

# NAGG

Vol. 16  
Issue  
**SIX**

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**13** REVIEWS  
INCLUDING

**COMPANY OF  
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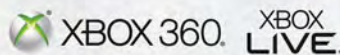
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#### WHERE'D THE LAST EIGHT YEARS GO?

As we prepare to charge into gaming's next generation, we fondly reminisce on the last eight years: the good times, the bad times, the what-even-is-this experiences and the unforgettable moments of Generation Seven that will colour all our future gaming exploits. So long, old friend. You've been too good to us.

### 54 THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

*The Witcher* takes its mature fantasy setting and eases it into an all-new open-world full of intrigue, danger and furious sword slashes. Also, potions. When our feet ached, we found a horse. And then our boat sank, because storms are assholes. You should just stop reading this, and join Geralt of Rivia on page 54. You'll thank us.



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# Call of duty: equality warfare

This is dangerous territory I'm straying into here and I'm showing that I'm not scared with the heading I've chosen. I'm going to talk about girls and gaming and girls in gaming and game girls. I say dangerous because on one hand, I've been called sexist in the past for assuming that cheerleaders are dumb. On the other I've been told that I'm one of the few men that understand what it means when girls say they want to be treated as equals. But to be honest, I'm just really good at winging it – being able to think quickly on my feet and recover from awkward situations with grace and with some dignity left intact. If however I'm faced with an angry woman, there is always this tried and tested back up plan. Never show fear or turn your back, retreat at a rapid but steady pace and throw chocolate as a distraction while agreeing with everything you hear.

As much as I make jokes in the office about shoe sales and girls, I know that I'm just as guilty when it comes to Steam sales. As much as the ladies in the office have a cupboard full of shoes they've only worn once, I have a Steam library full of games I haven't even played. We're exactly the same, as boys and girls, so I wonder why we all think we're so different. I blame the past because it's the one thing that we keep coming back to, sometimes thousands of years later, for reference today. An example is the supposed origin of the word marathon and why it's an exact specific length. This dates back thousands of years ago (in Greece) and we're still using it today – look it up if you must. It's a bad example agreed, but it's the best one I've got right now. The point is, we have a lot

of old irrelevant history that keeps us from moving ahead.

This Ed's note is here to talk about the long awaited inclusion of female characters in *Call of Duty: Ghosts*. Yes, get excited, you can play as a girl now. I'm totally going to be using a female character for the first few months – just to tease the boys. I'm interested to see if I get shot at any less or if anyone tries to get a date with me. My reasons for doing this are purely professional of course, but I wonder what reasons others might have for switching things up and seeing how it feels to shout grenade without a gruff voice. I wonder if the fingernails will be painted and how effeminate the hands will look. Hey, don't accuse me of assuming things and being sexist when you know you'll be doing the exact same thing. I wonder which *COD* it'll be when you can choose to be a gay male character or even a furry. It's only a matter of time, in these games of today where you can select the colour of individual strands of hair and eyebrow bushiness. How do you think the world will deal with that reality? Of course I'm not expecting the gay male version to look or sound any different to the heterosexual male character. But if this is the statement then why will I be looking for painted red fingernails when I call myself Michelle and try out the female skin? No idea. See previous history point.

In case you're wondering it's not new for me, I used to (and still do) play the Crash skin in *Quake 3 Arena* and that's a girl skin. I'm comfortable with it, and outside of playing Lara Croft, I wonder how comfortable everyone else is going to be with this whole thing. Or am I

\*Not Hayley



being ridiculous and weird? Send your letters to the usual address people. I really want to know what you all think.

## BEST FRIENDS FOREVER

We received the above-pictured image from Riaan with the following text: "Here is the birthday card I did for my friend Byron. Please send through subscription details." Happy birthday Byron; you're lucky to have a good mate like Riaan. All my friends do for my birthday is send an SMS and, if I'm lucky, they pay for lunch the next week.

We also must welcome Hayley who has joined our sales team.

If she behaves herself she might still be around in a few months. So be friendly, but don't get too attached. :) **NAG**

Later people...

- RedTide  
Editor



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# INBOX

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## Letter of the Month September 2013

From: Jai

Subject: I dreamt of a gaming console. Now I’ve something better.

Personal computers have for a long time been suited to word processing and spread sheeting, maybe some graphic design, together with made-for-keyboard-and-mouse games. Of course, to get the most from your games, you needed a fairly high-end setup. The idea of the gaming console, a dedicated box with appropriate GPU and controller options that you could play games on while mom hogged the computer to research the exact ingredients for an ideal midday mojito, made so much sense.

But, as time went on and cash flow allowed for better computer equipment, my urgent desire for the latest gaming console lessened. It never really vanished. Up until only perhaps two years ago, I was still considering the virtues of the PS3 over the 360. Still I never went ahead and actually made the purchase. I still wanted to upgrade my PC components, the cost of console games versus PC games put me off, and I found my mouse still held more precision for FPS games than the little joysticks.

Then I discovered Steam. I discovered the joys of uncapped Internet access. And with both these discoveries, came the ease

of purchasing and downloading numerous games in the comfort of my room. Heck, I didn’t even need to change pants. The appeal of a dedicated console waned even more.

I looked at the range of gamepads and gaming mice available to PC gamers and was blown away. Companies like Razer have created a keyboard-pad made specifically for gaming. There are mice with more buttons and configurations than Jim Carrey facial expressions. Gamepads are wireless, have a range of buttons and triggers not available of the standard console controllers and some have motion-control sensors built in. I secured myself a pair of EEESticks, a two-piece, motion-controlled, gamepad not unlike the Wii nunchuck and stick. I even got myself the Thrustmaster F1 gamepad with its mini steering-wheel and progressive triggers.

Then there are the regular specials on Steam, not to mention the Summer Sale this last month which virtually doubled my library. I don’t need space for CDs. I can download and update my library easily and virtually anywhere. I can still browse the web, shop online, watch movies and listen to music using the same equipment and my preferred media players. And, while the oldest part of this setup

is just under two years old, I’ve finally come to the place where I really don’t feel any need to fork out for a console.

Right now, I’ve my Gigabyte T1125 hooked up to an HD wide-screen, with my wireless mouse and gamepads plugged in, Wi-Fi access to uncapped ASDL and Steam Big Picture completes my world of gaming joy. Sure, my equipment is not the most advanced for this day but I am able to play all my games with decent settings, I have the option of motion-control for virtually any game in my library, I can download DLC or any new games as I choose, and, in essence, my “gaming console” doubles as a fairly high powered touch-screen PC which I can take on the road with me, and play offline on the train or in the park.

After all is said, why on this good earth would I ever want to, in this day and age, purchase a console?

*This is an interesting perspective – one that I can identify with. I received another mail this month arguing this topic the other way. It seems that if you have enough money, then a PC setup can be anything you want it to be. Those who are watching the pennies or feeling the economic pinch are more inclined to head the console route. Ed.*

From: Jay

Subject: PC retirement

Gaming has evolved to such a level that one game, JUST ONE GAME, can rob us of all the time we have to spend gaming. A good example would be a MMORPG like WOW or Guild Wars 2. I have been

playing Guild Wars 2 since launch, and it was all that I played because it is such a time consuming game – if you want to progress and actually enjoy it, you have to invest pretty much all your gaming time to it (that is of course if you do not play games for a living). The



**LETTER OF THE MONTH**  
The ‘Letter of the Month’ prize is sponsored by the good folks at Megarom. The winner receives two games for coming up with the most inspired bit of wisdom of cleverness. Note: You can’t change the games or the platform they come on.

**HARD TECHNICAL STUFF**  
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consequences of this were two fold.  
1.) My personal life, relationships and work were taking tremendous strain.  
2.) I didn’t have the time to play all the other kickass games I so wanted to play. I got thinking about the financial costs involved of playing MMO’s and PC games in general and realized that I had been having to upgrade my PC at least once every two years just to keep up with all the latest games and play them on high graphics. When I say upgrade, I really mean buy a new PC, because let’s face it, ‘upgrading’ is a myth. Just think for a moment what a new CPU, Mainboard, GPU and possibly RAM would cost. A lot of us gamers just cannot afford a new rig every two or three years, especially those of us who have other expenses, like bonds or rent, levy, car re-payments, and those money devouring things called kids... you get my point. It had to make a decision, and a very difficult one at that. I have had my PS3 for roughly 6 years now, and all it cost initially was around R4k. That is all. No upgrading or worrying if it can handle the next game. The games are crafted for the console, not the other way around. Instead of upgrade my PC end of the year, I am going to buy a PS4 and smile at the fact that I will be having years and years of gaming without any additional cost of having to upgrade it. The fact is consoles are far more advanced than they were 10 years ago. They are complex enough to handle any type of game the PC can. We see game like Diablo 3 and Elder Scrolls Online being hand crafted for the console. I used to think that playing a FPS on console was just stupid and mouse and keyboard was superior (because that is how I learned to play

them with Quake.) I can say that playing a FPS on console is a new challenge and requires even more skill than using a mouse and keyboard. I won't say it is better, but it is no way is less fun. In light of all of the above and the fact that this worldwide economic decline/crisis is still purging our wallets and bank accounts, I won't be surprised if more gamers take the same route I have. Thanks for the excellent magazine.

*This is the other side of the PC and console debate. Please note that this isn't about which is better in terms of technical capabilities but rather which is better depending on your budget. Please send your comments about this to the regular address. Ed.*

From: Sandy

Subject: Gaming wrinkles

After reading the August 2013 issue, I have decided to come clean and confess. I am a gamer. No longer will I walk into gaming shops and pretend that I'm buying for my grandchildren. Never again will I go to rAge on the pretext that my grandchildren needed a ride. Next time I take my computer in for an upgrade I will admit that this gaming "rig" is mine. Most important of all, I will proudly display my stack of NAG magazines on my coffee table for all to see. This hobby comes with an extra bonus. My grandchildren, aged between fourteen and eighteen, love to visit me during school holidays and long weekends. We do the LAN thing, eat pizza, laugh a lot and kill Zombies, Skags and assorted baddies into the early hours of the morning. Retirement has turned out to be more fun than I ever imagined. After all, you're never too old to have a happy childhood.

*Excellent! This is proof that when you get older you don't have to abandon gaming. We're finding more and more older gamers all the time. Just remember in a few years you're all going to be older gamers, arguing in the retirement home about who is using the Internet and causing so much lag. Ed.*

From: Branden

Subject: Letter of the month - verification required

It all started as a good day I was sitting in my varsity's computer science labs productively questing through the NAG forums... buffering... when I decided to search for a particular thread on NAG LAN 2013 (so stoked nervous about tickets wink, wink two please). Like an unsuspecting n00b taking a rail gun to the face (Really Xaero! GG) I decided to use your forums inbuilt search engine. Little did I know of the nightmarish difficulty that awaited me when I attempted to solve the Rubik's cube like

# ON THE FORUMS

**The NAG forums; never go alone. You'll be sorry, and by never we mean never: [www.nag.co.za/forums/](http://www.nag.co.za/forums/)**

**Q: What are some of your greatest, most memorable moments from this generation?**

*"The ludicrous amount of Zombie games and how that became a selling point!"*

ZoRPA

*"Watching indie gaming go through a total renaissance and become my primary hope for games that I actually want to play."*

Squirly

*"Opening level in Crysis when the sun starts to rise, and you realise that all the money spent on the graphics card was worth it. For me, nothing else in this entire generation topped that."*

.exe



*"Ants invading my Xbox causing my dad to destroy its insides with Doom. Worst day of my life."*

CyniKill

image verification software (It hurt me plenty). My friend and I decided to see who could complete this challenge first. Eventually, after I had toiled away for what felt like minutes, I decided to registry as I hoped it would make things easier. I eventually registered after dealing with another bout with the dreaded image verification, this time I was lucky as it was kind to me and gave something guessable. My previous hope of registering making it easier was in vain as I was then told I was logged in already and had to go back a window which did not help. My mate and I had fun playing this truly challenging quiz game kind of like million rand money drop where no one is successful. Obviously it was nothing to do with your perfect system and probably a fault on my end. I was using an Ubuntu system (sigh) so I was lucky to have just made it onto the Internet never mind actually use it for anything. A truly challenging game is something hard to find these days so thanks NAG. Now I am off to do the impossible and find Roxy.

*Dane, our web guy (I'm not going to call him a master), said this is the forum software and not him. Dane then sent it to Geoff after talking to*

*Lauren about her having the same problem. Geoff then said that I should hire a web developer to fix the problem. Some threats went backwards and forwards about people working here and skill levels and so on. End of the day, I don't really know what to tell you other than I'm sorry. Ed.*

From: Sheldon, Christopher and Daniel

Subject: Skyrim beef stew

Me and my friends during my LAN party decided to show our dedication to NAG by



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.



Derik Stavast, "I created this image using Softimage 2013, Photoshop and Adobe After Effects. hope the NAG employees and community likes this image as much as I liked creating it!"

making the Skyrim beef stew in the July issue of NAG we are huge fans and would be very grateful if you where to put one of these pictures in the next issue of NAG. P.S. We cooked the stew traditionally on a fire which we prepared with fire wood we chopped that morning (the way a true Nord would).

*Geoff is as pleased as punch that so many of you have been trying recipes from his gaming food collection. He was so thrilled he even basted a turkey. He is thinking of releasing a whole book on the topic of food in games and retiring on the proceeds. I say let the boy dream – it's not like he's going to hurt anyone. Ed.*

**From: Ruan**  
**Subject: Social Gaming - A Fine Line**  
 Lately consoles have become all about social interaction. I understand that everyone likes the idea of playing with a friend that has moved away or showing off their kickass Kill streaks to the connected world. But the more developers let us interact without having to actually see, hear and feel other human beings, the more we seem to disconnect from society. Way back when the PS1 & PS2 came out we had to go next door or down the road to play with our friends. I love LAN culture because you get to meet like-minded people, discuss mutual interests, make REAL friends and play your favourite games. You can still play with someone on the couch, but you don't need to. You can still meet other

## THE SHORTS

### Extracts of n00b from NAG letters

"Why because all they do is read and write, and what do we do we sit on a been bag preparing for the day that we are going to save humanity!"  
 -Luke

"We've been married for 3 1/2 years now and to me there is nothing more romantic than charging, guns/swords blazing, into battle with my soul mate by my side."  
 -Jess

"I would like to end by quoting some famous person (cannot remember the name) who said, "If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and sounds like a duck... then its most likely a Power Ranger!"  
 -Paul

gamers in The Real World, but you don't have to. You can still go out and buy the new Crytek title, but your console does it for you. I know you might be thinking that gamers need to draw the line, to take responsibility and get outside. But for many people the only things keeping them linked to the society was the need to go to CNA and buy the new game, the need to call a friend over to play FIFA or Need for Speed, the need to invite your neighbours over to show off your skills. If we never have to do anything beyond paying our ADSL and phoning Mr. Delivery, by the time that the PS5 and Xbox One-Two (?) are released we will be a society that is devoid of basic linguistic skills, the ability to bathe and an economy that is little more than two guys who smell like rotting testicles (because they haven't showered since they bought the PS4) bartering over the last slice of pizza. Although that means that people will re-learn how to communicate in real life, so maybe it works itself out?

*I think you're correct, just not too sure about the human race ever actually improving from where we are now. Our technology is making us less human and before long we're just going to be machines plugged into other machines looking at other machines. Nobody will know exactly when it was that we lost our humanity, but some fingers will point to this generation as a suggested starting point where it all went so horribly wrong. Ed.*

**From: Carl**  
**Subject: A Number?**  
 NAG has always been my buyers guide for years. I trust your guys' opinions and ratings and you have never disappointed me. But I have always wondered, how do you arrive at that number that I see at the bottom of the page? Do you assign points to specific values or do you read it in a crystal ball?

