cocktail sausages [don't forget diced carrots, Ed]. The strength of these games, though, lies in their track list, and this is where *SiNG Party* drops all the balls. The game makes almost all the right moves, and then delivers fifty songs that are mostly B-sides and little known tracks by famous artists. Sure, there are a few that are well known hits, but most really leave a lot to be desired. The game is simple enough to play, and the Game Pad has been well integrated into the process, making it a great bonus feature for the game. But there is a lack of performance scoring in party mode, which does seem to make that mode somewhat redundant (other than being a great way to make a tit of yourself at a social gathering.) If you're a big karaoke fan, you may want to work your way through the 50 song track list, but you may have to learn the bulk of the songs first. It sort of defeats the idea of a quick and easy embarrassment session overall, although fumbling your way through little-known lyrics and vocal rhythms can add to the masochistic appeal of this title. **NAG**

- Shryke

DETAILS

Platforms
Wii U
Genre
Karaoke
Age restriction
3
Multiplayer
Local
As many as you want
Online
None
Developer
FreeStyleGames
Website
singparty.
nintendo.com
Publisher
Nintendo
Distributor
Core Group



Best happy/excited/
possessed by a
demon face ever!



66

It's a good attempt, but a rather odd selection of songs and a few questionable design decisions keep it from reaching its full potential.

PLUS

No real player limit / Great Game Pad integration

MINUS

Horrible song list / No party mode scoring



DVR-FHD600



DVR-FHD590



DVR-HD550



DVR-530

CeBIT Hall 14 - 15 5-9 MARCH 2013
BOOTH H16

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

Corex IT Distribution Dynamics
Tel: +27 11 700 7188
E-mail: Info@corex.co.za

Facebook Genius



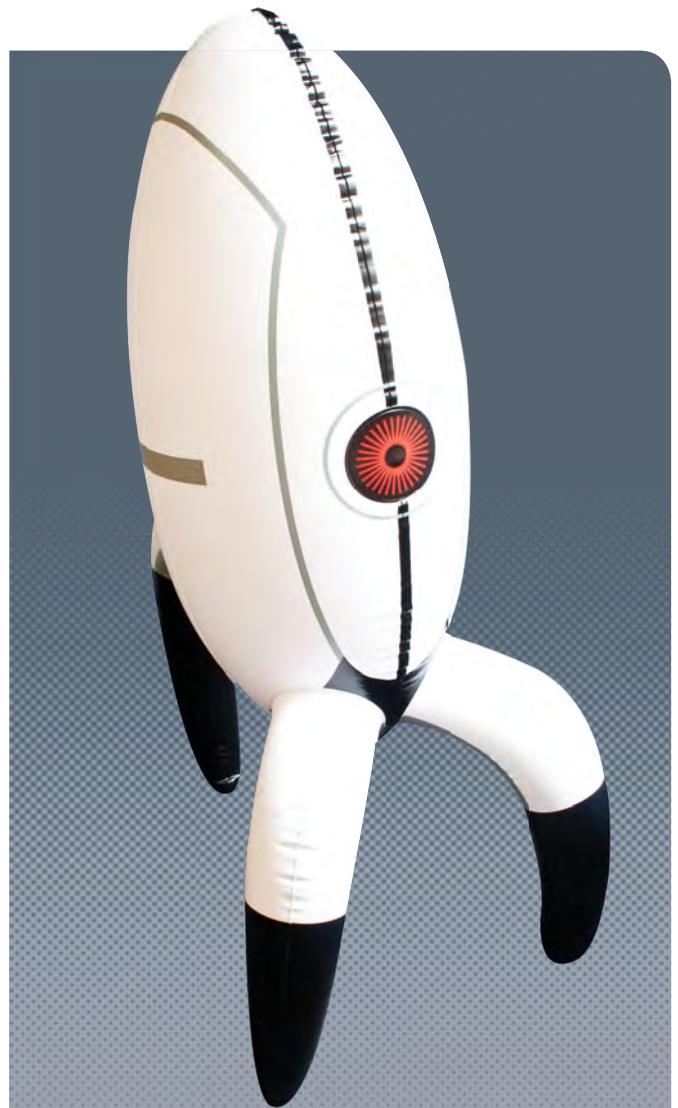
Everything Else

Bits and bobs that
can all be filed under
gaming lifestyle

HALF-LIFE 2 GORDON FREEMAN FIGURE

Supplier: AWX
Website: www.awx.co.za
RRP: R325

In the male doll action figure business, the only thing more gaming iconic than a *Half-Life 2* Dr. Gordon Freeman figurine is a *Quake* Shambler plush. He is the ultimate everyman hero: he basically saved the planet with a crowbar – give that man a round of rowdy applause. For those anal types he stands about 18cm tall and has around 20 articulation points – so you can pose him however you like with your sister's Barbie dolls (Gordon is the man). The packaging includes a head crab, crowbar, gravity gun, alternative pose hands and a bug bomb.



PORTAL 2 INFLATABLE SENTRY TURRET

Supplier: AWX
Website: www.awx.co.za
RRP: R370

It stands over 100cm tall (about the size of an average five year old). For those shady types at the back in dark outfits at odds with the weather, there are no openings other than the one you blow air into. The package comes with a small repair kit for clumsy/stupid gamers and is not recommended for but can be used in the pool. The only thing missing is a motion detector and little speaker with recorded turret messages from the game. "Are you still there?"
Note: This is not a life saving device! So if you're on a sinking ship grab the lifejacket and not your Portal 2 inflatable turret. Got that?

ATOMBIC ROBO VOL. 01 (TP)

Supplier: AWX
 Website: www.awx.co.za
 RRP: R265

Atomic Robo is a treat to both look at and read. It jumps around an alternate timeline from the 1930s and up, following the story of a near-invulnerable robot soldier built by a version of Nikolai Tesla that had it a lot better than the real guy. The writing is witty and fresh, rich in story without being laborious, and the artwork is hip and expressive if a little on the simple side. The result makes for an uplifting comic that's easy to read and fun from start to finish.



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES BACKPACK

Supplier: AWX
 Website: www.awx.co.za
 RRP: R470

If geek is chic then this right here is the ultimate fashion statement. Sporting a few handy pockets inside it's actually useful as a laptop and/or book bag, and it includes four super cool ninja action masks so you and your three most inebricated friends can play dress-up when nobody cool is around. Don't pretend you don't want this.



COWBOY BEBOP PLAY ARTS ~KAI~: SPIKE SPIEGEL

Supplier: AWX
 Website: www.awx.co.za
 RRP: R780

Having watched a few episodes of *Cowboy Bebop*, we're pretty sure that Spike's knees don't double-articulate, but what do we really know anyway? There's practically no way to pose this lithe fellow that doesn't make him look like a ponce, but he's loaded up more joints than a Rasta convention so you'll have ample opportunities to try.

WONDER WOMAN VOL. 01 [THE NEW 52!] (TP)

Supplier: AWX
 Website: www.awx.co.za
 RRP: R170

DC's New 52 series has done the publisher a world of good – reinvigorating old superheroes for today's audience and at the same time laying down a firm back story for some characters whose origin stories have been the only thing to fill in the blanks in the past. This first volume of *Wonder Woman* is just that; it stays away from the action and manages to churn out a solid narrative that's sure to get you hooked on the series.



TECH NEWS

KNOW YOUR TECHNOLOGY

WiMAX

Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access. This is a wireless communications standard designed for high speed data rates between 30 and 40Mbps initially. In 2011 the standards was ratified to allow for up to 1GPs for fixed stations. WiMAX is sold essentially as an alternative to cable and DSL as a last mile wireless broadband access technology.

LTE

Known better as 4G LTE (fourth-generation network). This is a standard for wireless high speed communications primarily for mobile devices. Based on the GSM/EDGE and UMTS/HSPA network technologies (hence backwards compatibility); it aims to increase the capacity and speed provided by these networks by using a different radio interface together with some significant changes to the core network. It remains the most natural upgrade path for GSM/HSPA networks with download peak rates as high as 300Mbps and uplink speeds reaching 75Mbps.

HSPA+

Evolved High-Speed Packet Access + is a standard that enhances the UMTS based 3G network speeds for end users. It allows for speeds as high as 168Mbps down and 22Mbps up. These speeds are achieved through the use of a multiple-antenna technique (MIMO) and a higher order modulation usually combining multiple cells into one with a technique called Dual-Cell HSDPA. While theoretical peaks are very high, in general HSPA+ will only offer those speeds in very good radio conditions and only on networks that allow Dual-Cell HSDPA and MIMO to be used simultaneously. HSPA+ is inherently different from LTE which uses a new air interface based on OFDMA technology while HSPA+ is an evolution of HSPA that upgrades an existing 3G network, providing a method for operators to migrate towards 4G speeds without the investment in the new radio interface.

WirelessHD

And industry specification (formalized in 2008) based on the 7GHz channel in the extreme high frequency radio band. It allows for either lightly compressed or uncompressed digital transmission of high-definition video and audio data-signals for consumer electronic devices. It's essentially wireless HDMI but with theoretical data rates as high as 25Gbps. Version 1.1 of the standard allows up to 28Gbps (higher than Display Port 1.2).

RAZER FEROX

This stereo speaker set features 360-degree omni-directional sound, has a 12-hour rechargeable battery life, and a carrying case, making it a great choice for mobile audio. It will plug into any media player with a 3.5mm jack. www.corex.co.za | R599



STEELSERIES KANA

Available in either black or white, this optical, ambidextrous mouse has been designed for all three grip styles: palm, claw and swipe. It falls into the middle of the SteelSeries mouse range, being better than the Kinzu but not quite matching up to the Sensei. www.megarom.co.za | R499



DID YOU KNOW?

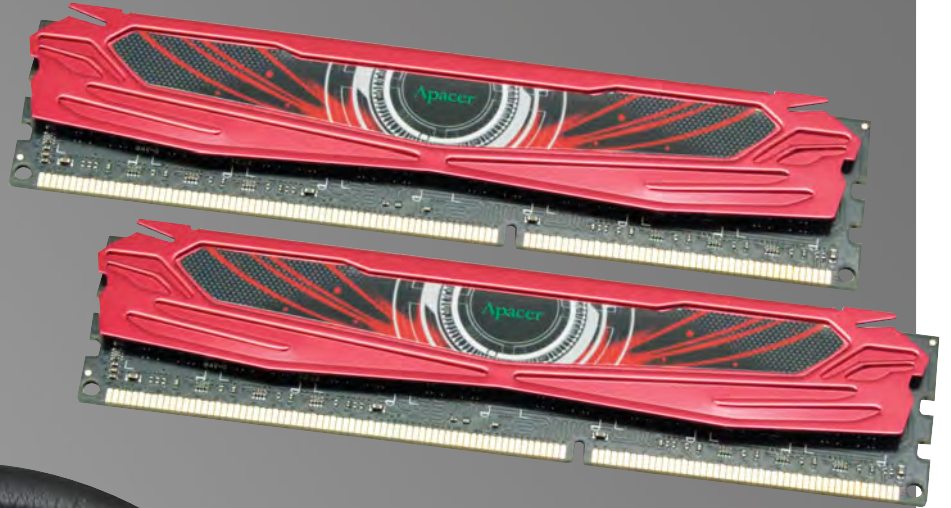
According to website Techpowerup, "AMD is working on a real GPU dynamic overclocking technology akin to NVIDIA's GPU Boost. Such a technology could manipulate GPU (and possibly memory) clock speeds, and voltages across multiple power states, taking into account processing load and temperatures. ADL allows third-party applications low-level interactions with AMD display drivers. Current generation Radeon graphics cards use Overdrive 5 and the feature-set it comes with, and so the new technology, along with Overdrive 6 could feature on upcoming generations of AMD GPUs. Close reading of the API documents also reveal that AMD is working on a dynamic boosting technology for the memory clocks, something that's currently not possible on NVIDIA's products."

Correction: The supplier of the Antec Kuhler H20 920 which appeared on page 75 of the February issue is Corex.

Mosh Pit

APACER ARMOR SERIES 8GB DDR3-2133

Apacer Armor series of memory is targeted at gamers who want reliability and compatibility at the highest JEDEC standards, ranging from 1,600 to 2,133MHz. The memory is optimized for several platforms including but not limited to Intel X79, Z68, P67 and Z77, and will support Intel's latest XMP 1.3 profiles. Armor series memory will be available in four distinct colours to match the various colour schemes of the most well-known mainboard vendors. www.apacer.com | TBA



TURTLE BEACH EAR FORCE Z1

The multi-pivot swivel design of this gaming headset lets you twist your ear cups so they can lie flat on your chest, and sports sound-absorbing cushions for that extra comfort. www.apexinteractive.co.za | R320

"For a personal computer to fully support HDMI 1.4 or deep colour, today a separate HDMI output is needed. This updated DisplayPort Dual-Mode Standard version 1.1 enables full support of HDMI 1.4 video modes, and 1080p deep colour, using a simple cable adaptor plugged into the system's DisplayPort output."

Craig Wiley, senior director of marketing at Parade Technologies, and VESA Board of Directors chairman.

The Video Electronics Standards Association (VESA) has announced the latest release of the DisplayPort Dual-Mode Standard. This release supports the next generation of Dual-Mode DisplayPort enabled PCs and Dual-Mode DisplayPort cable adaptors, expected to be available later this year.