Is the score for the single player campaign only or does it include a multiplayer rating? If so, why is the multiplayer only briefly mentioned, if it is part of the rating? Should the review not be half-half then?

Some clarification here would be nice.

*Technically, the score is a value out of 100 for the whole game, all modes, as-is when it arrives at our office. As for how we get to that score, it's different for everyone. For me personally (especially since I've been doing this for so long), I've built up a rating system inside my head for games based on all the games I've played in the past. It's not a perfect way to do things because there is no official system in place to do a job like this – movie reviewers are in the same boat. End of the day it's never going to be a scientific process and it is just an*

*opinion, albeit an educated opinion based on years of experience. Ed.*

**From: Rowan**  
**Subject: Cheat codes? I think not...**  
 This may have been posted before but one of my earliest child memories is playing Jazz Jack Rabbit and typing some cheats (of course after I finished game) for some fun. Now in today's age, games have "cheats" well for a price and are called DLC. Now I understand this in free games like DoTA. But for a game like Borderlands 2 and well "insert non free game with DLC here" it annoys me. Now I know they won't stop this, but for a guy who does not have a way to pay for it online, should South Africa not do what other countries do and sell the DLC codes in stores in BT Games?

*I have seen DLC as packaged on the shelf products in the past; Battlefield 3 did this a while ago for example. It's not common but it does happen, but not for Borderlands 2 in your case. Perhaps this letter will get some discussion on this topic and some smart person out there will have a solution. One longer term plan is to wait for the game of the year edition of the game to appear in store. Those usually include all the DLC ever released and some cool extras. Bottom line you will still need to use the Internet at some point but that's not your issue is it. Just in, BT Games is offering something that might help. Head along to [www.downloads.btgames.co.za](http://www.downloads.btgames.co.za) Ed.*

## ON TWITTER

Quack like a duck @nagcoza 

**Nagrigo\_Nic**  
 @nagcoza please give me a free pie that contains a PS4 :G

**Derick Smitch**  
 @nagcoza Will someone think of the short-sighted people when hiding Roxy? :)

**alec van veen**  
 @nagcoza worst day ever my nag arrives in the mail, so I rip open the package, only to find out that some assn\*le has stolen the cover DVD

**Ri@H@RD(B@BB¥)?!™**  
 @nagcoza the only mag that'll teach guys 2 multi task\*holds controller in 1 hand\*.\*eats donut\*.\*uses foot to scratch nose\*.\*blinks\*.\*farts!\*

**River Leask**  
 #WorstFeelingEver: reading the @nagcoza and seeing all the kickass games coming out soon and knowing my PC can't run them... :|  
 <-- my face



# SAINTS ROW

## IV



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Phil Fish – exit, stage left

**H**ow about that Phil Fish bloke? Man, the gaming industry hasn't had a bad boy figure like him in quite a while; although, depending on what camp you fall into, that "bad boy" moniker might be replaced with "total asshat". You see, when it comes to Phil Fish, there is a multitude of opinions: the opinion that says the guy should be hated because he's an arrogant douche; the opinion that says he should be admired because he's a person who speaks his mind, and figures like him are rare in the industry these days; and opinions that go something along the lines of, "who cares what he's like; the game he made (*Fez*) was fantastic."

**"Yes, Phil Fish said some mean and careless things, and in turn many other people said some equally mean and careless things to him..."**

Needless to say, Fish has been the subject of much online scrutiny and verbal abuse in response to his unfiltered stance on a number of topics. The now infamous Japanese games "just suck" incident is often used as evidence that Phil Fish is a mean person. He might be; that statement was certainly a mean thing to have said to somebody who clearly admired Fish's work. The Japanese developer who asked the question (and then got indirectly ridiculed by a panel of indie developers) is called Makoto Goto. He has since gone on record to say that while he considered the remark rude, it actually ended up motivating him to become a better game designer, and to that end he wants to "thank Phil Fish for what he said". So surely, if the target of the initial wrongdoing is over it, then the rest of the online rabble with their righteous indignation should get over it too? That doesn't even take into consideration the fact that Fish has apologised for the remark on numerous occasions.

Anyway, Phil Fish decided that he's fed up with this gaming industry thing, and has, in his own words, decided he's "getting out of games because I choose not to put up with this abuse anymore". The abuse he's referring to culminated in the recent incident involving *GameTrailers* journalist Marcus Beer. I'm not going to recap those events; they're covered in the news Bytes section of this very edition NAG. The bottom line is this: a journalist decided to trash Phil Fish in a very personal and very public way. Whether or not it was directly responsible for Fish quitting games development is a bit of a moot point, because it's not going to change the fact that he's gone, and that it was online hostilities from a multitude of sources that were responsible. No matter what you think of Phil Fish, it's an utter catastrophe that the industry has degenerated into such a hostile environment for everyone involved; developers, gamers, publishers and journalists.

Yes, Phil Fish said some mean and careless things, and in turn many other people said some equally mean and careless things to him (irony!), but really this whole incident speaks volumes about the loss of common courtesies; things that people feel aren't necessary in this day and age, especially online. The fact that it's gotten bad enough to make a talented creator walk away, is something we should be ashamed of. I guess that this is kind of a "bigger picture" way of looking at this whole debacle.

I'm pretty sure that Phil Fish will still develop *Fez 2*. Hopefully when (if) he comes back to the industry, he'll find it a little less poisonous.

- Miklós Szecsei -

## The dawn of a new era

Everquest is ready to step things up a notch

**S**ony Online Entertainment has tried this twice already, but it looks like the studio finally has something that's going to become the sequel to *Everquest 2*. It's called *Everquest Next*, and represents a major evolution of the genre, which we think it only fitting considering the contributions of the studio to make MMORPGs what they are today.

*EQN* is set to be a complex affair, with all the usual MMO stuff you'd expect as well as a dynamic world filled with NPCs, quests and even locations that change. Yep, locations: the worlds of *EQN* will be ever-shifting ones, owing to the destructibility of absolutely everything. This will, of course, be limited in certain respects to prevent too much griefing, but for the most part it'll allow for full *Minecraft*-like destruction.

But what's the point of having stuff to blow up if it hasn't been lovingly crafted by your friends and enemies? That's where *Everquest Next Landmark* comes in. The details are still a little fuzzy, but essentially, *Landmark* will be a free-to-play component of *EQN* in which players can stake out a plot of the game world as their very own, travel that world gathering supplies and materials, and use those materials to build whatever the hell they want within their territory. The idea is that entire cities can be built by players, and then NPCs will move in, bringing with them shops and quests to keep you busy.

The design tools made available in *EQN Landmark* look to be quite impressive, with varying brush sizes to paint your "voxels" (those



big *Minecraft*-like blocks everyone keeps naming incorrectly) onto the game world, as well as smooth and bevel tools to create anything from a straight cube to a perfect sphere.

*Everquest Next* certainly sounds adventurous – from both a developer's and a player's point of view – and we sure do hope that all these features make the final edit when it comes down to it. For now, all we can do is wait. *Landmark* is set to launch by the end of this year, and with the main game fast approaching beta status already, we hope to see it before 2014 is over.

**"From a developer's side, it definitely pushes us [to do better]. But it pushes us in a – I don't know if other studios feel this way – but I hope in a sort of camaraderie type sense. 'Oh, those guys are doing awesome stuff. Let's jack up our game.' But not like two opposing teams. Rather, like the same team pushing in the same direction,"**

– Mark Rubin, *Infinity Ward* executive producer, chatting with *GamesIndustry.biz* on why *IW* loves getting to see what other FPS developers like *DICE* (Battlefield) are doing with their games.

## Doom still on its way, Rage on the backburner

According to id Software's studio director Tim Willits, the long-awaited *Doom 4* has suffered from a serious case of "identity crisis". In a recent interview, Willits explained the massive delays in getting the game out the door, and much of it comes down to something that many gamers are sure to have felt with a game or two.

"Every game has a soul," he said. "Every game has a spirit. When you played *Rage*, you got the spirit. And [*Doom*] did not have the spirit, it did not have



the soul, it didn't have a personality. It had a bit of schizophrenia – a little bit of an identity crisis."

The solution has been for id to refocus their energy and efforts, with only *Doom 4* in mind. That does mean the inevitable sequel to *Rage* is still a long way off, but we're willing to bet that most of you would be okay with the trade-off.

## Saints Row IV gets \$1 million dollar special edition



Alright, we get that the *Saints Row* series has become one massive send-up of video game absurdity, but now that send-up has turned into a satire of the actual gaming industry. More specifically, developer Volition and publisher Deep Silver have decided to highlight the stupidity of over-the-top special editions. They've done this by creating the most ridiculous special edition that we'll ever see – or at least see until *Saints Row V* is announced.

The special edition is called the *Saints Row IV: Super Dangerous Wad Wad Edition*. There's only one in existence and it'll set you back \$1 million. Yes, it costs just short of R10 million. It comes with a copy of the game; a replica of the Dub-Step gun; a trip into space (actual space with no gravity and stars and stuff) with Virgin Galactic; a day of real spy training; a hostage rescue experience; a new wardrobe; a personal shopper; seven nights stay in Washington DC; seven nights stay in Dubai; first class air tickets to both destinations; a year's membership to the E25 Super Car Club that comes with an actual Lamborghini Gallardo for you to use; a new Toyota Prius with one year's insurance; and (wait for it, this one is insane) plastic surgery of your choice.

The thing that scares us the most isn't that this is a real thing. What scares us the most is that somewhere on this wretched planet there's some really, really wealthy person thinking "huh, maybe I'll get this just for a laugh."

## What did you call my mother?

Just when we were wondering what's become of Team Bondi's action-adventure *Whore of the Orient*, Videogamer.com goes and releases what they call a video leaked by a "trusted source" on the inside. The video clip is just about a minute long and shows the lead character running through streets and marketplaces in what we can assume is the Orient. There's some karate-chopping to the face, pushing civilians onto the ground and a bit of cover shooting, but it's all rather rough and likely alpha phase at the most.

*Whore of the Orient* has suffered from major setbacks during its development, but it seems to be on its way for a next-gen release following a cash injection from an Australian investor in June.

## DwarfCorp aims to be Dwarf Fortress with actual graphics

*DwarfCorp* describes itself as a "lighthearted simulation game in which you manage a colony of ruthless capitalist Dwarves" as they expand to new lands and exploit their natural resources, usually resulting in comedy and ultimately sadness when everything inevitably goes awry. The project's already surpassed its Kickstarter target at the time of this writing, which means it's definitely happening.

You'll manage every aspect of your dwarves' lives, defending them from enemies, deciding their daily tasks, providing them with entertainment and sustenance, and ensuring that every aspect of your colony is kept running smoothly.



## CM 690 III

INTRODUCING THE NEXT GENERATION CM 690 III



PC components are not included. Assembled photo for reference only.



The CM 690 III is a revolutionary update to the popular CM 690 II mid-tower. The exterior retains the curved metal mesh look the series is known for. The interior has been completely updated – the HDD/SSD combo cage can be switched between 3.5-inch or 2.5-inch drives or completely removed if not in use. There's enough room for a 240mm liquid cooling radiator at the top or front, 120mm in the rear and supports up to 9 fans, including 3 large 200mm fans. Cleaning is hassle free thanks to multiple dust filters.



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The Game Stalder



GTA

I love *Grand Theft Auto*. Like, really, really love it. If *GTA* were a person & not a video game I would be the groupie throwing my panties on stage at the launch party [whoa, there are kids here, Ed].

I don't mean a particular game in the series either; I'm talking about the whole shebang, *Grand Theft Auto* in its entirety. I have played every single *Grand Theft Auto* game released, from *GTA* up until *GTA IV*, as well as all the unnumbered versions such as *Vice City* plus the expansions in between – the PSP versions, the DS version, and the mobile version. Everything.

All of which means that I am insanely excited for *GTA V*. Insanely!

One of the major reasons for this is that the game is not just fun to play, but the entire universe is so well thought out on all levels that it continually surprises me, even when I'm playing it for the second or third time around.

The way they used to name the cars when *GTA* still sported a top down camera, the introduction of personalised music, prostitutes in *GTA III*, the Kill Frenzy, hidden packages, the names of the stores, the random banter on the radio, the hillbillies. All of these things have been carefully considered and not only display an understanding of good game design, but they display a twisted sense of humour that both appeals to *GTA* fans and is a conscious critique of contemporary society.

The entire universe is set up as a parody, highlighting stereotypes such as the gangster, the hillbilly, the corrupt cop, that make us laugh and offends us at the same time. Rockstar sets out to highlight the injustices of society by putting us in the role of the criminal, trapped initially through circumstances in a life of crime, but later on a conscious participant motivated no longer by fear, but by greed and the appeal of becoming the top rung in the local crime ladder.

Of course you are always a criminal in *GTA*, but there is still a sense of a moral compass and it is completely up to you as to how you apply it. We all enjoy an element of the chaotic, but are we inherently good people underneath it all?

Another aspect of this universe that I am in love with is the self-awareness. The game references itself continually, and time and again you'll find characters popping up in multiple games, at different ages, in different places indicating how the stories all connect, especially those from *GTA III* onwards.

Now with *GTA V* fast approaching, I have to sit back and take stock of my feelings towards the series, and wonder whether it has serious longevity. Is the universe of *Grand Theft Auto* getting a bit tired? After all, they have a winning formula, but it's a formula that many other developers are now utilising, and Rockstar must continually innovate in order to remain relevant. I think they're being quite successful in this so far, as every game introduces at least one new feature that manages to enhance the overall experience.

This time around, on the most basic level, it's the ability to experience the story from multiple character perspectives, adding yet another dimension to the franchise.

How long will Rockstar be able to maintain this? I guess until they run out of stories... At this point this doesn't look likely.

Now excuse me while I build up my strength before the 17th September. I wonder if they sell *GTA* underwear online...

- Pippa Tshabalala -

## John Carmack splits time between Oculus Rift and id Software



Have you heard of Oculus Rift – the hyper-cool virtual reality headset that's got the games industry in an excited frenzy over the extreme heights of its potential? If not, we dissect the device in a *Lazy Gamer's Guide* elsewhere in this issue. Be sure to check it out.

Anyway, id Software (*Doom*, *Quake*) co-founder and industry legend John Carmack – who, incidentally, has been a very vocal supporter of the Rift since its inception – has joined Oculus VR as the company's CTO (chief technical officer). It's a full-time position and Carmack will now spend his workdays at a new office the company is opening in Dallas, Texas.

"The dream of VR has been simmering in the background for decades, but now, the people and technologies are finally aligning to allow it to reach the potential we imagined," said Carmack in a statement. "I'm extremely excited to make a mark in what I truly believe will be a transformative technology."

The move immediately sparked

speculation that Carmack had exited id Software, but parent company Bethesda quickly dispelled such talk: "John has long been interested in the work at Oculus VR and wishes to spend time on that project," said a Bethesda representative. "The technical leadership he provides for games in development at id Software is unaffected."

It seems John is now an even busier man, splitting his time between three different ventures as he clarified in this Twitter post: "My time division is now Oculus over id over [rocketry developer] Armadillo. Busy busy busy!" Given how much excitement there is over the Rift's capabilities, the introduction of Carmack's genius to the tantalising piece of hardware can only be a good thing.

"John's early experiments with the Rift put Oculus on the map and helped create an amazing amount of momentum around virtual reality," stated Palmer Lucky, Oculus founder. "His technical genius and passion for solving hard problems makes him the ideal CTO."

**"I don't think you can ever design toxic behaviour out, but what you can do is prevent them being able to ruin other players' experiences. You give people these tools that encourage them to interact positively with each other and then if someone is interacting negatively with you, well, they can't ruin your experience."**

– Bungie's *Destiny* hopes to encourage positive behaviour via the implementation of its social system, explains the game's technical director Chris Butcher to Edge.

## So long, and thanks for all the concrete donkeys



With *Worms 3* and *Worms Clan Wars* now safely released from the apron strings, series creators Team 17 have decided that this is the end of *Worms* from them.

"[*Clan Wars* has] got full Steam workshop support, so people can make their own items and stuff," said studio head Gavin Hood. This will be the studio's last big push into the series, and they're going to bow out gracefully with a fully-equipped user-generated content system to deliver new game content, instead of milking

dry the series with endless DLC, although they will continue to provide support and updates for both games.

As for their next move, well, Hood isn't revealing much just yet.

"I assume we're looking [at next-gen]," he said. "I mean, we've got next-gen dev kits and that, but I don't know what we're planning on doing."

Or maybe they just don't know what they're doing, and that's equally as exciting. Regardless, we're unlikely to see anything new from them inside of a couple of years.

## That'll learn ya



Following a massive backlash from the Russian public, *Company of Heroes 2*'s publisher in that territory – 1C SoftClub – has pulled all copies of the game from store shelves.

The move comes after continued and highly heated debates emerged online that claim Relic's treatment of the Soviet contribution to WW2 was highly offensive – with many using the term "Nazi-like" in their accusations. Relic's Steam forum moderators returned fire with a bout of childish retorts, and the resulting flame war has left the game effectively banned in the country.

SEGA, Relic and 1C have since been in talks, and SEGA's PR reps are on high alert while decision-makers take a fine tooth comb to the game's campaign.

It's doubtful that much will change, as most of the offensive subject matter is deeply embedded in the campaign in the form of game mechanisms, objectives and cut-scenes, but at this rate we don't imagine much of the Russian public would be all that interested in picking up the game if it were re-released.

## One Xbox LIVE Gold account unlocks gold perks for everyone at home

Here's some great news for those of you with multiple console gamers in your house: you'll be able to share Xbox LIVE Gold benefits with anyone else at home on your Xbox One console. Microsoft has unveiled this neat new Xbox One feature, which they're calling "Home Gold".

With Home Gold, one person in the household can purchase an Xbox LIVE Gold subscription and then share the Gold benefits with as many other people in the same household as they want to. So long as those people are playing on the home Xbox One console, they get access to online multiplayer gaming, the new Xbox One Game DVR feature, SmartMatch and more. This is a marked improvement over previous Xbox LIVE Gold rulings whereby every individual account on an Xbox 360 was forced to have its own Gold membership in order to access things like online gaming.

What's more, if you go off to a friend's house and log in to their Xbox One console, you can share Gold benefits with your friend as well.

Microsoft has also revealed that anyone who has an existing Gold account on Xbox 360 will have their Gold status automatically applied to their new Xbox One profile once they make the switch to the new console. In case you had plans to keep your Xbox 360 for some *Black Ops 2* multiplayer sessions, the good news is that your Gold will work on your 360 as well as your Xbox One. You can even be logged in to both systems at the same time.

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## The Indie Investigator



## Haters

At the time of writing this piece, something still rather fresh in the indie sphere was the matter of Phil Fish (of *Fez* fame) effectively rage-quitting the industry and cancelling *Fez 2*.

Even the most cursory follower of this story already knows the gory details: Marcus Beer's damning commentary, Fish's heated response, the messianic death/resurrection of his Twitter account (complete with a cryptic Vine video) and the endless media speculation about the psychology and motives of a man whose emotional story actually isn't that complicated.

This is a perfect time to outline the hazards of becoming a well-known indie developer. Not along the tired path of describing megalomania and hubris, because that's not what this situation is about. In fact, the media has done a bang-up job of consistently sensationalising Fish – often bringing poorly-investigated sentiments to the table like his responsibility for the loss of developer jobs, apparent racism towards the Japanese and presumably his role in several global wars.

It's important to remember that Fish is just some dude who happened to make games and became famous for it. And when you're famous, people's expectations for you rise while reporting accuracy goes down the toilet. In the face of this, you either evolve and manage, or you remain like Fish – a man who speaks to the world like he's talking to just one person. While this sounds beautiful and honest as an out-of-context quote, the consequences of this attitude can be severe. Fish has a problem – not because he got famous and changed, but because he got famous and *didn't*.

It's a surprisingly easy trap to fall into, especially as an indie who sees art instead of business.

Feedback on the average hobbyist developer's projects tends to be positive and/or constructive. Immediate audiences include friends, family and a tightly-knit community of dedicated developers. This generally helpful nature tends to diminish when your audience becomes broader – starting with trollish YouTube commentators and followed up by unsympathetic Internet bloggers. That soon graduates to self-styled video game critics, mainstream journalists and the Westboro Baptist Church.

The very top of that list is held by some surprising contenders: in an era when *Call of Duty* designers get death threats for adjusting the reload time on a machine gun, even the label of "game fan" can be strangely macabre. And it's hard to know from the developer's side when popularity tips past that critical mass – when a big part of your day-to-day social media interaction becomes dealing with angry, entitled Internet denizens instead of enthusiastic and supportive friends.

Fish described his explosion as the end of a "long, bloody campaign", and he's not exaggerating (well, maybe with the blood). If your game approaches a market that's large enough, it doesn't matter who you are. It's happened to Fish and Yu and McMillen and Blow and Gabler and Purho and Bruce and Persson and Ismail and everyone else. Being well-known is *hard*. It's *scary*. And more South African developers are starting to bring their games to a level where this problem becomes relevant.

Haters gonna hate. What will you do when a fellow indie dev comes under fire in the future? And what will you do when *your* time comes? You'll want to know how to deal with unconstructive criticism, insults, discouragement and harassment. You'll have to take heat. And it won't be trivial when you do.

So are you prepared?

- Rodain Joubert -

## Prey 2 not in development at Arkane, say Bethesda



Recently rumours were roaming the Internet that *Prey 2*'s development had been yanked out of the hands of *Prey* creator Human Head and handed over to *Dishonored* developer Arkane. It caused a minor outcry, and Bethesda's finally appeared to assure everyone that *Prey 2* has not been handed over to Arkane.

"All of that stuff, I have no idea where it came from," said Pete Hines, Bethesda's VP of PR and marketing (who happens to be all over the news this month), in an interview with Rock, Paper, Shotgun. "The Human Head *Prey 2* thing is the Human Head *Prey 2* thing. Arkane is over here, and they're doing their thing, and that's for them to work on. We'll be ready to talk

about what they're working on when it gets closer to release."

When asked what's actually happening with *Prey 2* then, Hines admitted that while it's definitely not dead, it just wasn't at the level of quality that Bethesda and Human Head expect from the game.

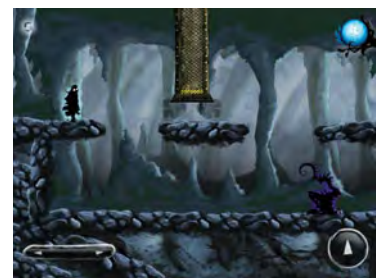
"We could ship it and put it in a box and be done with it, but it won't meet anybody's expectations. Not ours, not yours, not the consumer's. It'd just be like, 'What happened to this?' Well, that's what we would like to know. It's not fun to make a call to pull back the reins on something like that and say it's not coming out this year. It's certainly not an easy decision, especially after you spent years and millions and millions of dollars creating it."

## Nintendo reaches out

There's a feeling from the industry that indie is going to be a potential goldmine for the next generation of gaming consoles, and anyone who can count to three might be left wondering how Nintendo feels about all this, given that they're regarded as the most secretive, unapproachable and exclusive platform on the face of the planet.

"We're putting a lot of effort into changing that and making ourselves more accessible," says Nintendo's business development manager Dan Adelman. "I really want to make sure that people realize that it's actually pretty easy now – and we're trying to make it easier – to work with us and release games on our systems."

There's been a lot of pressure, both internally and from indie developers, to lower the barrier of entry for these



studios, and the results of this pressure is set to see as many as 30 indie games reach the Nintendo eShop by the end of the year, with more on the way in the coming years for both Wii U and 3DS.

"I think we'd all like to see our install base grow a little bit faster, and I think we'll see that when our holiday line-up comes up," Adelman says. "I think a lot of developers are waiting on that."

## Dead Island goes ZOMBA



Every week seems to bring another MOBA, and publisher Deep Silver is obviously keen to get in on the action with their announcement of *Dead Island: Epidemic*. It's a free-to-play multiplayer online battle arena for PC – and seeing as it's touting the title of Techland's popular open-world, zombie-smashing *Dead Island* series, it's naturally going to be centred on the undead.

The game pits three teams of players against each other, all competing to survive the zombie apocalypse. Deep Silver's calling their twist on the genre a ZOMBA: a Zombie Online Multiplayer Battle Arena. A release window has not yet been announced, and it's unknown whether Techland (original creators of *Dead Island*) is handling development of *Epidemic*.

## Self-publishing will come to Xbox One



Microsoft has already done much to repair the damage caused by the initial Xbox One announcements, and now they're going even further by allowing indie game developers to self-publish. Not only that, but every Xbox One has the potential to be a dev unit.

This is big news for developers who don't have the means to rope in a third-party publisher (or Microsoft themselves, who have in the past used their own restrictions to score some lucrative publishing deals), and much of it comes down to the way that the new console's architecture is engineered.

"One of the things we missed with on 360 is because PartnerNet was so low-scale, even when we did things like XNA, they couldn't take advantage of the services that we put inside of Live," said corporate VP of Xbox Marc Whitten. "Now that we've re-architected the system from the ground-up, we'll be able to give developers a full suite of tools."

These tools will include access to the operating system, Kinect and Microsoft's cloud service. Kinect has already proven to be a great tool for hackers and engineers, and adding this level of integration is only going to make it easier to get your hands dirty.

Currently, the plan is to launch these services post-launch, which could fit in quite well with our own local launch window of "not 2013".

## Batman: Arkham Origins gets three-way multiplayer

It seems Warner Bros. Games Montreal isn't the only studio taking the reins from Rocksteady in developing the next game to star the Caped Crusader. It's been announced that Splash Damage (the crew behind *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory*, *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* and *Brink*) is eagerly crafting an all-new multiplayer experience for Bats and co. And, unlike other traditionally single-player games with shoehorned multiplayer modes, this one boasts such a unique approach that it actually seems like it'll be worthwhile.

Splash Damage hopes to take "the series' trademark invisible Predator gameplay online" by engaging players in 3 vs 3 vs 2 battles. That's right: 3 vs 3 vs 2. Two teams of three players each depict the respective gangs of the Joker and Bane. The two gangs vie for supremacy while a third team attempts to throw a wrench in the works. That third team is made up of Batman and sidekick Robin, utilising powerful gadgets from the single-player campaign to aid them. At a certain point, set players from the villain teams can become Bane or Joker themselves, leveraging their special abilities to give them an advantage.

Unfortunately for Wii U players, it's been reported that *Arkham Origins'* multiplayer component won't be available on Nintendo's console.

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## Miktar's Meanderings



## Dota 2 – The International 2013

**H**ow can you tell someone's been playing *Dota* for a long time? Don't worry; they'll be sure to tell you.

Yeah, it's an old (and rather template) joke. I first heard it in relation to *Game of Thrones*. "How can you tell someone's read the books? Don't worry; they'll be sure to tell you." I laughed, but it was a laugh at the expense of people who enjoyed something long before it was made popular by the new TV show based on the books. I felt appropriately guilty, paying the price of mentally contributing to dumb stereotypes, and moved on.

As for *Dota*, last night I watched the grand finals of the The International 2013 *Dota 2* tournament. I won't pretend to be a hardcore (or even "tryhard") *Dota 2* player. I never played the original *Warcraft III* map much, and I have only a passing interest in *League of Legends*. But skill is skill, and I wanted to see what grandmaster play in *Dota 2* looked like. It looked damn impressive. Even if you don't fully understand a game, good broadcaster commentary can get anyone into the fun – especially when a \$1,437,204 first-place prize is on the line. The final best-out-of-five match between Alliance and Natus Vincere went the full five rounds. Alliance curb stomped Na'Vi the first round (the round lasting barely 16 minutes). Na'Vi returned the favour in the second round; the third and fourth had both players trading measured and considered games.

The final round, everything on the line, saw huge plays and a lot of inventive tactics. Though not quite as inventive as during the second round when Na'Vi's Bounty Hunter used the enemy jungle's neutral creeps to farm his own creeps. Na'Vi was favoured to reclaim the championship (having finished second place last year), but it was Alliance that won in the end thanks to some incredible teamwork.

Alliance is composed of five Swedes, known for unorthodox strategy and using often-neglected heroes. By contrast, Na'Vi team members consist of one from Estonia, three from the Ukraine and one from Germany. They're arguably the most popular *Dota 2* team, which was easy to spot thanks to *Dota 2*'s ingenious "Pennant" system. Fans can buy virtual pennant banners in *Dota 2* that show their support for a team when spectating one of their matches. During the final round between Na'Vi and Alliance, spectated by nearly 300,000 people live inside *Dota 2* and I don't know how many over Twitch.tv streaming and such, over 60,000 Na'Vi pennants were counted, with half that for Alliance.

Because *Dota 2* is a team of five vs. five, I personally find it a bit more interesting than watching, say, a *StarCraft II* grand finale. While individual skill against a single opponent is impressive, it's more impressive to me when five players have to work together at that level. I've always preferred cooperation to competition. And no offense to prospective *StarCraft II* pros, but right now it seems only one country produces consistent tournament winners (South Korea) and that gets a bit boring. It's been like that since the '90s.

I'm sounding like an advertisement for *Dota 2*, ironic, since I have mild distaste for the game and half its culture. But that's the trick. You don't *have* to like, or love, something, to be able to appreciate or understand certain aspects of it.

- Miktar Dracon -

## Former F.E.A.R., No One Lives Forever devs form new studio

**F**ive former Monolith developers recently announced that they've joined forces to create Blackpowder Games. Based in Seattle, Blackpowder Games' founders include Larry Paolicelli (who worked on the art of *F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin*), David Longo (art director on the original *F.E.A.R.*), Brad Pendleton (*F.E.A.R.*'s lead software engineer), Wes Saulsberry III (*F.E.A.R.* art lead) and Craig Hubbard (lead designer and creative director of the original *F.E.A.R.*).

Many of Blackpowder's founders featured prominently in Monolith's history, touting credits to the studio's earliest titles like *Blood* and *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division*, all the way through to *Aliens vs. Predator 2* and the recent *Gotham City Impostors*. Importantly, they're also credited with having worked on two of NAG's favourite games/franchises: *F.E.A.R.* and *The Operative: No One Lives Forever*, which means Blackpowder immediately has our attention.

"We wanted to get back to crafting games more intuitively," said Blackpowder's creative director (and designer of *No One Lives Forever*) Craig Hubbard. "There's a sense of discovery and excitement when you navigate by instinct rather than market research and open yourself up to opportunities that arise during development."

Blackpowder's first title, a PC-based action adventure going by the

name *Betrayer*, will likely already be available on Steam Early Access by time you read this. The game takes place in 1604 and tasks players with unravelling a mystery surround the disappearance of an English colony on the Virginian coast. *Betrayer* is built in Unreal Engine 3 and employs a minimalist colour palette, its black and white world strongly contrasted by sprays of violent red.