BY THE NUMBERS

3

Futuremark has released the newest instalment of its 3DMark franchise. It's the first 3DMark to lack a version name, making it a "reboot" of sorts. The new 3DMark is a collection of three independent benchmark suites, each with its own demos, game tests, physics tests, and combined tests, and scoring. Ice Storm is designed for tablets, mobile devices, and entry-level desktops, which needs nothing more than a DirectX 9.0c GPU to get going; Cloud Gate is for notebook and home desktops, which needs a DirectX 10 feature-level GPU; and Fire Strike is an over-the-top suite designed for today's gaming desktops.

DREAMMACHINE

The head-in-a-jar that we commission to come up with awesome introductory text for the Dream Machine every month was told that this time it'd have to come up with a neat way to say "the Dream Machine is exactly the same as it was last month" in 80 words or less. This is what it dreamt up for us. Thanks for nothing, asshole.



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



MSI N680GTX Lightning
R6,999 / www.msi.com



OCZ Vector 256GB SSD
R3,000 / www.ocz.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.rectron.co.za



Corsair Hydro Series H100i
R1,499 / www.corsair.com



Razer Ouroboros mouse
R1,399 / www.corex.co.za

Razer Ironclad mouse mat
R599 / www.corex.co.za



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



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



Creative Labs Sound Blaster Recon3D Omega
R2,995 / www.corex.co.za



Hardwired

Shameless expression

In the computer DIY market there is a belief that end users buy components and build computers for a virtually infinite number of reasons. These reasons or beliefs range from gaming to number crunching (folding, if you will) and everything in between. It's true that there are users who build their own computers for very specific purposes, but for the most part users build computers for very few reasons outside the obvious ones such as gaming.

Very rarely would anyone invest in a \$400 motherboard for anything other than what will eventually be a fairly expensive gaming machine. That very same machine will for the most part go on to play console ports. So the components used for the machine will offer a limited added experience over and above playing on said console.

"An unimaginative reason for an entire industry to rely on, but it is the truth. There's also nothing wrong with that being the truth."

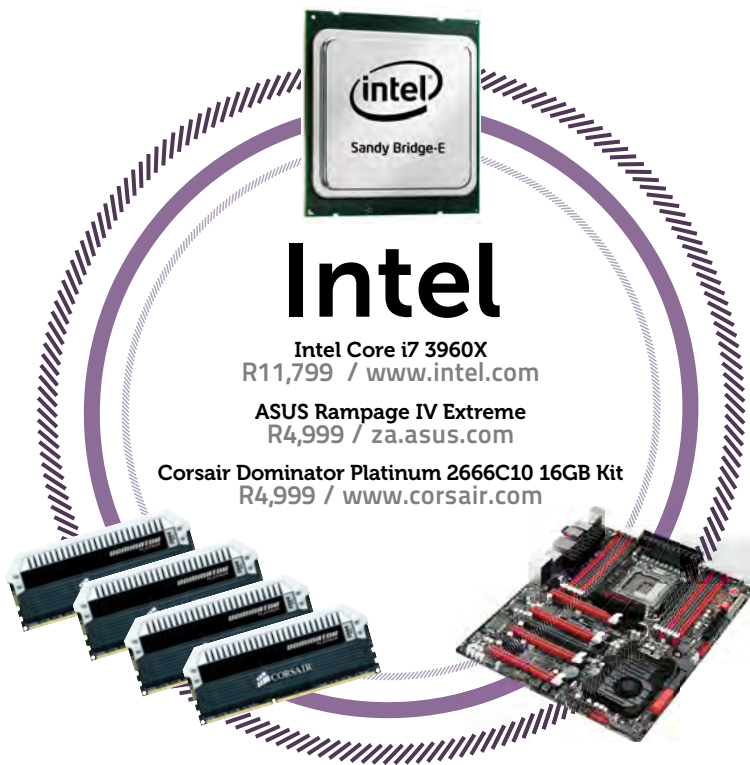
So why then do we build our own excessively powerful machines? Well, there are a couple reasons for this as stated earlier (within a gaming context). The most obvious one is that you'll simply get a sharper image or more appealing visuals on the PC provided you've made the right choice in hardware. The other reason is simply because you can. The open computing platform we have allows for a vast array of uses that are not possible for closed box systems, but the real appeal of building your own PC is, besides gaming, simply because you can. An unimaginative reason for an entire industry to rely on, but it is the truth. There's also nothing wrong with that being the truth.

As a society we do many things like this. For instance, in many countries there are heavy penalties for exceeding the speed limit and in some, even imprisonment. Yet in those very same places, there are thriving businesses whose sole purpose is to sell performance enhancing parts for cars. Some of these places don't even have track days where people may benefit from their enhanced vehicle performance.

Why buy these parts for our cars and purpose-built track machines in those communities? We do this because we are enticed by the idea of travelling at 300kph, even though we may never be able to do so. We are heavily invested in the performance and aesthetics of our vehicles. There's an entire industry around that as well.

One has to wonder then, why in the hardware DIY market this somewhat benign reason for building a powerful computer is veiled in all kinds of nonsense arguments. There's absolutely nothing wrong with admitting that there are few practical and logical reasons for building a R50,000 machine. "Because you can" is enough of a reason in itself, and whatever need it satisfies or fulfilment it brings to the individual is neither enhanced nor diminished by its practical applications. We are essentially fulfilling a need that a vast number of people have. The outlet is of very little importance, as this is a character trait we exhibit in other areas of our lives as well. We are less critical about it in those parts of our lives though. There's probably no reason to ever have a computer with more than one graphics card and a four thread processor. However, that doesn't mean it's not desirable to own a machine many times more powerful.