## Under da sea: BioShock Infinite's DLC goes back to Rapture

**O**ne of our (and most likely yours as well) favourite games of 2013, *BioShock Infinite*, has had its first of three promised DLC packs released. It's called *Clash in the Clouds*, it's a wave-based, arena-combat style offering (as well as delivering a number of other new goodies for fans) and you're able to go buy it right now if you'd like. The more interesting news is that the second and third DLC packs will form a two-part detective story, set in the

underwater city of Rapture from the original *BioShock*.

It's called *Burial at Sea*, and is set on New Year's Eve 1958 – the night of the infamous bombing that sparked Rapture's tragic downfall. Interestingly, you'll play as both Booker and Elizabeth, who return as the stars of the DLC. The first episode sees you play as Booker, a private detective in Rapture, while in the second you'll play as Elizabeth, who approaches Booker at the start of the DLC's story.



## You can't take my phone from me



Wooohoo, we're getting a *Firefly* game! Oh, no, hang on a sec – didn't we do this already, maybe about seven years ago? And then again last year? Let's clean up a little first: both of those games are gone. The first one died off in 2011, and now the second one – tentatively named *Firefly Universe Online* – as also been sent off to live with the Reavers.

Which leaves us with the third attempt at a game from this beloved franchise: *Firefly Online*, which is due for release late 2014. Before you get too emotional, know that it's a mobile game, and it's social. If you're not put off by the combination of those two factors then you might be excited to learn that the game will see players building and crewing a space vessel and travelling through space in search of work. So like life, really, but with spaceships and slide guitars, and on a tiny screen covered with smudgy fingerprints.

At least it's finally going to happen, right? Right..? Hey, I haven't seen a tumbleweed in ages!

## Valve tour group possibly reveals Left 4 Dead 3, Source Engine 2

It seems there's no company quite so adept at attracting rumour and anxious conspiracy theory as Valve is. New rumours are circulating at the time of this writing which could reveal the existence of *Left 4 Dead 3* and a new Source engine (the latter of which, to be fair, was already confirmed by Valve co-founder Gabe Newell late last year).

The speculation is born of a photo of a Valve developer's monitor allegedly taken by a member of *Dota 2*'s subreddit who was part of a tour group that was guided through Valve's offices. The photo was obviously scoured for clues, which revealed an entry (timestamped August 5th) that states: "[Source2] Restored L4D3's devtest unit test. Ran locally 6 times without an assert. There may be so..."

As you'd expect, it set the Internet alight. Valve writer Chet Faliszek said in an interview last year that they Valve may do a new *L4D* "sometime down the road", going on to clarify "like anything, I would say that to all of our games. So that's not a promise of when or where".

## Wii U sales still in the toilet, Iwata says don't blame the price

Nintendo's latest home console continues to perform poorly as the company releases its earnings report for the financial quarter ending 30 June 2013. In three months, only 160,000 Wii U consoles were sold throughout the globe. By comparison, the Wii sold 210,000 consoles during the same period.

Nintendo president Satoru Iwata insists that the price of the Wii U is not the main issue. He pointed towards the fact that the more expensive Deluxe edition is still outselling the Basic edition despite costing \$50 more. "The basic version should have sold a lot," he said, "but the fact of the



matter is that people are buying more of the premium version. So the issue is not there."

The issue, according to Iwata, remains the lack of Wii U titles. This is something the company aims to fix by the holiday season, when a ton of new games will release for the ailing console.

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~ Support Lines ~



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## Fez 2 cancelled, creator quits the gaming industry



Infamous indie game developer Phil Fish has left the gaming industry and cancelled the recently announced *Fez 2*. Fish, who is no stranger to the indignant wrath of the Internet, made the rash announcement shortly after an argument with GameTrailers journalist Marcus Beer. Beer had used a video blog episode to verbally attack both Phil Fish and Jonathan Blow (*Braid*) for their refusal to provide a comment on Microsoft's then rumoured policy shift that would allow indie developers to self-publish on the Xbox One. Beer retaliated to their snubbing of media requests by saying, "Gents, you were the guys who did *Indie Game: the Movie*. And some of you looked relatively normal in it; one of you looked like a total tosspot in it. But you can't have it both ways. You're successful game designers — you're 'indie' game designers — hurrah, good for you, you f\*\*\*\*\*g hipsters."

Beer's rant didn't end there; his three minute long diatribe accused Fish and Blow of being "self-styled kings of the indie genre" and for "bitching and moaning" about

legitimate press requests for comment. A couple of "wankers" and "f\*\*\*\*\*g assholes" were thrown in to really hammer home the point that Beer was upset by the snub.

Fish, being the volatile individual that he is, immediately took to Twitter to respond to Beer's taunts. His outbursts weren't exactly sanitary either, as he told Marcus Beer to go and kill himself (a *Futurama* reference) and called him an "inconsequential limey f\*\*k". The online argument ended with Fish tweeting "I f\*\*\*\*\*g hate this industry". A short while after that he again took to Twitter to announce his withdrawal from the gaming industry and the cancellation of *Fez 2*. In a later statement to website Polygon, Fish explained: "*Fez 2* is cancelled. I am done. I take the money and I run. This is as much as I can stomach. This isn't the result of any one thing, but the end of a long, bloody campaign. You win."

Phil Fish's Twitter account has since been set to private and he's provided no further statements to the media.

**"Anytime you want to make a big triple-A, you're spending, let's say \$100 million, you're not going to want to take a chance. It's got to be, I'm making the next *Call of Duty* or the *Assassin's Creed* and I know it's going to make 'X' amount, so we'll make money. I think that's the tougher thing."**

– *Ubisoft Toronto studio head Jade Raymond, speaking with Digital Spy about the rising cost of AAA game development, and how it's stifling innovation*

### Cop a feel

Despite the success met by fellow former *Sierra Quest* game developers on Kickstarter, the campaign for *Precinct* by *Police Quest* creator Jim Walls hasn't fared nearly as well. Maybe people just don't feel like setting up traffic cones on a busy highway, or perhaps there's a little (or a lot) of Kickstarter fatigue doing the rounds.

Unperturbed by the failure, Walls and his team pulled down the Kickstarter campaign and turned to a new and very interesting form of crowd-funding directly on the *Precinct* website. The system allows for backers of all pledge levels to receive the game at each stage of completion, and will accept pledges at four stages throughout development. At each stage, a product will be released: \$25K is a proof of concept; \$90K is a vertical slice; \$200K is a demo; and \$400K will see the final game launched. There are no T-shirts, posters or any of that fluff, just the game, although they're running a shop on the side to pull in extra funding.

Since the campaign will run for the entirety of the game's development cycle, it's possible that we're going to be in this for the long run, but at the time of writing they had garnered nearly \$10,000, so there's every chance that we'll at least see the proof of concept.



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## New Wolfenstein delayed

Bad news for fans of B.J. Blazkowicz and his particular brand of Nazi-disposing justice: the upcoming Wolfenstein reboot has been delayed. You can now expect to see *Wolfenstein: The New Order* sometime next year. Publisher Bethesda Softworks' VP of PR and marketing Pete Hines attributed the delay to splitting the game's development across console generations, as well as to add a final layer of always-appreciated polish to the game.

"Working on next-gen and current gen definitely has an impact, you're developing for two different things," said Hines to Polygon. "The fact that the next-gen stuff is still moving is also definitely a factor. But the most important thing was definitely just looking where it was at, what they needed to polish"

Hines went on to explain that the game has been in development at MachineGames for a hefty chunk of time, and that "you don't want to waste all that time and effort for the sake of a couple of months". Very wise thinking there, Mr Hines. The more we see of *The New Order*, the more excited we are to dig our old-school-loving teeth into it. So while we're sad to see the game delayed, we're also happy to wait a bit longer to get the best possible experience.



## Look & Listen

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SpongeBob SquarePants: Plankton's Robotic Revenge	October
Just Dance 2014	October
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	November

BDS

Pokémon X and Pokémon Y	October
Angry Birds Star Wars	November
Skylanders: Swap Force	November

## God of War II director returns to Sony

Corey Barlog is one of the big names behind the PlayStation 2 hit *God of War II*. Shortly after the game released in 2007, Barlog left the development team of Sony Santa Monica. Now, he's made a return to the studio to work on something new. Exactly what that something new might be is still very much under wraps. Given his history with a Sony franchise that stars a particularly angry Spartan, and given the fact that Sony is about to launch new hardware, we're kind of hoping for a *God of War* on the PlayStation 4.

Barlog is obviously playing it coy for now. Writing on the official PlayStation blog, Barlog said, "What am I working on, you ask? Good question. Sadly, I cannot tell you... yet. But I can say that it is freaking huge, and it will live up to the standards that I helped establish here at SMS."

# We need a hero!

Tribute Games – the studio behind the excellent action platformer based on *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World* – is back in the saddle with their return to the genre in the form of *Mercenary Kings*.

The game is a combination of classic side-scrolling platform game somewhere in the middle of *Megaman* and *Metal Slug*, and adds

in a healthy dose of RPG-like character and weapon customisation. As players make their way through each level, they will gather crafting materials that can be taken back to their camp and handed over to the skilled hands of various specialised artisans. As well as affecting your combat abilities, customised weapons will affect player speed, and there

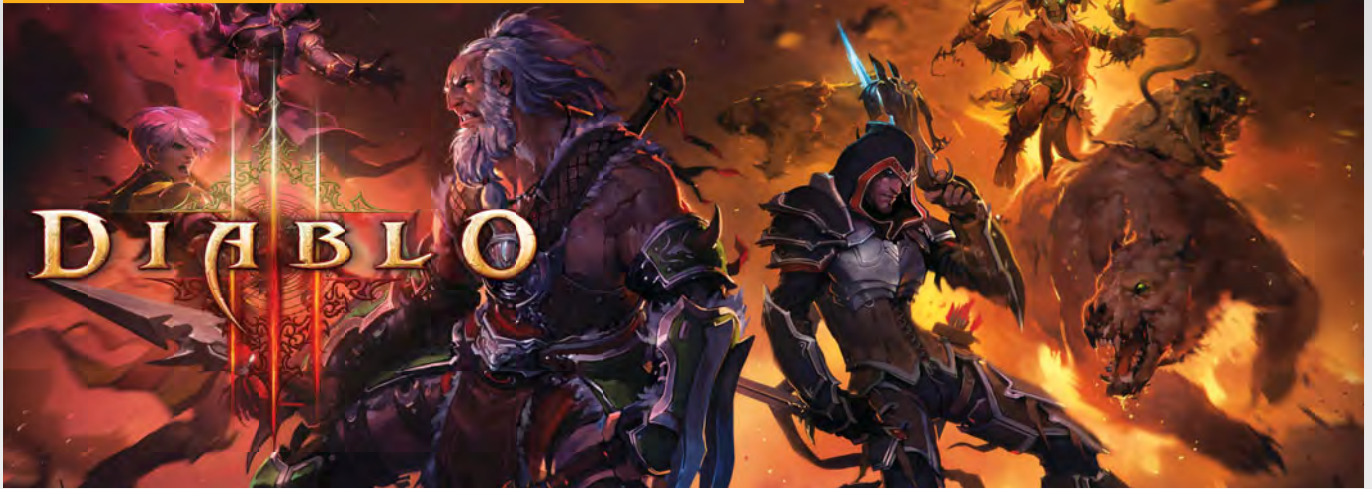
will be a number of visual customisations for those who like to play doll with their tough action heroes (hey, no judgement).

*Mercenary Kings* will support co-op play and is currently in alpha. You can buy and play the build as it currently stands through Steam Early Access, or wait for the final release on PC and PS4.



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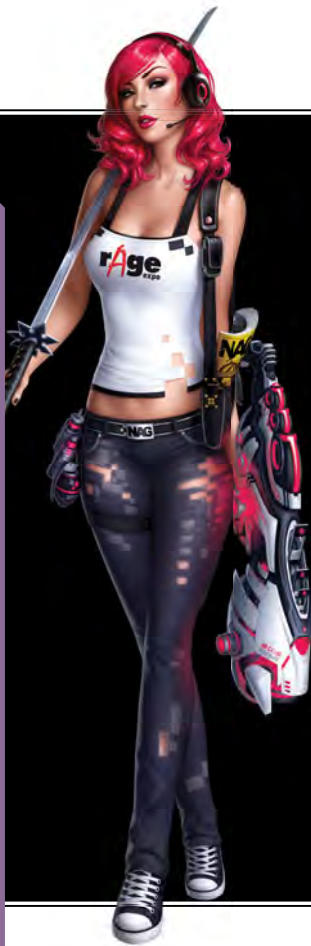
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# Foxy Roxy

Some call her the ultimate gamer grill. Then we smack them and tell them that Roxy isn't food (this is what eating too much of mom's meatloaf will do to you), she's the official rAge/NAG mascot. She was lovingly created in 2012 by South African illustrator Warren Louw for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of rAge. Seeing that we (much like the gaming industry) like to squeeze the blood out of every IP we create, we've got her working it hard in NAG each month. Her job is to hide somewhere in the magazine for you to find. Go, do it now!

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

## AUGUST WINNER



Dewald Pretorius, page 62

## THIS MONTH'S LOOT

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# 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 **Farming Simulator** for PS3 from Apex Interactive. Send your captions to [ed@nag.co.za](mailto:ed@nag.co.za) with the subject line "September caption".



**NAG's lame attempt at humour**  
Things were looking a bit rough after rAge weekend.



**Last months winner**  
"Hmm I thought he was getting a spray tan, it must be faulty" - Tshepi Mokoena



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# No next-gen Street Fighter for a while

With all the tension and excitement surrounding the impending next generation of gaming consoles, we bet that all you fighting game fans are just itching for a new *Street Fighter* – especially given the success of *Street Fighter IV*. Well, you'll have to stow your optimism in the bottom drawer, because series producer Yoshinori Ono says it ain't happening.

Okay, he said more than that; it seems that Capcom thinks that serious fighting game players wouldn't be willing or ready to make the financial commitment just yet, as they'd be "required to invest in a new console, game, and arcade stick" to play at a high level. This also applies to any developer who'd have to invest a lot of time and money in developing hardware and software for a new platform that will already have a high entry-point cost.

If you're scratching your head in confusion about the arcade stick thing, bear in mind that neither the

PS3 nor XBO will support fight sticks (or any controllers) from the current generation, so the man certainly has a point. That's not to say that we'll never see a next-gen *SF*, but right now a bit of hesitation from both the consumer and publisher camps is to be expected going into the next generation.



## Plays well with others

When Rockstar teased that they had huge plans for *GTA V*'s multiplayer component, we were expecting some cool features, but during a recent trailer they blew away all expectations.

Dubbed *Grand Theft Auto Online*, this standalone game mode will allow up to 16 players to play together in the massive world of Los Santos and entertain themselves with every activity already listed in the single-player mode. That's right: parachuting, playing golf, heisting banks, boosting cars and all those mad or mundane activities we've been going on about for months will all be doable.

*GTA Online* is such a big undertaking that Rockstar is delaying its release until the 1<sup>st</sup> of October – two weeks after the launch of *Grand Theft Auto V*. If that's getting your Spider Sense tingling, don't worry: *GTA Online* will be entirely free-to-play for all owners of *GTA V*.