- Neo Sibeko



Intel

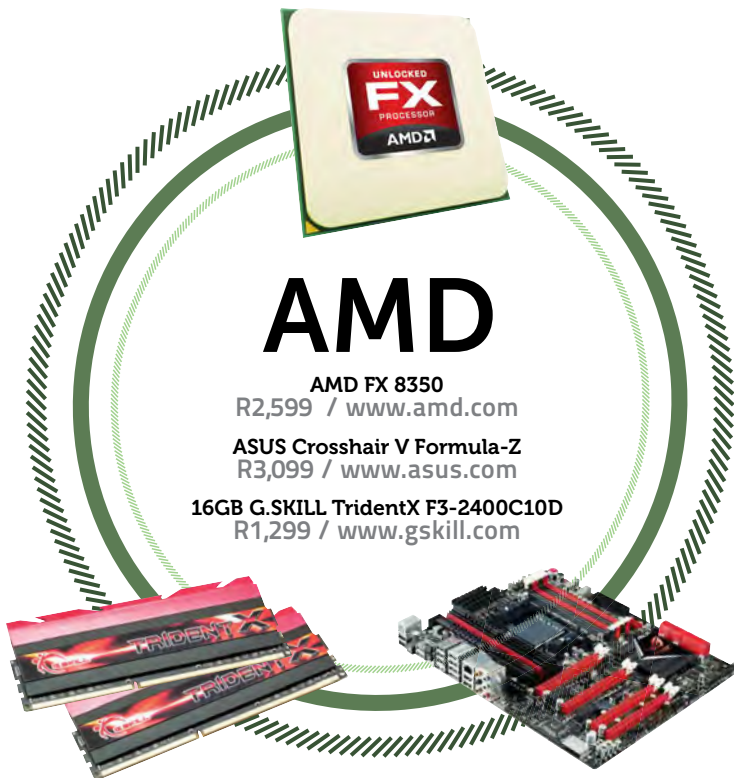
Intel Core i7 3960X
R11,799 / www.intel.com

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

Corsair Dominator Platinum 2666C10 16GB Kit
R4,999 / www.corsair.com

Intel Dream Machine price:

R62,182



AMD

AMD FX 8350
R2,599 / www.amd.com

ASUS Crosshair V Formula-Z
R3,099 / www.asus.com

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

AMD Dream Machine price:

R47,382

SteelSeries World of Warcraft [Legendary] MMO Gaming Mouse & World of Warcraft Wireless MMO Mouse

Website www.steelseries.co.za

RRP R799 (World of Warcraft MMO Gaming Mouse [Legendary] Edition)

R1,299 (World of Warcraft Wireless MMO Mouse)

When you're the most successful MMORPG in existence, you're bound to attract all manner of attention. There's an oft-used platitude in there somewhere involving the use of delicious sweetened dairy products to attract boys into your garden, but we're willing to pretend we're classy enough to avoid using it. So, let's move onwards to *World of Warcraft* then, and its millions of loyal subscribers that have attracted SteelSeries to create a range of peripherals dedicated to its particular brand of online adventuring. As a kind-of-job-but-not, you could consider this pair of SteelSeries mice to be tools of the *WoW* trade – a necessary addition to any player's arsenal. Then again, with their visually striking design and appealing features list, perhaps they'll grab the attention of even those gamers who'd rather lose an eyeball than step anywhere near Blizzard's monolithic MMO.



CUTTING THE CORD

With its heftier price tag, we thought we'd start with the wireless variant. Boasting a total of eleven programmable buttons, it's not got the same lust for complete clickable overkill that, say, Logitech's G600 (and its ludicrous set of 20 thumb buttons) MMO mouse so eagerly touts. Still, eleven is more than enough buttons, and their placement makes ergonomic sense. For programming them, you've got access to a whole lot (more than 130) of preset game commands that can

be assigned for single-click access, or you can create your own custom macros.

A much-appreciated feature is the ability to charge the mouse on the fly via USB if an intense, lengthy raid leaves you low on juice. It also means that if you prefer your mouse wired, that route is still available. However, you then won't get to use the awesomely decorative charging pedestal / wireless receiver covered in illuminated runes. Speaking of illumination, the mouse itself offers it too (in the same blue hue as that of

**WORLD OF WARCRAFT
[LEGENDARY] MMO
GAMING MOUSE:**



Sensor
Up to 3,200 DPI
Buttons
Eleven, programmable
Acceleration
30g acceleration

**WORLD OF WARCRAFT WIRELESS
MMO MOUSE:**



Sensor
Up to 8,200 DPI gaming grade laser
Buttons
Eleven, programmable
Acceleration
30g acceleration
Wireless range
Three metres
Wireless band
2.4GHz



the pedestal), with various levels of intensity and pulsation settings.

TRADITIONAL CONTROL

If you can't get behind the idea of a wireless gaming mouse (which many people can't) despite its sibling's capability to go either wired or wireless, the [Legendary] Edition has you covered. With its aesthetic designed to mimic the fabled blade Thunderfury (which, to be perfectly honest, we have never heard of), it's all lightning bolts and unbridled ferocity for this mouse's look. As with its more expensive

wireless buddy, it's covered in eleven programmable buttons and shares the macro-recording capabilities and impressive array of preset game commands. You've also got the option to once again switch between four levels of intensity and pulsation, but here you've got the opportunity to select your own lighting colour from 16.8 million options as well.

BUT SHOULD YOU SPEND YOUR MONEY ON THEM?

Naturally, this is a pair of gadgets that's bound to appeal mostly to

WoW players – specifically those who love its expansion *Mists of Pandaria*. Not only that, but using them with *WoW* actually adds value, because you can tinker with their settings from within the game. Pretend the "World of" part doesn't exist, and fans of regular, good ol' *Warcraft* will also find reason to love them. For everyone else, these mice boast good quality and design, so it'll really come down to personal preference – and whether or not you think spending so much money on them is worthwhile. **NAG**

PROS

- Nice themed aesthetic
- Perfect for WoW fans

CONS

- A bit on the pricey side

ALTERNATIVES

- Any MMO mouse that's not *World of Warcraft* themed



SPECS

Audio controller
C-Media
CM18888DHT
Interface
PCI Express
SNR (Front
output): 118dB
Features
Dolby Home
Theatre v4, Xear
Surround, GX 3.0,
ASIO 2.2

ASUS ROG Xonar Phoebus

Supplier ASUS Website www.asus.com RRP R2,199

What can ASUS not possibly make these days? The company has just about every component that goes into the PC, and between ASUS and say Corsair, you can build an entire PC, save for a CPU.

In the company's ever growing portfolio, ASUS has added a new line of audio cards, mainly the ROG Xonar Phoebus. A catchy name for sure, but one that is, if anything, given to a very deserving product. After all, ASUS has proven time and time again that it knows how to make audio equipment at the highest level.

With the Phoebus though, ASUS has chosen to build this sound card around what we imagine is a more suitable audio processor than their own AV100. This time ASUS has gone out to a 3rd-party company, namely CMI and the 8888DHT (Oxygen) processor. It supports ASUS's own GX3.0 standard which allows better compatibility with older EAX enabled titles than the 2.5. A great feature on paper, but ultimately useless, as accelerated audio is all but gone on all modern computing platforms. As such this should not entice you in any way

unless you play the older titles that use the EAX standard and have Alchemy support.

The choice of Audio controller is second to none as the Oxygen processor has proved itself in many high-end studio and audiophile grade products over the years. The only difference here is that this is the Express chipset which offers native PCIe support as opposed to the older processor which would have needed a bridge chip.