## RELEASE LIST

Dates subject to change without notice

### September week 1

Turbo: Super Stunt Squad	360 / 3DS / DS PS3 / Wii
Diablo III	360 / PS3
Guild Wars 2: Heroic Edition	PC
Killzone: Mercenary	PSV
Disney Infinity Starter Pack	Wii U
Farming Simulator 2013	360 / PS3

### September week 2

Puppeteer	PS3
Total War: Rome II	PC
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 Remix	PS3
NHL 14	360 / PS3
The Sims 3: Movie Stuff	PC

### September week 3

Grand Theft Auto V	360 / PS3
LEGO Legends of Chima: Laval's Journey	DS
Hot Wheels: World's Best Driver	360 / DS / PS3
Pro Evolution Soccer 2014	360 / PC / PS3 / PSP

### September week 4

FIFA 14	360 / 3DS / PC / PS2 PS3 / PSP / PSV / Wii
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### September unconfirmed

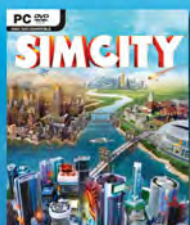
LEGO Friends	3DS
Sacred 3	360 / PC / PS3
Payday 2	PC



R149.90 ea



R169.90 ea



R199.90 ea

# DIGITAL DOWNLOADS



The background of the title screen features a stylized, semi-transparent illustration of a beach scene. On the left, a Ferris wheel is visible. In the center, the ocean waves meet a sandy shore. On the right, a city skyline with several skyscrapers is depicted. The sky is a light, hazy blue. The title text is rendered in a bold, white, blocky font with a thick black outline. The word 'Grand' is on the top line, 'Theft' is on the second line, and 'Auto' is on the third line. The Roman numeral 'V' is significantly larger and more ornate, featuring a green mesh pattern and a white banner that wraps around its base with the word 'FIVE' written on it. A small 'TM' trademark symbol is located to the right of the 'Auto' text.

**Grand  
Theft  
Auto** **V**

**17 SEPTEMBER**







THIS

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It's been a ride, hasn't it? This generation of video gaming is drawing to a close; it'll soon usher in a new wave of technology, game franchises, debates and debacles, and it's a hell of an exciting time to be a gamer. Much has changed in the last eight years – not all of it good, mind you – so we decided to take a look into the seventh generation of video gaming, collect our own personal experiences, and share them with you.

Who'd have thought that the fighting game genre would have such a strong revival?



# Where'd the last eight years go?

**"STORIES OF IMAGINATION TEND TO UPSET THOSE WITHOUT ONE" – TERRY PRATCHETT**

More so than any other gaming generation, the one that's moving into history now has produced stories that have expanded the scope of the stories games are capable of telling, stories they're *allowed* to tell.

Now, don't get us wrong – that's not to say that previous generations of games haven't woven incredible narratives filled with memorable meaning, because they certainly have and many remain fondly embedded in the minds of gamers everywhere. This generation stands above the rest, however, for furthering the idea that our video game characters can be believable, can be fallible, can be *human*. In both the indie space and the AAA bazaar, gaming's stories have showcased their ability to affect us with masterfully delivered, powerful fiction.

Two mainstream games immediately spring to mind, partly thanks to their having emerged recently, but mostly because they genuinely left us reeling with emotion right up until their credits began to roll, and well after that: *BioShock Infinite* (and its named forebears deserve special mention as well) and *The Last of Us*.

While *BioShock* is a more surreal, eccentric experience, it still dealt with very mature themes of racism, totalitarianism,

religious extremism and other -isms in between making you care about the world it's set in, the people who inhabit it, and the unforgettable duo of Booker and Elizabeth. Similarly, *The Last of Us* told a bleak tale of survival in a world gone mad in the post-apocalypse, creating a very real, immensely poignant relationship between its two featured characters, Ellie and Joel.

Indies have left not a dry eye in the house with such incredible, minimalist, art-house exhibitions as *Dear Esther* and *To the Moon*. What initially introduced itself as a standard military shooter evolved into *Spec Ops: The Line* – a potent dissection of the effects of war on the human psyche. *Papa & Yo* is a video game exploration of an abusive relationship between a son and his alcoholic father, and the splashes of love and interdependence they nevertheless share. And let's not forget the emergent stories instigated by players in games like *DayZ* and *Eve Online*. There are far too many games to list here, but we're grateful for each and every one of the ones that demolished narrative boundaries.

## SHIFTING TIDES

If you're an indie game developer, there was no generation more receptive and embracing than this. From Steam to Ouya, XBLIG to Kickstarter – the last few years

## BIGGEST SURPRISES

### MINECRAFT

It may be *du jour* to say it now, but arguably the biggest surprise this generation was *Minecraft*. It's easy in hindsight to say, "well sure, digital LEGO bricks and an infinite procedural world to explore, why wouldn't it become the next gamer religion?" But nobody expected it to get *this* big, complete with its own yearly convention.

### THE FIGHTING GAME REVIVAL

While the world busied itself with recreating their favourite thing in blocky chunks (or waiting for Survival mode to improve), the fighting game genre saw an incredible revival. First with *Street Fighter IV*, nine years after the last instalment in the franchise. Then with *Mortal Kombat 9*, which shocked people more with the fact that it's incredibly good, than with its violent and gruesome finishing moves. From here, many fighting game franchises saw a return, with a few new ones like *Skullgirls* appearing on the fringe.

### DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION AND DLC

The full ramifications of which is still years away from being fully understood, the rapid uptake of digital distribution and DLC is unprecedented. We've gone from a physical media dominated industry to one where nearly all content appears on digital services the same day, even on consoles, in just one generation. Perhaps it shouldn't come as much of a surprise. Digital services can discount product faster and easier, being more nimble and responsive to market trends. As for DLC, in spite of vocal outcry, downloadable content appears to be selling to such a degree, brazen publishers will even slice content out of a game to sell at a later date.

### THE DEATH TOLL

Perhaps the saddest surprise from this generation, is how fast developers and publishers are shuttered. More than ever before, people are realising that making games has become expensive and dangerous: a side effect of a booming industry few consider.



have seen a massive rise in not just the number of indie game developers and games, but how seriously this side of the industry is taken by the public. It's an awesome time to be innovative and daring – to say "bugger the publishers" and just get out there and make games.

This was all made possible by a trail of developments from throughout the industry. Microsoft opened the floodgates for any independent developer to get their games (often of questionable quality) onto their Xbox LIVE Indie Games marketplace, but Sony went further and offered these small studios a place on their main PlayStation Store. Wars were waged between platform holders for exclusivity of some of the more promising games, and some titles suffered for it while others flourished.

And then Kickstarter came along. The concept of crowd-funding had been around for a while before, but when Tim Schafer launched his Double Fine Adventure campaign and pulled in nearly \$3.5 million from 87,000 backers (over 60,000 of which were new to the concept of crowd-funding), suddenly the rules of video game development changed. Studios continued to rake in millions of dollars in pledges – without a hint of a publisher in sight.

Between the overall shift in taking indies more seriously to increased accessibility of game development tools (although you still have to be a decent game designer if you want to get anywhere), we're likely to see this part of the games industry reach even greater heights in the years to come.

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

We're coming out of the longest generations to date, with the biggest install and user base. But, the industry is also fractured into almost mutually exclusive sectors. Mobile, browser-based, and free-to-play are all spinning up and gaining traction. The PC market is blazing new ground with a steadily renewing interest in the PC as a primary gaming platform thanks to fierce competition between digital services. Meanwhile, the traditional console sector faces a problem, coming out of a generation where it was bigger than ever before. But it got big at the cost of severe homogenization.

Console gaming has contracted around a small but profitable number of annual franchise properties (that are on the verge of becoming services). Because the cost and complexity of churning out these games on this scale every year prevents experimentation, it's forced game design to take a back seat to production values and presentation. Publishers are banking on the idea that they've locked in an audience that wants the same thing over and over, but in a fresh package with a fresh story hook each time. It's cost-effective to have generic templates you can put new colours of paint over.

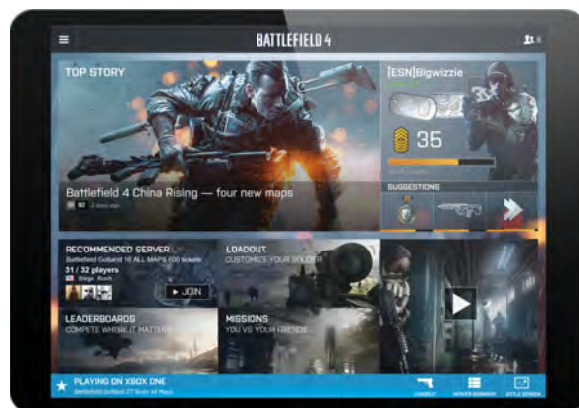
While all this was building up, the industry has seen the most studio closures in its history: hundreds of small, medium and some large studios have been shuttered. Most were closed due to a lack of



Telltale Games' *The Walking Dead* was Barksin's biggest surprise of this generation, the character's plight had him mesmerized from start to finish.



*The Last of Us* told a bleak tale of survival in a world gone mad in the post-apocalypse, creating a very real, immensely poignant relationship between its two featured characters, Ellie and Joel.





Mikit0707's pick for memorable moments was *BioShock Infinite*. At one point he honestly thought his heart was going to burst with sadness or something. Check the boxout to the right for the full story.

**MIKTAR'S MOMENT**  
To pick one moment from eight years of incredible gaming experiences isn't easy. But I kept coming back to *Journey*. Not everyone "gets" *Journey*. Kind of like how some people don't get scared during horror films, not everyone will get "feelings" from *Journey*. But it gave me *all* the feels. That first rush of finding a stranger in the desert, working together without being able to communicate. The final stumbling climb up the mountain. The elation and head-rush of reaching nirvana, where for one brief moment, two people share the same zen-like space. *Journey* gave me emotions and memories I'll take with me to my grave and perhaps, further along.

**MIKIT0707'S MOMENT**  
Perhaps it's just because this was fairly recent, or because I'm an unremitting fanboy of the *BioShock* series, but there was a moment at the end of *BioShock Infinite* that floored me. **[MASSIVE SPOILERS AHEAD]** No, it wasn't the whole revelation of the parallel world theory that Elizabeth spends ten minutes explaining; it wasn't even the revelation that Booker IS Comstock. It was that sudden arrival in Rapture and that touching moment when Elizabeth watches Songbird drowning. When she says to the struggling creature "just let go" I honestly thought my heart was going to burst with sadness. When did NPCs become some utterly convincing?

**BARKSKIN'S MOMENT**  
It's obviously tough to think of any one standout moment amongst the many of this generation, but I'd have to say practically the whole of Telltale Games' *The Walking Dead*. Each episode brought new revelations, new choices that made you sick to have to make them, each one a standout moment in its own right. By the time I reached the game's final episode, it had me so carefully mesmerised by the plight of its characters that I could hardly bear to battle onwards to what was always going to be a grim conclusion. And all this from a game with relatively scarce player interaction. Aren't video games just incredible?

profitability, like Team Bondi, Junction Point, Bizarre Creations, Zipper, Studio Liverpool, Radical Entertainment and more. Others went dark due to corporate shenanigans, such as THQ's financial finagling landing them in utter bankruptcy, their assets sold off to the highest bidder.

Generation 7 left us with this: a fast, powerful, bullet-train of an industry, taking passengers at speeds never thought possible. But nobody is checking to make sure there's enough track up ahead, or even where the track is going.

### WE DON'T NEED YOUR SOCIAL HERE

While we're sure there are a great many gamers who love the fact that they can't step near a game without being bombarded by thirty thousand varieties of immersion-killing, Facebook-style social network integration, we're now officially over it. And even though there are still those among us at NAG who worship Achievement and Trophy hoarding, the majority of us have had enough of them – especially when they pop up in particularly engrossing games and rudely remove us from all that sexy immersion. We'd like to thank *The Last of Us* for making the effort to avoid doing that.

We don't care that you just killed thirteen angry Rancors dressed in tutus while riding

a flying pony upside down (awesome though that may be) and were awarded with 13,000 Life Points for your troubles. Oh, you've got a Steam Level of 76 because you've bought every single game on the Steam store twice and have officially been given an honorary award for having spent more money on Steam sales than the whole of Zambia does annually on plumbing? You're going to have to get your validation for that from someone else. And no, Bob E. Snurfleherder, we don't want to accept your friend request so we can spend all day uselessly chatting to you about games rather than actually playing them.

Perhaps we're being fools, but we like to think that the time and resources spent developing, polishing and integrating things like RaceBuddies and FightLog and ToiletJournal would really be more impactful were they actually pumped into making the actual games themselves better. And no, before you use that excuse, those services do not actually make your game better. On the other hand, we love multiplayer services that DO enhance and streamline the experience for people keen to join a few multiplayer games with friends – but we'd rather not be reminded that we should "Like" the fact that Friend X just leapt across Impossible Chasm Y.



GeometriX grinned like a dumbstruck idiot playing *Civilization IV*.



### RISE OF THE RHYTHM GAMES

It's not often you get an entire gaming genre rising and dying within a single console generation, but this is the case when it comes to the rhythm genre. Technically speaking, this genre began slightly before this generation, but its rise in popularity can be attributed to hardware like the PlayStation 3, Wii and Xbox 360. The genre encompasses titles from Konami's *Dance Dance Revolution* to series juggernauts like *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*. Heck, it even includes PSP exclusives like *Patapon* and the less popular peripheral-based rhythm games like *DJ Hero*.

Many would argue that the rhythm game genre isn't dead just yet; just look at how successful Ubisoft's *Just Dance* series remains. Still, the vast majority of people think *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero* when they hear "rhythm games", and that branch of this diverse genre is a shadow of what it once was.

You could trace the rise of the rhythm games back to peripheral manufacturer RedOctane. They were responsible for developing hardware for Konami's arcade game *GuitarFreaks*. What they learnt on hardware development for that game, they applied to their own game with the help of developer Harmonix; *Guitar Hero* was born and the rest is pretty much history. Side note: yes, PC gamers, we can hear you bellyaching about PC game *Frets on Fire* and how that was probably the first, but that game never quite reached equal levels of popularity.

*Guitar Hero's* sudden rise in popularity came at about the same time Activision was swallowing IPs and developers whole. They bought RedOctane and set Neversoft on *Guitar Hero* development duty. At more or less the same time, Harmonix went off to develop *Rock Band* with MTV and publisher Electronic Arts. The rivalry between publishers Activision and EA might be one of the contributing factors as to why this genre imploded through market saturation.

### THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

The great farce of this generation is mandatory Internet reliance – the fact that you need to Internet because of the Internet. Let's begin with DLC. Somehow we've gone from getting free downloadable units in *Total Annihilation* each month as a "thank you for buying our game" to being charged twenty bucks for a skin on a gun. Come on. Remember when *Call of Duty: World at War* map packs were sponsored by NVIDIA and Intel? That was cool but only because Activision couldn't figure out how to charge PC players like their Xbox counterparts – now it's just pay to play for a few maps through Steam. *Guitar Hero* took it a step further with weekly DLC in the shape of new songs; fair enough if you don't like Lady Gaga. The sad thing is this is entirely our fault; the more we keep eating this garbage the more they'll keep serving it up.