The rest of the audio circuitry is as you'd expect from ASUS. The board is littered with high quality components similar to those on the Xonar Essence line of sound cards. Some of the components on the board are two JRC2114 operational amps (opamps), a PCM 1796 DAC with a THD (total harmonic distortion) + N rating of 0.0005%. On board is a dedicated TA6120A2 headphone amplifier that allows from +10 to +30dB boost. Rounding up the card are popular NE5532 and JRC2114D opamps. None of these are swappable and understandably so given the market which this sound card is targeted at.

Overall, the bill of parts is fantastic

PLUS

- Sounds good
- Simple and easy setup
- Features

MINUS

- Pricing
- Not better than the Essence sound cards

BOTTOM LINE

ASUS has once again produced an exceptional sound card, this time purely for the gamers.

and this would have worked well as an addition to the Xense family.

The software interface ASUS provides is simple enough and the inclusion of Dolby Home Theatre 4 is most welcome. It doesn't always work with the desired effect but when it does it adds dynamism to the audio signal that you miss when disabled. It's largely if not entirely software driven and we'd like to see this added on to the other audio products from ASUS, even if through a wrapper.

The downside of this sound card would have to be the pricing. You're paying for the audio breakout module which helps a great deal in gaming without a microphone. However if clarity isn't an issue with the headset you are using, then you're probably better off with the package without the breakout module. It should be cheaper and bring the pricing down, putting it more in line with its output audio quality. It will never be as refined as the STX or ST, but it sure is a lot better than virtually any other sound card that you can buy for this kind of money.

- Neo Sibeko

25.5" **SUPER TOWER**

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- > Five radiator mounting points
- > 15 total fan mount locations
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- > Room for dual power supplies
- > Includes three AF120L 120mm front intake fans and one AF140L 140mm rear exhaust fan



What will you do with all this room?

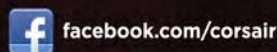
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Learn lots more at corsair.com/900D.



CHECK OUT THESE OTHER CORSAIR PRODUCTS DESIGNED TO MAKE YOUR PC THE BEST PC



NZXT Phantom 820

Supplier Evetech **Website** www.evetech.co.za **RRP** R2,399

When NZXT launched the Phantom 410 it impressed us with its touches of high-end functionality at a mid-range price, and now the chassis manufacturer has loaded this new Phantom with high-end bits and, subsequently, pushed up the price considerably to show its intent to compete in this segment.

The styling on the Phantom 820 is just flashy enough to stand out from the crowd without being gaudy. Smooth, powder-coated steel panels and plastic moulding meet with finely-crafted spacing and everything has a solid, well-engineered feel to it. For those who appreciate a bit of bling, NZXT has integrated their HUE custom LED lighting kit into the case – a nice touch. Another feature which we really dig is the inclusion of LEDs on the rear IO panels to light the way

for fumbling fingers in even the darkest of hovels. These can be disabled if you'd like.

Look inside and it's clear that this is the premium version of the Phantom 410 – the layout is remarkably similar but everything has been improved. The two 80mm side-panel fans have been replaced with a single 200mm; a pivot-mounted fan slot in the middle of the case ensures air flow to your graphics cards or CPU depending on your demands; the raised pedestal increases airflow from underneath the case; cable management is well thought-out and plentiful. There are as many features here as you could possibly expect, and for that functionality you'll have to pay – the jump from the 410 is noticeable, but whether or not it's worth twice the price is highly reliant on how much you want that lighting kit. **NAG**

- Geoff Burrows



HARDWARE



9

SPECS

Integrated controllers
HUE LED kit and multi-channel fan speed controller
Front inputs
4x USB 2.0, 2x USB 3.0, audio in/out

PLUS

- Integrated lighting kit
- Plenty of cooling and cable management options
- Sturdy
- Slick aesthetics

MINUS

- Slightly overpriced compared to previous models

BOTTOM LINE

A premium offering from NZXT with a price to match.

Razer DeathStalker Ultimate

Supplier Corex **Website** www.corex.co.za **RRP** R2,599

Razer's DeathStalker Ultimate is a keyboard that's bound to incite mixed feelings. It's a pleasure to use, and its Switchblade UI is an impressive novelty. At R2,599, however, it's got to be capable of more than just being a keyboard. Stuff like building pet robots for you in its downtime, for example, or juggling meerkats while making an endless supply of omelettes for your enjoyment. What I'm getting at is that for the extra cash it had better offer some tangible benefit over its R850 sibling, the DeathStalker – which is pretty much exactly the same in most respects, with a traditional numpad in place of the Switchblade UI. Sadly, the Switchblade UI is not worthy of the substantial investment. At least, not right now.

Its basic keyboard functionality isn't the issue. Typing on its Chiclet-style keys is a pleasure, although the layout of some of the keys does take some getting used



to. Having to use Razer's Synapse 2.0 software is as much of a pain as always, requiring that you create yet another online account that you'll need to log in to in order to access the keyboard's advanced features.

Switchblade doubles as its coolest feature and its own worst enemy, requiring that you download and install specific apps to get the most of it. It ships pre-installed with stuff like a YouTube browser/player (with shoddy

performance) and a Facebook app, accessible entirely from the Switchblade LCD. There are very few game-centric apps available right now, and they really don't add much value beyond simply showing images on the LCD and offering shortcuts (via the ten dynamic keys) that are just as easily accessible on an ordinary keyboard, without the need to take your hand off the mouse. **NAG**

- Dane Remendes

7

SPECS

Keys
Chiclet style, backlit
Anti-ghosting
Up to ten simultaneous key presses
Inputs
2x USB

Macro keys
Five, programmable on the fly
Switchblade UI
4.05-inch touchscreen with multi-touch and gesture support, doubles as track pad / 10 dynamic display keys



BRING THIS PAGE TO LIFE

PLUS

- Quality build
- Nice typing experience

MINUS

- The price
- Switchblade UI is superfluous

BOTTOM LINE

It's a good keyboard, but the Switchblade UI is just not worth the obscene asking price.

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Energy Efficiency: 6x battery life of Wireless N

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“Right off the bat you can see that **ASRock** has been making strides in the right direction and, even in the regular boards, are offering features that are overclocking friendly.”



HARDWARE

ASRock 990FX Extreme 9

Supplier TVR Website www.asrock.com RRP TBA

Last issue we looked at the ASUS Crosshair IV Formula-Z and found it to be the best AMD 990FX motherboard money could buy. This was in part because the legendary and still brilliant GIGABYTE 990FXA-UD7 had reached end of life more than a year ago, which left a gap in the market.

This month we have the ASRock 990FX offering. Much like with the ASUS board, we wondered about the purpose of bringing out a high-end AMD motherboard at this time when the company neither has a new chipset nor new CPUs. In the case of ASRock it's not necessarily because the outfit has added new features to a board they had before, that the Extreme 9 exists. This board is actually completing a lineup of AMD motherboards which until now has been lacking. The entire range consisted of low-end to mid-range products while the Fatal1ty board had been a disaster for the most part.