Next up is DRM, the reason why we have DRM and online activations is because of the Internet and piracy – and the Internet is being used to combat this. Publishers, and developers less so, perceive a great threat with piracy and their sales. The irony of the situation is that this makes playing games for the honest consumers harder than those pirating the games. *Diablo III* is the most public culmination of this problem. There is a rating system linked to the amount of hoop jumping (bullshit) gamers must endure to actually play their games. Extreme cases involve forcing you to create a separate unique account with some publisher's content system to play a game you spent money on a few minutes ago. Making matters worse is then receiving a mail from the same system telling you that your account has been hacked and you must change all your passwords. WTF... **NAG**

## MEMORABLE MOMENTS

### REDTIDE'S MOMENT

The thing that keeps popping into my head is playing *Portal 2* online with Barkskin. We teamed up online with Steam voice chat and proceeded to solve all the puzzles with our "bigger brain". It was epic and fun and filled with plenty of laughs. The other moment that shares the spot is playing *Call of Duty: World at War* Zombies with the guys in the office. It got so bad at one point the rest of the office staged a stay away – the funny thing is we didn't even notice (or care). Yes, I get two defining moments because I'm the boss.

### GEOMETRIX'S MOMENT

I'm going to skirt right in at the start of this generation and mention *Civilization IV*: a single moment that will forever be etched in my memory: booting to the main menu and just... listening.

The haunting sound of *Baba Yetu* struck me with awe. I sat there, gob hanging open like an imbecile, unable to move or click or do anything. I let the entire length of the song play out, and then I took a breath, pulled myself together, and launched myself into the game with the biggest, dumbest grin on my face.



COMING TO CONSOLES

3/9/2013

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RELEASE DATE / November 2013  
 PLATFORM / XBO  
 GENRE / Action  
 DEVELOPER / Capcom Vancouver  
 WEBSITE / [www.xbox.com/xbox-one/games/dead-rising-3](http://www.xbox.com/xbox-one/games/dead-rising-3)  
 PUBLISHER / Microsoft Studios

# Dead Rising 3

A next-gen zombie sandbox bristling with detail

Nick Ramos is an everyday kind of guy. Before the zombie apocalypse, his day job was fixing cars in one of the local Los Perdidos mechanic shops; now, as the game's producer Mike Jones puts it oh so dramatically, his day job involves surviving and finding a way out of the city. In six days, the government will bomb Los Perdidos to the ground, and Nick doesn't want to be around when that happens.

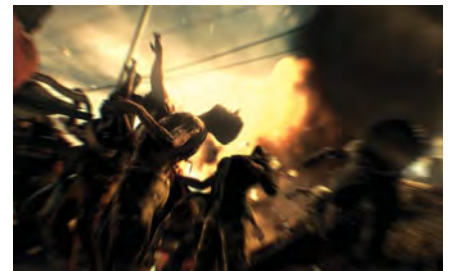
Previous *Dead Rising* games always felt a little hit or miss. The first game's bloody, open and highly enjoyable setting and gameplay were often mired by phenomenally difficult moments. And then there was that fixed 72 hour countdown that would trigger the story events at certain times. All that really did was make you feel rushed, which was a shame because *Dead Rising* was at its best when you were exploring and goofing around trying to find new weapons with which to dismember the endless waves of undead. With those criticisms still ringing in Capcom's

ears, even though some were addressed in *Dead Rising 2*, *Dead Rising 3* actively seems to encourage you to explore; to wander off the beaten path and forget about progressing the story for a while. That is largely thanks to

**"it was disgusting and visceral but oh so appealing, like any guilty pleasure."**

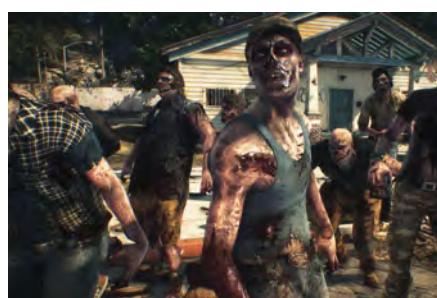
how much detail the Capcom Vancouver team is cramming into the design of fictional Southern Californian city of Los Perdidos. The whole city is open; you can walk way off into the distance to explore every nook and cranny you can possibly find. All of the buildings have been hand crafted and you can explore the interior of all of them. The whole city is just begging to be traversed and ransacked for supplies, weapons and ammunition.

That attention to detail carries over to the individual zombies as well. Capcom Vancouver has accurately modelled every piece of each zombie's anatomy – yes, even the insides have been modelled for that extra macabre visual fidelity when it comes to dismembering the undead. "We've actually



Hold still – you've got a little something on your cheek.

If you use SmartGlass to connect your phone or tablet to your Xbox One, Nick will find a PDA belonging to the Zombie Defence and Control. The ZDC is kind of like a zombie FBI organisation, and therefore the PDA will prove useful; like for calling in artillery strikes! There's also a set of SmartGlass exclusive side missions.







Thanks to Kinect 2.0, any ambient noises in your house while you're playing will be "heard" by the zombies in the game, causing them to shamle towards Nick.

modelled all the insides," Jones proudly exclaims during our presentation, "bones and guts and everything." As he says this, the developer playing the game in front of us sends a Sledge Saw (a combo weapon created using one of the many in-game blueprints and combining a sledge hammer with a cement saw) tearing vertically up a nearby zombie's midriff. "You can see ribcages, teeth and eyeballs." We could; it was disgusting and visceral but oh so appealing, like any guilty pleasure.

With a city as large as Los Perdidos comes the necessity to refocus on the game's vehicles. Cars have always featured in *Dead Rising* games, but they're far more integral to gameplay mechanics this time around. All of the cars have had full physics programmed into them. Zombies will still attack you and hang onto whatever you're driving, shifting the vehicle's centre of gravity and forcing you to compensate for the change in weight distribution. They'll also try to reach through windows to grab Nick; if they manage to you'll need to shove them off by performing a pushing gesture at Kinect. Naturally there's a ton of different cars to be found in the game, ranging from motorcycles to SUVs, and steamrollers to forklifts. While a larger vehicle like the SUV might come with more ramming power thanks to its greater weight, it also comes with a larger surface area, meaning more zombies can hang onto the car at once.

A lot of *Dead Rising* staples will make a



return. You'll still encounter other survivors and you'll be able to get them to join you as you journey to the various safe houses that can be unlocked throughout Los Perdidos. You'll also still encounter human enemies, or Psychos as they've always been referred to in the series. You'll gain experience points (or PP – Prestige Points) to unlock new skills split across seven categories: Inventory, Mechanic, Agility, Smarts, Ranged, Melee and Life. Skill Books can still be found throughout the city to add character buffs depending on which book you choose to have active. And yes, you'll still be able to dress up the main character in all sorts of ridiculous outfits; throughout the last half of the live presentation, Nick Ramos was running around in a shark costume, the head of which was later swapped out for a Blanka head. As for co-op, which made its debut in *Dead Rising 2*, that returns as well, however there'll be a second character for player 2 to use. At time of writing, Capcom Vancouver is yet to unveil who that

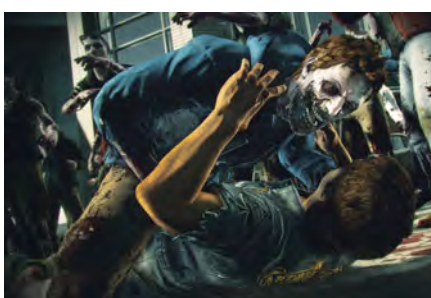
character is.

For those wondering whether the continual time progression feature has made the jump to *Dead Rising 3*, the answer is yes and no. It depends on what skill level you choose to play the game in: regular means you can progress as you like with no time restrictions; Nightmare mode means you'll need to shift it in order to complete the story before the US government drops bombs on Los Perdidos.

Whenever new console hardware launches, everyone has that one title that manages to nudge them out of their delicate teetering and send them careening down the slope towards early adopter. *Dead Rising 3* is pretty much that Xbox One title for me. It looks like one massive, festering sandbox stuffed with zombies and endless potential for some immersive water cooler moments, and I'm not quite over the whole zombie craze just yet.

**NAG**

- Mikit0707





RELEASE DATE / November 2013  
PLATFORM / 360 / PC / PS3  
GENRE / Action-adventure  
DEVELOPER / MercurySteam  
WEBSITE / [www.konami-castlevania.com](http://www.konami-castlevania.com)  
PUBLISHER / Konami Digital Entertainment

# Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2

## The final chapter in MercurySteam's Castlevania masterpiece

*Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2* picks up right where the first game left off. Technically speaking, it picks up right after the epilogue that plays at the end of the credits; you did watch the epilogue right? It was kind of a massive twist and showed Gabriel in the present day as Dracula himself, skulking in the belfry of a cathedral. Zobek finds him and promises to release him from his mortality if he can help stop the return of Satan and his acolytes.

Our hands-on time with the game played out during the one brief section that is set in the past. During this sequence, Gabriel is the young Dracula and he's very powerful. The opening portions introduced us to new fighting mechanics and the basics of feeding off stunned enemies and utilising focused or group attacks. Gabriel (we should probably call him Dracula from now on) has access to new weapons called the Chaos Claws and the Void Sword. The former is mapped to the

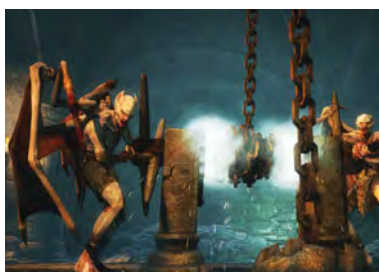
R1 button while the latter is mapped to the L1 button. They're meant to be easy to switch between in the middle of combat, and indeed they are. Coupled with Dracula's whip

attacks (mapped to X and Y buttons), there's a lot of scope for combos and tactics. The Chaos Claws are required to break sections of

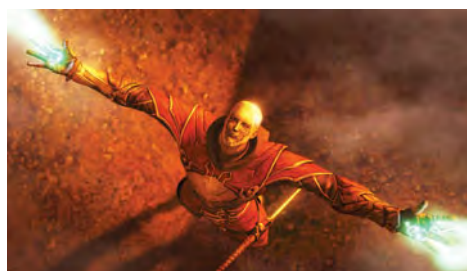
enemy armour so as to land real damage, while the Void Sword is useful for leeching life from enemies. Well timed blocking can result in stunning the enemy, which leaves them open to being grabbed and fed on to restore health.

Combat in the first *Lords of Shadow* required a certain amount of finesse to master. It was fast, but it often suffered thanks to the fixed camera. Now that *Lords of Shadow 2* has moved on to a free camera, the combat feels far more refined and comfortable to control. The original was one of this generation's most under-appreciated titles; we're very excited for the epic conclusion.

**"Well timed blocking can result in stunning the enemy, which leaves them open to being grabbed and fed on to restore health."**



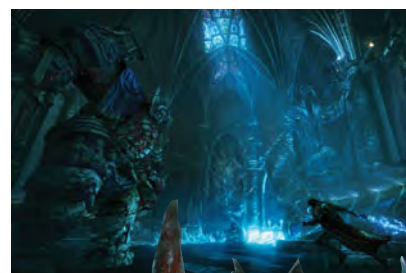
**This is what happens if you don't pay your furniture account.**



The Nintendo 3DS game *Castlevania: Mirror of Fate* acted as a filler between the original *Lords of Shadow* and this upcoming sequel. Dave Cox, the studio head for Konami's European branch assured us that knowledge of the events in *Mirror of Fate* is not a requirement. There will be some story recaps in *Lords of Shadow 2*.



Scale of the set-pieces is still staggering. At one point, we were platforming along a lumbering colossus that was busy ripping apart a castle with its bare hands.



# Interview

with **Eric Alvarez**

(studio head at MercurySteam) and  
**Dave Cox** (head of studio for Konami EU)

**NAG:** One of the things we loved about the first game was the variation in environments. With the sequel set entirely in one castle and a city, how much variation is there going to be?

**DC:** Well that was a really important aspect of the first game, so although we are basing this game in two key areas, within those key areas there's a huge amount of variety in terms of ambience, visuals and things you can do. We thought it was really important to keep that variety. Although the game is delivered in a story-driven way, at some point in the game you're going to realise that you don't need to follow that story, you can go somewhere else; you can go down that corridor or alleyway and see what's down there. We want to give the player a lot of surprises in terms of exploration.

**NAG:** So it's more open than the last *Lords of Shadow*, which was quite linear in exploration?

**DC:** Yeah, it was linear, but I wouldn't want to call this "open world" – it's the wrong word.

**EA:** Yes it's not "open world"; we're not ticking those boxes. This is a sequel to *Lords of Shadow*, which was a heavily story-driven, linear game. Many fans said "ok, that's a good game, but it would be better if we were able to explore more freely." So we did exactly that. We built a new engine to accommodate the entire world in a single loading time so there're no loading screens. In terms of what you asked, yes there will still

be variation in environments. This game is going to be considerably darker than the first one. Considering it takes place in just one night, you can imagine that the environments are going to be far more dark and gloomy. So forget about shiny, sunny forests; we're playing a different card this time, because the story has to go in this direction.

**DC:** There's more freedom for the player. This time, everything is seamless, so if you want to go back, you can walk back to all the areas you've explored already. If you wanted to get from one side of the city to other, it would require a huge amount of your time.

**NAG:** So a renewed focus on exploration.

**EA:** Well, the focus of the game continues to be combat. It's probably the aspect that has been given the biggest enhancement.

**NAG:** The biggest adjustment to the combat?

**EA:** The biggest? First of all: camera. It's a free camera this time and it's a massive, massive enhancement. But at the same time if you don't touch the camera, it works. It will intelligently aim at the enemy that is the most dangerous to you or the one that you are attacking, or even the enemy that it thinks you're going to attack... [Laughing]

**DC:** [laughing] Yeah, it can read your mind now!

**EA:** We also refined important things like the

enemy tells: when an enemy is about to do something special, something dangerous or something that needs to draw your attention. Those events are now far easier for the player to detect when an enemy is going to do an unblockable attack or when the enemy can be blocked or when you have to use dodge controls. We've taken the combat from the first game and refined it to beyond what we think people will be expecting. **NAG**

- Mikit0707

# Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare

PopCap's surprise announcement looks set to be another classic

One of the biggest surprises to come out of E3 2013 was PopCap's reveal of a co-operative team-based, third-person shooter set in the *Plants vs. Zombies* universe. Deliberately ripping off another big EA series, *Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare* was introduced to the world through a trailer that channelled the distorted, six beat bass riff that's become synonymous with the *Battlefield* series. While EA's *Battlefield* keeps the very serious military shooter space covered, *Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare* looks set to just have a bit of fun. We also might be detecting a sly reference to a competitor's military shooter series in that title, but maybe we're just reading a little too much into things?

We've seen a live, four-player demo of the

game in action, and we have to admit we might be a bit over-excited about this one. Think *Monday Night Combat* meets *Gears of War* Horde mode meets *Plants vs. Zombies*

**"Think *Monday Night Combat* meets *Gears of War* Horde mode meets *Plants vs. Zombies* and you might be on to what PopCap has in mind with this game."**

and you might be on to what PopCap has in mind with this game. Each of the typical *Plants vs. Zombies* plants takes on a different role on the battlefield.

The Cactus is your sniper class; the Sunflower is your medic; the Peashooter is your soldier class, etcetera. The game features numerous familiar plants from the first tower defence game, but it will also include some of the new ones from the upcoming *Plants vs. Zombies 2*.

At the start of each game you need to put down a garden so that you have a base to defend against the waves of zombies. Each of the plants is capable of two special

The Cactus is the game's sniper class. It can call a Garlic Drone to fly around the battlefield performing reconnaissance and making light attacks. The Garlic Drone can, however, be used to call in an incredibly powerful Corn Strike. Obviously.



attacks or abilities, as well as one rooted ability. For example, the Peashooter can place Pea Turret plants to help fend off attacks; it can also root itself to the spot to drastically increase its rate of fire with the Gatling Gun upgrade. The Sunflower medic plant can place down Marigolds to attack enemies with a weaker rate than the Peashooter's Pea Turrets, but Marigolds are able to heal other nearby plants. The Sunflower's rooted attack is a solar powered laser with a massive rate of damage.

*Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare* will feature up to 24-player online battles, and considering the class-based emphasis on co-operative play, we're guessing that the zombies will be playable as well so as to enable team-based competitive online matches.

There are still a bunch of unanswered questions about this game. While PopCap was a little coy considering how new this reveal was, it sounds as if the game will feature a single-player portion as well. As to what format the game will take, downloadable or disc-based at retail, is still up for debate; we pushed for answers but the PopCap rep leading the presentation wasn't budging. **NAG**

- Mikit0707



As with all upcoming Electronic Arts games, *Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare* is being built on the Frostbite 3 engine. The result is a gloriously detailed, Saturday morning cartoon kind of feel.



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# Project Spark

## Making a game out of making a game



RELEASE DATE / Q4 2013  
 PLATFORM / 360 / PC / XBO  
 GENRE / Game creation tool  
 DEVELOPER / Team Dakota  
 WEBSITE / www.joinprojectspark.com  
 PUBLISHER / Microsoft Studios

At NAG we're enthusiastic supporters of everything that gets put, thrown or accidentally dropped in the drawer labelled "indie". We've got a dedicated section in the magazine for local developers, called home\_coded, which will coalesce at

rAge with an "indie village". Most of us at the office have some kind of cash tied up in Kickstarter projects and other, independent projects like *Starbound* and *Star Citizen*; we're even making our own indie game of sorts for rAge (well Geoff is, really). We unabashedly love indie because it represents where gaming began and of course some of our idle fantasies of making games instead of writing about them. This job is fun but we think making games will be more fun; we're completely wrong of course but let us dream.

This is the shared dream of most gamers, we (gamers in general) love our hobby; it's our passion and because of our unique metal makeup (generalising here) most of us feel that we could do a better job. That is until

we hit the actual work and the mathematics and the time it takes to draw ten frames of good looking jumping animation. It's not easy starting from scratch so the universe has, over the years, given us tools of

**"It's not easy starting from scratch so the universe has, over the years, given us tools of varying degrees of complexity to help us make games."**

varying degrees of complexity to help us make games. This started long ago with text-based adventure game creators and even saw various game making tools pop into existence for those 8-bit classics like the Commodore 64 and Apple II. These game creation tools all have one thing in common – you have to be dedicated and smart to use them. With time and brains being two key ingredients not many Joe gamers had the chops to see a project to completion; resulting in countless unfinished ideas, half-baked projects and short-lived careers in game development. Even today these tools are complicated and require significant effort to use. Perhaps this is why casual creative tools and games like *Garry's Mod*, *Minecraft* and PlayStation's *LittleBigPlanet* are so successful – they



provide an outlet for all this pent-up but directionless creativity.

Now Microsoft is getting a chance to impress with *Project Spark*, and players can look forward to collaborative online play, content sharing and even improving on or remixing what others have already created...

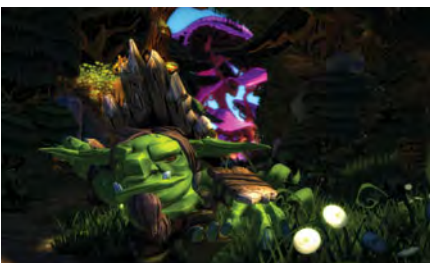
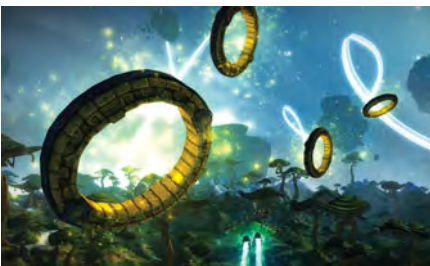
Seen for the first time at this year's E3, *Project Spark* looks like it just might finally bridge the gap between lazy gamers and their fantasies of producing something other than a permanent dent on the couch and a pile of pizza boxes. A "something" that's truly great and creative, perhaps even providing inspiration to other gamers around the world.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

*Project Spark* is an open world digital canvas driven by a visual coding language on steroids where anything is possible, and that's just according to the sales pitch from Microsoft. In English it means you start with a blank, flat and featureless world and by using smart editing tools make a game others can play. If you're new to the world of game creation software there will be a "build your own adventure" mode called crossroads to get you started. This mode is aimed at inexperienced players where general ideas are automatically turned into a playable experience after a series of menu-



*Project Spark* has been gestating in secret for around two years.



based choices made by the player. If you prefer a surprise, there is a random mode where themes, characters, environments, enemies, quests and even side-quests from the creation palette are thrown together as a cohesive playable experience. This all highlights that *Project Spark* is designed to allow players to jump in where they feel most comfortable. For example, if you only want to add a single race track to someone else's karting game you can, or if you like, you can overhaul the kart racer and turn it into something with vintage airplanes and floating cities. All objects in the game can be broken apart and glued together to make new objects – the developers claim they've already created X-wings and TIE fighters.

But back to the flat canvas; from here you can raise and lower the landscape, change the time of day and decide on the setting. Desert, arctic and woodlands are the current examples and it has been hinted at that additional themes might be handled as micro transactions or DLC. The art style is whimsical fantasy but with the right kind of lighting and a bit of imagination anything is possible. For example there is a *Project Spark* version of *Limbo* made by simply adjusting the lighting and viewing angle of the camera.

Once the landscape is done players can add features such as trees, vines and even

tunnels through areas of the world they've just created. The texturing is smart and as you paint from hills, over cliffs and into valleys the texture painter adjusts, correctly leaving behind a blended and realistic looking world that takes minutes to create. During this part of the process everything is handled by a contextual brush passing over a smart canvas, a large brush means large objects will be created such as bigger types of trees, for example. All the clever stuff is taken care of leaving users to focus on creativity.

Once you're happy with where you'll be playing you can add a main character. Everything is up for tweaking; changing from third-person perspective to first is a menu away. Changing what each button on the controller does is equally simple with visual "when" (if) and "do" (then) statements. For instance, when the A button is pressed the main character must jump, from there you can specify what kind of jump or how high. The system is icon driven which makes it quick and easy to understand logically. The depth of the coding system allows for very complex control or very simple control – it's all up to the player. Part of the coding process is the brain system. Everything in the game has a brain. Rocks just lay on the ground until you tell them that when the player gets closer they must follow the main character around. This following action can be jumping or rolling or a combination of both. Of course this gets more complicated when you add multiple characters and their complex interactions. You can even get your new pet rock to attack enemies.

The game is expected around the end of the year and for those parents out there concerned about little Johnny flying around on a giant penis in boob land there is a curated mode for children aged 13 and under. As for the rest of us expect the unexpected but don't get so lost in admiring what others have been creating and forget to do your bit too. **NAG**

- RedTide

# Cube World

The start of something great



RELEASE DATE / TBA  
 PLATFORM / PC  
 GENRE / Open world / Role-playing game  
 DEVELOPER / Picorama  
 WEBSITE / picorama.com/cubeworld  
 PUBLISHER / Picorama

*Cube World* is currently in alpha (which means "very early testing phase").

You can play around with the alpha if you pre-purchase the game, which is how *Minecraft* handled early access as well. Alpha software, like it says on the tin, is unstable, can crash, lose data, and doesn't have all the functionality planned for the final product. Even in alpha, *Cube World* is already impressive and packed with working (although sometimes flaky) features.

While *Cube World* may share a cube-like aesthetic with *Minecraft*, it is a different kind of game. You can't build structures in *Cube World* by harvesting or manipulating the terrain like you do in *Minecraft*. *Cube World* focuses on exploration, combat, loot, finding and taming pets, and delving into procedurally-generated dungeons, castles and other impressive structures. When you start, you create your character by picking a

**"Cube World focuses on exploration, combat, loot, finding and taming pets, and delving into procedurally-generated dungeons, castles and other impressive structures."**

race (which is just for looks). Currently, you can be a human, orc, goblin, elf, undead, frogperson, dwarf or lizard man. Then you pick your class. Warriors use charged attacks to block and smash. Rangers attack from

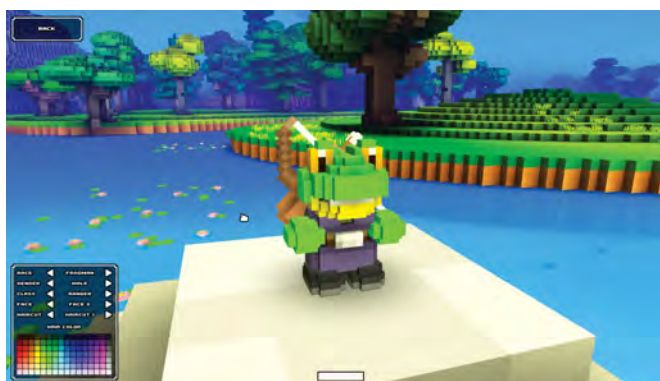
afar with bows, Mages do so with spells, and Rogues chain together fast-paced special attacks. Each of the four classes has two specializations. For

example, Mages could go either Fire, for instant-cast explosions, or Water for healing and increased attack speed. As you kill monsters you gain experience, which unlocks skill points to put into the skill tree. Each class has its own skill tree, which unlocks new abilities or special attacks. There are more classes and advanced skill trees planned.

The combat is very fast-paced. You have an active dodge button and can combo attacks, which is needed to get through an enemy's resistance. To help you survive the



The ability for players to build their own house, filled with trophies and such, is planned for future versions.



harsh randomly-generated world, you can tame pets with special pet food. You have to discover for yourself what food tames which type of animal. You can unlock a skill to ride certain pets, and pets gain experience and level up independently. Some pets heal, some attack at range, etc.

One of the best things about *Cube World* is exploring via hang-gliding. Because the terrain is really, really big, hang-gliding (and sailing) provides more freedom than you'd expect. Around the world, Boss Monsters can be found. These are giant, difficult or hard-to-reach enemies that drop valuable crafting materials. Weapon customization involves adding the types of crafting cubes you find to the structure of the weapon. This lets you customize the stats and visual appearance at the same time. There is also armour crafting, jewel crafting, cooking and alchemy.

Currently, *Cube World* supports LAN and online multiplayer for up to four people. Some players have found ways to increase that to 64 players, but with serious server instability. This is one to keep an eye on.

**NAG**

- Miktar



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# Dawngate

## League of Legends: Remix Edition

Waystone themselves admit they built *Dawngate* to "look and feel familiar". In that sense they succeeded rather well. If you were playing *League of Legends* and looked away for a minute, someone switching the game to *Dawngate*, looking back it'd take you a few minutes before you realized something was amiss.

That seems to be the point Waystone is going for. "Here is *League of Legends*", they say with words I'm putting into their mouths, "but in a new configuration, with a few changes, so you can master a new MOBA all over again!" To be fair, *Dawngate* does bring a few nice tweaks. The interface is clean,

**"Bindings regenerate after a while, the idea being to give teams a chance to push back against a 'lost' lane."**

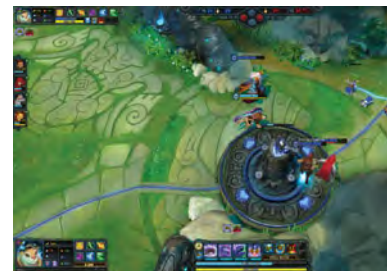
the breakdown you're given upon death is presented nicely, and the overall presentation is more polished compared to *League of Legends*. The real "difference" with *Dawngate*: their take on the map, items and how you

gain gold, or in this case, "Vim".

After picking your character, called a Shaper, you choose one of four "roles". Gladiator grants you bonus Vim

for killing lane minions. Tactician increases the amount of Vim gained from damaging enemy Shapers. Hunter lets you do 10% more damage to jungle creatures, healing you when you kill one. Predator is for "ganking", giving you a huge Vim boost when killing or assisting on an enemy Shaper kill.

The game plays like one would expect a



*Dawngate* is Waystone's first game.

You won't need the Origin client to play *Dawngate*, but it does use an Origin account.

MOBA to play, except the map only has two lanes, not three. The middle lane is replaced by jungle, and the "big bad" you kill when your team needs a serious boost. There are "Summoner spells", just called spells, that unlock as you level up during a match – the first slot at level 1, the second at 10, and the last at 20. You choose which spell goes into the slot when it unlocks.

In the flanking jungles are Spirit Wells: passive resource generators. Each team starts with control of two, and they can be captured after some time has passed, giving teams a secondary objective other than taking out towers, or in this case, "Bindings". An interesting mechanic with Bindings, the towers that act as defences against incoming

enemy minions along each lane, is that they also function like the "Inhibitors" from *League of Legends*. When the enemy destroys one Binding in a lane, their minions start spawning stronger versions. Bindings regenerate after a while, the idea being to give teams a chance to push back against a "lost" lane. But it feels more like it makes the match drag on needlessly long. As for items, there are no active abilities on items. They all provide passive increases, and can be upgraded.

Waystone have yet to confirm (or deny) an account "levelling" system like *League of Legends* has, or how Shapers will be gained.

**NAG**  
- Miktar

# PREVIEW

RELEASE DATE / 2013  
 PLATFORM / PC  
 GENRE / Digital collectible card game  
 DEVELOPER / Blue Manchu  
 WEBSITE / [www.cardhunter.com](http://www.cardhunter.com)  
 PUBLISHER / Blue Manchu

## Card Hunter Dungeons & Dragons: The Card Game



Currently in closed beta, *Card Hunter* is a novel idea. It takes the core *Dungeons & Dragons* experience and breaks it down into cards. You delve dungeons with heroes while a "Dungeon Master" narrates the experience. Success rewards loot, items like weapons and armour, which actually represent sets of cards.

A sword, for example, may have a series of block and attack cards attached to it. Equipping the sword puts those cards into the shuffle so that during play you may be able to use them. Cards are skills, basically, and the skills you have are determined by the gear you take into a campaign module. The presentation is stylish, the single-player campaign narrated by a pitch-perfect dungeon-master-in-training, occasionally interrupted by his know-it-all older brother. The dungeons are presented like a board game, with monsters and heroes as little stand-up cut outs.

The way the system plays is remarkably solid, which shouldn't be a surprise considering developer Blue Manchu was founded by some heavy-hitters like Jonathan Chey (co-founder of Irrational Games, director on *BioShock*, producer on *System Shock 2*, designer of *Freedom Force*), and Dorian Hart (game designer on *Ultima Underworld II* and *Thief*). Richard Garfield (creator of *Magic: The Gathering*) is their design consultant.

When launched, *Card Hunter* will be a free-to-play browser-based game, supported by micro-transactions – versus multiplayer is in the works. **NAG**

- Miktar



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# Infinite Crisis

The march of MOBA titles continues...

It's good to see a genre experience rapid growth and evolution – variety being the spice of life, and all that.

Thanks to the ludicrous success of *League of Legends* (taking what *Aeon of Strife* then *Defense of the Ancients* made popular), it's been a MOBA tidal wave.