With the help, or at least the influence, of their in-house overclocker ASRock has finally decided to build a true high-end board for the 990FX chipset. The Extreme 9 is the resulting product, and we have to say it's rather impressive given that this isn't a dedicated OC board.

Right off the bat you can see that ASRock has been making strides in the right direction and, even in the regular boards, are offering features that are

overclocking friendly. We may take them for granted with tier one vendors such as ASUS and GIGABYTE, but for ASRock, such little features are worth writing about. In this case it's the on-board power, reset, rear clear CMOS button and POST LED.

As usual the POST LED isn't in the most ideal place, but it's far from being in the worst possible position and, given that end users are unlikely to run a 3-way graphics card configuration on an AMD platform, its location is understandable. Electronically ASRock has also stepped up its game, outfitting the board with a newer "Dual-Stack" 12+2 phase digital PWM. If it doesn't help overclocking it at least ensures a more stable power delivery system than their previous PWM on the Fatal1ty board. The audio controller on the board has also been swapped out in favour of the high-end ALC898 instead of the 892. These are some small changes that have been made but they all result in an overall better board.

This is in particular when it comes to the BIOS options which have had an overhaul if not in appearance at least in consistency. Overclocking is much easier than before and in fact this board just works, without putting you through hoops. It is worth noting that one could have some potential issues in trying to reach the advertised DDR3 2450 speed but should have DDR3 2400 memory

SPECS

Chipset
AMD 990FX + SB950
Memory
4x 240-pin DDR3
CPU support AMD
AM3/AM3+ CPUs
Slots
4x PCI-E 16X,
1x PCI-E 1X, 1xPCI

PLUS

- 3-way SLI
- Relatively easy overclocking

MINUS

- Not quite special in any way

BOTTOM LINE

ASRock has finally delivered a good AMD 990FX motherboard, which is both suited for gaming and overclocking.

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: ASUS Rampage IV Extreme

3DMark Vantage CPU	25,091 46,760
Cinebench 11.5	7.95 13.43
AIDA 64 copy	19,384MB/s 20,396MB/s
3DMark03	98,823 127,025

and a fairly competent PileDriver CPU such as the FX-8350. You shouldn't have any trouble reaching at least 2,400MHz.

Much like we stated with the ASUS Crosshair IV Formula-Z board, we do think that there are some missed opportunities here with regards to feature sets. As the premier AMD motherboard, why not just make this the best board possible for the platform, by adding a gaming NIC for instance, or a somewhat useful audio controller. The Extreme 9 is not bad as it is, but in our pantheon of 990FX motherboards, it slides in nicely below the Formula-Z and the UD7. The ASRock 990FX Extreme 9 is a good motherboard that is well worth the purchase if you're looking for an AMD board.

NAG

- Neo Sibeko

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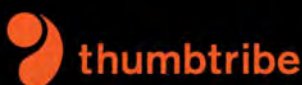
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Cooler Master Centurion 6

Supplier CoolerMaster **Website** www.sonicinformed.com **RRP** R899

In typical CES fashion and Cooler Master tradition, a new Centurion case was released a few months ago. The new case is a follow-up to the previous generation Centurion 5 (no prizes for guessing that). The case is pretty much a standard mid-range mid-tower case. That is you'll not be getting any XL or EATX support here but the standard ATX/microATX treatment.

Aesthetically this case is a run-of-the mill design; you can install a total of nine fans in the case, but you'll only find that two are installed upon purchase. We would have liked to have seen at least four fans in there but perhaps that would have raised the price too much bringing it into another price bracket. At the top of the case there's enough space for 240mm radiators, like their recently announced Seidon 240mm LCS. In fact these two would go well together,

especially if you're building one of those sleeper gaming machines. Other than that, there really isn't much to this case that you've not seen before. At this price point there are many alternatives and many of them could be argued are better than what Cooler Master is offering with the Centurion. Then again, the extent of ingenuity in such cases is limited by the selling price and the form factor.

As a successor to the Centurion 5, this is a respectable case. However, we aren't sure if you can't find better within Cooler Master's own range. The HAF-XB is arguably a better investment than this one if only because of its dual purpose nature and higher build quality, all of which justify the cost. The Centurion 6 then, while worth taking a second look at, isn't the best we've seen from Cooler Master. **NAG**
- Neo Sibeko

7



SPECS
Gross weight 5.9kg
Dimensions 200x464.5x481mm
Supported motherboard type MicroATX/ATX
Front Panel 2x USB3.0, 2x USB2.0, 1xMic, 1x Audio

PLUS
• Support for 240mm radiators

MINUS
• Average looks
• Lacks a highlight feature

BOTTOM LINE
An above average case in general, but one that we had expected more from given that it's the successor to the Centurion 5.

Evetech LAN gaming PC

Supplier Evetech **Website** www.evetech.co.za **RRP** R12,999

As someone who regularly reviews computer cases and prebuilt machines, I'm very sensitive to how heavy and cumbersome these megalithic gaming PCs can be. Evetech feels my pain (and yours), and has put together a tidy LAN gaming package wrapped up in the brightly-coloured BitFenix Prodigy.

Small it may be, but this little guy doesn't lack power. Mounted onto the diminutive MSI motherboard is a desktop-spec i5 CPU and a dual-slot GTX 660 Ti. The surprisingly roomy interior makes space for additional hard drives and SSDs, but there's no room to upgrade past this point without replacing the existing RAM or video card. In our benchmarks we found that the system performed very well. Surpassing our loose definition of mid-range and crawling into the high-end, it measured 2,887 points in 3D Mark 11's Extreme test and 5,989 in PC Mark 7, and saw average frame



rates of 82 in *Hard Reset* and 30 in *Sniper Elite* at ultra settings. It's what's inside that really counts, but we have to say that the BitFenix case, while overall well suited for this sort of build, has us just a tad worried that the top handles will eventually break. They're plastic, and flex quite

a bit while supporting the full weight of this machine. Those same handles extend to the bottom of the case and for some reason have no rubber feet, which gives the PC a decidedly unstable and slippery stance when it's placed on a desk. **NAG**
- Geoff Burrows

8

SPECS
CPU Intel Core i5-3570K OC to 4.6GHz
Motherboard MSI Z77IA-E53 Z77
RAM Kingston Predator 8GB (2x4GB) DDR3 2,400MHz
GPU MSI Power Edition Twin Frozr IV GTX 660 Ti OC
Storage Corsair Force GT 120GB SSD
Optical drive None
PSU Corsair GS600
Cooling Corsair Hydro H80 liquid cooling
Chassis Bitfenix Prodigy

PLUS
• Impressive performance
• Quiet
• Neat little machine

MINUS
• No further upgrades without replacing components
• Flimsy handles and feet

BOTTOM LINE
If you're on the hunt for a prebuilt LAN PC to supplement your monster rig or replace your mid-range PC, this machine will suit you well.



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Max device connectivity

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Battery life

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USB support

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Patriot Gauntlet Node

Supplier Patriot **Website** www.patriotmemory.com **RRP** TBA

Patriot, a memory vendor that was synonymous with enthusiasts is, like others, looking at new businesses. With all traditional memory companies having tried the SSD route, the market became quickly saturated and with the price of DRAM and NAND at dismal levels, it's time for many companies to find new revenue streams.

In the case of Patriot, they have resorted to making fewer niche products like overclocking memory (true overclocking memory, not JEDEC rated speeds) and are trying their hand at what can somewhat be described as a Wi-Fi media centre. It's hard to really pinpoint or to say exactly what the Gauntlet Node is because it can very well serve as a simple 2.5" inch drive enclosure. This is rather fortunate, because moving files to and from the Gauntlet is very easy. It shows up as a normal hard drive on the PC and you simply drag and drop files to it without having to install any 3rd-party software. You can perform regular drive maintenance on it and by and large it is a hassle free device.

In the manual Patriot states a few limited file types the Gauntlet is able to play, such as MOV, AAC and MP4

(H.264) files amongst others. This is disappointing file compatibility but of no consequence for the most part. The device with which you will be playing back the files on the Gauntlet from has no such limitations. It will be that devices' native player that will either fail or succeed at playing your media.

We installed the Android Gauntlet app and found that, with a 3rd-party player such as MX Video Player, you could stream any file format or codec from the Gauntlet with no trouble at all. This applied to music and even regular text and APK files. In that context it simply worked as a wireless hard drive which so happens to be sold as a Wi-Fi media centre. Overall a pretty convenient device to have and one that you'll unlikely realize you need until you start using it.

Not all is well with the Gauntlet however and some oversights have marred what would have otherwise been a perfect product. For one, the USB interface on the device is not a standard micro or mini USB connector, but a custom one. That means if you lose the cable you can't just buy any cable, but have to order a specific one from your retailer. Secondly the drive stops being

PLUS

- Standard desktop file system use
- No need to install software
- Relatively fast

MINUS

- USB cable type
- Needs screws for secure mounting of the drive

BOTTOM LINE

Patriot has taken an existing idea and simplified it to serve as both a portable drive enclosure and a wireless media centre.

accessible over Wi-Fi as soon as it's plugged in via the USB cable to your computer for instance. That means that every time you update the drive's content, it becomes inaccessible to other users.

In addition to that, there is also no dedicated Wi-Fi on or off button. As soon as you plug in the unit and power it on without a USB cable attached, the Wi-Fi connection broadcast is enabled. This isn't always desirable especially when you have a connectivity issue or need to reset your devices. You need to power off the unit completely instead of just turning off the Wi-Fi part.

Drive installation could have also been made easier. The Gauntlet's need for screws is unnecessary especially given that it only takes 2.5" drives. A screw less latch system would have sufficed simplifying the entire setup process and procedure.

Other than those issues, this is a great little device and one that you should consider especially if you have lots of media you want accessible from a few devices around the house or small office. It's not perfect, but the Patriot Gauntlet is a fairly impressive product from Patriot. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko

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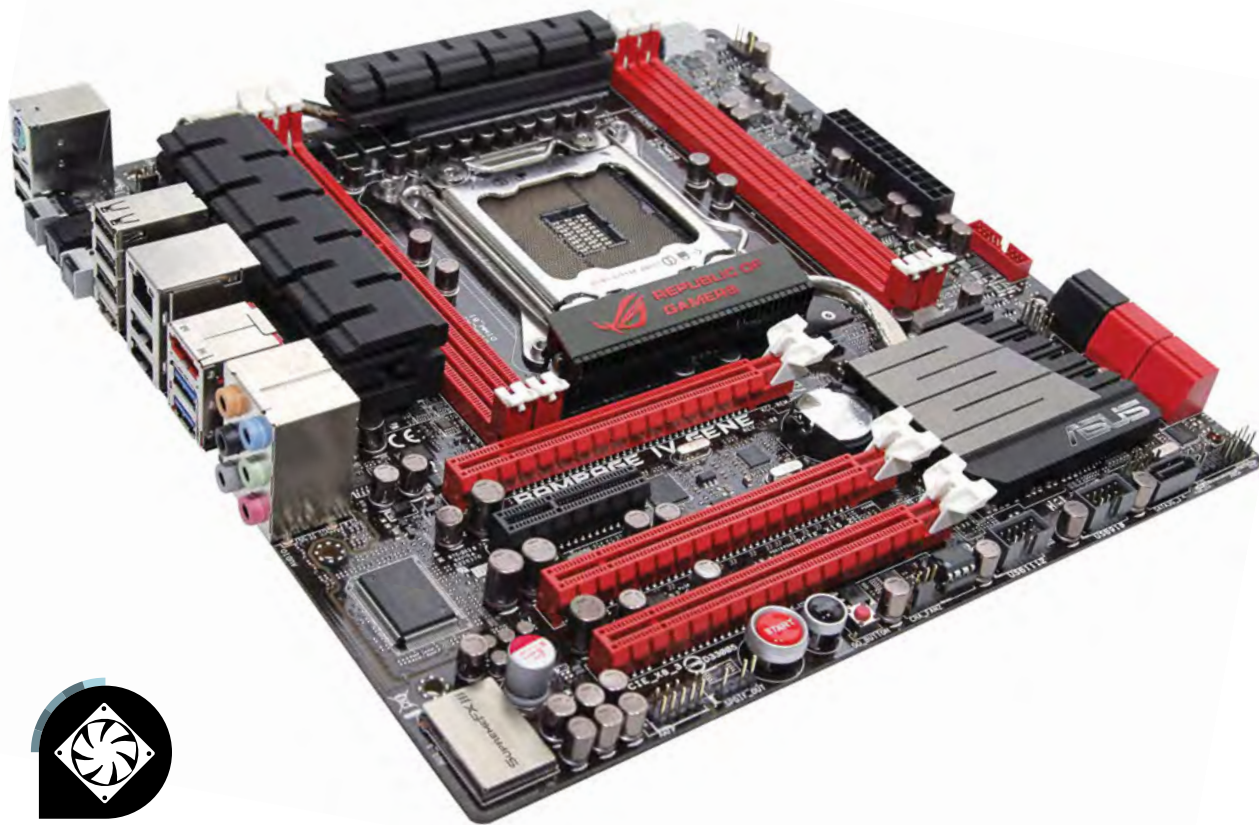
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ASUS Rampage IV Gene

Supplier **ASUS** Website www.asus.com RRP **R2,799**

Do not be alarmed by this review. We are well aware of just how "old" the Rampage IV Gene is. We here at NAG however, have never reviewed this board. Moreover, that we are looking at it now is beneficial in that it now has full Windows 8 support via a new BIOS microcode. Doesn't make much of a difference to the board performance, but it does ensure maximum compatibility with the operating system, which is never a bad thing.

As ASUS is the only vendor which can claim to have an entire line-up of functional and fully working X79 motherboards, the platform is pretty much defined as we know it by our previous experience with ASUS X79 motherboards. Our current Dream Machine motherboard, the Rampage IV Extreme, serves as the benchmark for all X79 boards on the market, with a feature list more exhaustive than any other, better performance and an overall superior package to anything else out there.

A lot to be compared to for sure, but fortunately the Gene delivered, especially given the price tag. Granted this is not a cheap motherboard, but keep in mind that most X79 motherboards are expensive and this one is certainly cheaper than last month's Intel X79 offering which was mediocre at best. For R1,000 less you

get a much better product which, for all intents and purposes, isn't too different from the Rampage IV Extreme. You'll get the same detailed BIOS features (for the most part), more overclocking options than you'll know what to do with, and one of the best looking Micro-ATX boards money can buy.

The fact that our experience with the Rampage IV Gene wasn't too different from what we had with the Extreme is fantastic. Overclocking is so straightforward and easily begs the question of why other vendors can't produce boards that are half this simple to work with for the platform.

As a fairly premium ROG component, you'll get the Supreme FX III audio controller, which we must admit is pretty decent. The oddity here is that ASUS speaks highly of their Supreme FX III (understandably so) as it is built around Creative X-Fi audio technology. It features a fairly capable signal processor, Blu-ray audio layer content protection, EAX advanced HD 5.0, THX TruStudio, specialized audio capacitors, EMI shielding and just about anything you can throw on to motherboard audio at present. (Not counting the G1 series of motherboards from GIGABYTE). Yet for all this auditory wizardry, ASUS speaks somewhat poorly of Creative audio products

SPECS

Chipset
Intel X79
Memory
4x 240-pin DDR3
CPU support:
Intel Core i7 SB-E
(LGA2011)
Slots
3x PCI-Express 3.0
16X, PCI Express 1X

PLUS

- Overclocking
- Incredible BIOS
- Features

MINUS

- None

BOTTOM LINE

The Rampage IV Gene is an amazing motherboard with tons of features and performance for a fair price.

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: **ASUS Rampage IV Extreme**

3DMark Vantage CPU	46,703 46,760
Cinebench 11.5	13.40 13.43
AIDA 64 copy	19,143MB/s 20,396MB/s
3DMark03	N/A 127,025

in their user guide for their ROG Phoebus sound card. Why not just use in-house audio solutions then?

Overall, this is a great motherboard and obviously the best X79 micro-ATX motherboard money can buy. It has no limitations or shortcomings as such other than what is prescribed by the form factor. It is deserving of a perfect score and it would be a Dream Machine board had it not been for the existence of the other X79 products from ASUS. One needs to look no further than the Rampage IV Gene for this motherboard form factor and chipset. The Rampage IV Gene is the perfect motherboard to build a LAN or small gaming computer around. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko

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GG



And now for something completely different

So, after years of swearing off ever playing MMOs for one reason or another but mostly because I do actually have to leave the house from time to time¹, I decided to exercise my woman's rights and change my mind about it completely, or at least until I change my mind about it again². Also, I got a free copy of the *Guild Wars 2 Limited Edition* at a launch event a couple of months ago so that was totally convenient, but to be honest, I needed something *different*.

Let's go back a bit for context. I have this monster video game collection. I mean, it's one of the first things visitors see when they walk into my house and not just because I'm all, like, "HEY, LOOK AT MY MONSTER VIDEO GAME COLLECTION, RANDOM COURIER GUY OR WHATEVER". On closer inspection, though, my monster video game collection is perhaps more appropriately described as my "monster first- and third-person shooter collection with some other stuff that I probably haven't even finished because there's no guns, lol³". I'd become *that* gamer.

I think it happens to everybody eventually. When we first discover games, we'll play anything and everything we can get, and then we find something we really like, and we never stop playing it — whether it's the same game or one of its same-thing, better-graphics sequels, or one of the same-thing, other-graphics clones. Okay, yes, fine, so maybe this is mostly about first- and third-person shooters, but you know what I mean.

Funny thing is, when people ask me what sorts of games I like to play, I usually tell them "oh, you know, all sorts", and I might or might not add "except rugby games because rugby is gross" depending on whether or not the other person is wearing one of those sport ball jerseys. Meanwhile, back in



reality, most of the games I do, in fact, play are predictable variations on the same kill-things-for-points theme. It's not that there's anything wrong with kill-things-for-points games, mind you, but rather that there's a lot more out there to play than that⁴.

That brings me back to *Guild Wars 2*, which quickly proved a compelling distraction from first- and third-person shooters as well as pretty much everything else in the universe. Not 24 hours later, both my boyfriend and I were hunched in a darkened room in our underwear, surrounded by empty beer cans and bits of leftover pizza and crusted blood spatters on the carpet, and I'm not even making this up for dramatic effect although the blood spatters were technically an unrelated accident. Something different? Definitely, and it's filled the gap rather nicely between the last first- or third-person shooter and the next. Hey, I gave it a go. Now it's your turn. **NAG**
- Tarryn van der Byl

1 There's really only so much space for beer and peanut butter in the kitchen, and until online grocery shopping is a thing in South Africa or I can train my cat to use my credit card responsibly, manual resupplies are a tedious necessity.

2 Because. ^____^ I have not, however, changed my mind about MOBAs. Maybe. Kind of. Okay, yes, fine, I installed Dota 2. Check the NAG website (www.nag.co.za) for updates on what happened next.

3 Also, my "monster Xbox game collection", because most of my other games — which do, as it happens, also include loads of RPGs, RTSes, adventure games, various sims, and one railroad manager — and are in the back of a cupboard somewhere. Next to the Wii.

4 This is the part where I grudgingly concede that, okay, yes, fine, MMOs (and basically all games, ever) are fundamentally kill-things-for-points games too, but it's different things and different points, so it's different. That was the whole idea.

Extra Life

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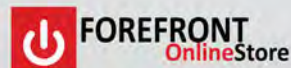
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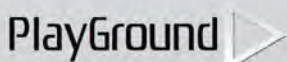
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