*SMITE* tries it with a third-person action perspective, *Awesomenauts* wraps it up in side-scrolling '80s cartoon chic, *Dawngate* removes a lane, *Heroes of Newerth* insists it's better than *League of Legends*, *Demigod* went for "bigger is better", *Rise of Immortals* does nothing new, *Monday Night Combat* wore the genre as a third-person shooter, *Blizzard All-Stars* seems MIA, *Guardians of Middle-earth* is *Lord of the Rings*, and of course,

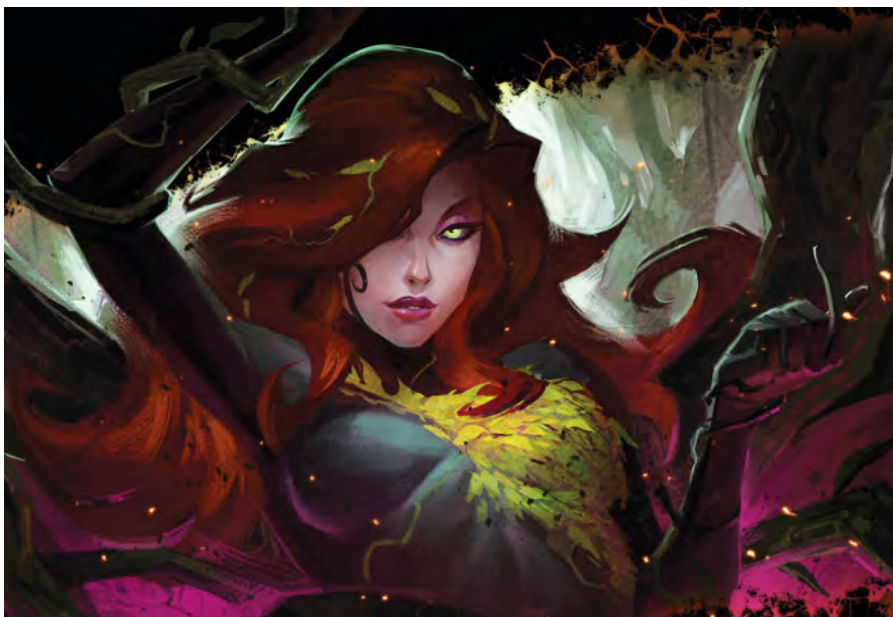
Valve's *Dota 2* hopes to beat them all by being the most free to play with the most hats to collect (and an insane amount of spectator-centric functions).

And then there's *Infinite Crisis*. The beta only had one map (a variant on Dominion from *League of Legends*) and a paltry handful of DC Comics characters, like Gaslight Batman

**"Infinite Crisis will be free-to-play, and has the benefit of being able to pull from a vast pool of iconic characters."**

(from the one-shot comic *Gotham by Gaslight*), Shazam, Flash, Doomsday and Joker. If you've played *League of Legends* or *Dota 2*, *Infinite Crisis* is not a complicated game to unpack. The one problem with the booming MOBA genre seems to be an intrinsic genericization. Developers want to capture a particular kind of market that they assume will only play something if it's exactly

RELEASE DATE / 2013  
 PLATFORM / PC  
 GENRE / Multiplayer online battle arena  
 DEVELOPER / Turbine  
 WEBSITE / [www.infinitecrisis.com](http://www.infinitecrisis.com)  
 PUBLISHER / Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment



*Infinite Crisis* was a seven-issue comic book series, sequel to DC's 1985 limited series *Crisis on Infinite Earths*.



like the thing they already like.

*Infinite Crisis* does deviate from the genre template somewhat. Your Hero skills require you to hold down the cast button, and will only activate once you or the enemy is in range of the ability. This feels like a mechanic designed for a future console version, to be honest. When killing the minions, in this case "drones", that move along lanes, anyone on your team can pick up the credits they drop. If you last-hit a drone, they drop more credits. The enemy team can see (but not pick up) your team's dropped credits, which leads to some interesting strategies.

*Infinite Crisis* will be free-to-play, and has the benefit of being able to pull from a vast pool of iconic characters. Promised future features include an "unfolding storyline crafted in collaboration with DC Entertainment", whatever that entails, and "devastating, map-altering events". The beta map had one such event, which was a meteor strike which made an area dangerous to be in for a short while.

What *Infinite Crisis* does not have right now, is any kind of polish. Being a beta, this is expected. But the kind of "jankiness" the beta has is the kind I don't expect to go away. But there's still time for Turbine to prove me wrong.

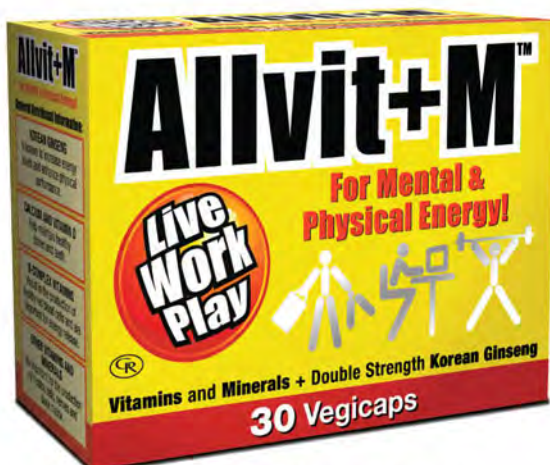
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will be contacted via details supplied on the entry form.



# Let the hunt begin

Your next-gen RPG experience is right here

The two CD Projekt RED developers demoing *The Witcher 3* seem nervous. It's evident that perhaps public speaking isn't something our presenters necessarily delight in doing. There's some apologising as they stumble over the pronunciation of certain words; English is not their first language, and presenting to a room full of people who make a living out of their knowledge of grammar and pronunciation must be a little intimidating. The fact that their PC keeps crashing to desktop in mid presentation certainly doesn't help their attempts to appear cool and confident. Those nerves, however, are short lived; the moment live gameplay for *The Witcher 3* appears on the large screen in front of us, and we see Geralt of Rivia riding a horse up a narrow track carved out of the face of a seaside cliff, it's obvious that the expressions on every journalist's face betray what we're all thinking: *oh my... look at this game*. It is at that point where the confidence levels of our presenters skyrocket; they know they have a winner on their hands.



## THE LONE, WHITE WOLF

*The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* sends players back to Temeria as Geralt the witcher. For those who haven't played the previous games in the series, a witcher is a mutant individual trained from birth to be a monster slayer. They possess superior senses, access to magic, deadly sword skills and an abundant knowledge of alchemy. At the end of *The Witcher 2*, the Southern Empire invaded the Northern Kingdoms. Those who once used Geralt to fight their battles are now all gone, which means the witcher is free to embark on his own journey. While the Northern Kingdoms reel from the chaos sparked by the Southern invasion, a wraith-led Wild Hunt arises and begins destroying villages and capturing inhabitants. Geralt has history with the Wild Hunt and has been tracking it for some time. Consequently, the moment it reappears he makes it his primary concern to pick up the trail. That was about as much of the game's main plot that CD Projekt RED was willing to share with us.

Insofar as story is concerned, the team remains adamant that plotline is the most important aspect of the series. The good news is that while the events of *The Witcher 3* follow those of the previous two titles, they also pretty much stand on their own. This means that you could pick up *The Witcher 3* having never played the previous titles and you'll still have a complete experience.



## TEMERIA UNFETTERED

Previous *Witcher* titles offered somewhat confined areas in which large chunks of the game's plot would play out. Very often entire acts would take place in a single location. While *The Witcher 2* remedied area fatigue by creating much more detailed locations, there still wasn't much in the way of exploration for exploration's sake. *The Witcher 3*, however, will not follow the same game world presentation as set out in the first two games – it's going entirely open-world.

CD Projekt RED is being ambitious; the small portion of the game world that we were shown took place in the Skellige Islands off the west coast of the Northern Kingdoms. That "small" set of island chains was already the same size as the entire offering found in *The Witcher 2*. If you take the mainland into consideration, the area of *The Witcher 3* is about 35 times the size of *The Witcher 2*. The game will load once, and then you'll be able to travel from one side of the map to the other without ever seeing another loading screen.

Alarm bells are certainly ringing: how on Earth does CD Projekt RED hope to create a world that large and still fill it with interesting content? "We can have this open world," environment artist Jonas Mattsson says, "but we need to fill it with something. So we fill it with living communities." As he mentions this, Geralt finds himself in a seaside village at the base of the cliffs he was winding his way up before. High above him, the austere castle of Kaer Trolde looms. The village is teeming with NPCs that live individual lives that are interconnected with the rest of the game world. The important thing is that this all continues without Geralt's presence; the world of *The Witcher 3* is independent of you the player.



**"Alarm bells are certainly ringing: how on Earth does CD Projekt RED hope to create a world that large and still fill it with interesting content?"**

The different parts that make up this open world realisation of Temeria are all linked. As Geralt strolls down a rickety pier, a long boat crammed with men and bristling with oars casts off from a nearby jetty, the sound of their singing growing softer as the vessel cuts its way through the dark blue waters, heading out into the deeper ocean. "That's a raiding party," Mattsson says motioning to the long boat, "Since it's good weather, they're going out to raid. Weather affects the community, so if it was bad weather they would have just gone to the tavern over there instead."

With a massive world comes the need for transportation. Geralt jumps into a small sailboat and steers out into the bay, leaving the hubbub of the coastal village behind him. Before long, all that can be heard is just the wind, the gentle creaking of the boat and the spray of the ocean. Mattsson cautions that you wouldn't want to be on the ocean during a storm in a boat this small; it would almost certainly end in having Geralt's boat smashed upon the cliffs or him being thrown overboard. While the witcher can swim, the waters are too cold to survive for any great length of time.

Obviously you will be able to fast-travel between locations on the map, but you will have to have physically found the locations before fast travel becomes available. It's standard fare for most open-world role-playing games. To that end you'll use boats, horseback and Geralt's own two feet to cover the vast expanse of *The Witcher 3*'s game world.

At this point our presentation jumps forward a bit. The map is pulled up and Geralt fast-travels to another coastal village on the shores of a different island in the Skellige chain. There's a definite Nordic influence in the environments and village designs that make up this island.

There are over 80 monsters to hunt in the game. There are no boss fights, but certain monsters will require much more planning and research before they can be defeated.







**ABOVE:**  
The Leshen is a powerful creature that lurks in the dark woods of No Man's Land. Definitely go into those woods.



As Geralt walks inland from the shoreline, Mattsson turns the view to point out a lone house sitting on top of a rocky outcrop in the middle of the bay. To the left of the house, far off in the distance, grey mountains fade into the horizon and a dark forest crowns the cliffs behind the village. These, we're told, are good examples of the game's "points of interest". They're deliberately enticing parts of the terrain that are placed so as to lead you away from the beaten path. "It's all designed to kind of draw your attention and make you curious about our world," Mattsson explains. Those specific points of interest might not necessarily lead to official side quests; they may just lead to small distractions – the kind that Bethesda has become such a dab hand at creating in *The Elder Scrolls* series.

But the terrain and structures aren't the only things vying for your attention; as Geralt begins to ride up the hill and out of the village, a man runs up to him and asks Geralt if he's travelling east. The developer controlling the game ignores the man's pleas and Geralt continues on his way, but Mattsson explains that this is one of the game's many random encounters. They're similar to those you might have found in Rockstar titles like *Grand Theft Auto IV* and *Red Dead Redemption* – bite-sized distractions designed to remove you from formal quest lines, if only momentarily.

The man's shouts fade as Geralt rides on up the hill. Eventually he reaches the top and a massive tundra opens up in front of him. Wind sweeps through the grass and flowers, both of which bend and sway in response. A little to Geralt's left, a lone deer is startled by the witcher's sudden appearance and darts into a forest that skirts the base of a large mountain. There's a lake glinting in the distance as rays of sunlight battle to penetrate the thickening clouds. This is an open-world just begging for exploration.



### A WILD HUNT

Hunting supernatural beasts has always been a staple of *The Witcher* series, but CD Projekt RED is making sure that each hunt, whether part of a quest or impromptu encounter, feels unique and in depth. To demonstrate this, we're shown a side quest set in a troubled village on the edge of a dark forest. The villagers have found one of their own impaled and twisted inside a coil of tree branches and roots. The village elders are convinced that a woodland spirit resides in the forest, and that this spirit is responsible for these killings. A younger faction within the village is led by a man called Sven; he and his followers believe that this woodland spirit is nothing but a beast that's been plaguing the village for too long. It's clear that the population is divided as to how to deal with the problem, so it's up to Geralt to decide whether to appease Sven or the village

elders. Before he can make that decision, Geralt needs to explore the forest to ascertain exactly what he's up against.

Geralt enters the forest which becomes denser as he progresses. A storm starts brewing and the wind picks up, howling through the branches and rustling each of the individually rendered leaves. Using his mutated witcher senses, Geralt is able to highlight points of interest in the environment to use for clues about what type of beast he's hunting.

As he moves deeper into the forest, the game's day-night cycle makes things a little harder. The sun goes down and the forest comes alive with enemies. Geralt is attacked by packs of wolves, which he quickly dispatches with a flurry of well-timed sword swings. "We have a new combat system that's been redesigned in order to provide traditional RPG elements with the speed and precision of a dedicated fighting game," Mattsson says. "It's very smooth and responsive; we give you full control over Geralt's blade." Indeed, at this moment in the presentation, *The Witcher 3* looks more like a third-person action game than your traditional RPG. It's a good fit and the combat style is better suited to Geralt's signature speed.

It's not long before Geralt ascertains that the beast he is hunting is in fact an old male Leshen. In order to lure it out of hiding and have any hope at defeating it, one needs to consult the in-game bestiary. *The Witcher* series has always



“Geralt is able to highlight points of interest in the environment to use for clues about what type of beast he’s hunting.”

Umm... yeah... that's exactly what you think it is...



had bestiaries, but CD Projekt RED is determined to make monster hunting a far more in depth aspect of *The Witcher 3*. Consequently, the bestiary tells us that to lure out the Leshen, we need to destroy its totems that ring its territory; it tells us what sword to use, what special attacks to be wary of and it has one vital piece of information: Leshens mark humans near their territory so that if the Leshen dies, it can use the life force of the marked human to be reborn. With that knowledge, Geralt returns to the village to track the victim that the Leshen has marked. It turns out to be Sven's lover, but it also turns out that Sven is an obstinate man, so he allows for the poor girl to be murdered.

With the Leshen's marked victim eliminated, Geralt is free to pursue his quarry. As he begins destroying the totems, so the leshen can be heard screaming somewhere deeper in the forest. Goaded by the Leshen, trees and animals start to attack Geralt. Finally the creature appears, standing twice as high as the witcher. It's a grotesque spectacle: tall, thin and made of a twisted melding of wood and bone, dark eyes staring lifelessly from a stag skull in place of its head. As the Leshen moves, you can hear its wooden joints creaking. The attention to detail is staggering.

CD Projekt RED is making sure that a grey moral code permeates the game. As such, upon returning to the village with the Leshen's head, Geralt finds that the elders are dead and Sven has taken control. Geralt has been used in what he himself refers to as a "petty peasant squabble". A narrated epilogue to the side quest reveals that the village only lasted another three months before it was raided and burnt to the ground.

- Mikit0707

# Interview

with Jonas Mattsson –  
environment artist at CD Projekt RED



**NAG: What prompted the shift to an open world?**

**JM:** Well, we always wanted to make an open world; it's just that we were restricted by technology before. It makes sense as a monster hunter to go from village to village, slaying monsters and bringing story to that – [open world] just makes more sense, and now we can really do it. We really want to bring the quality and hand-craftsmanship from *The Witcher 2* to *The Witcher 3*, and we have some pretty smart tools to do this. One awesome tool actually is for forests. It's hard to make forests look really natural. So, say we have a landscape with mountains and stuff; now our awesome technical artists are given tools to calculate where it would rain and gather water, and where it would grow actual forest. You get a natural looking forest like that, and then you start hand-crafting the paths to make the composition stuff so if you look out at that you go "wow, that's a natural looking forest." It sets this type of tree, with this colour bush so that in an instant you have a forest, and then you just start working on that. So to do an open-world in *The Witcher 3*, we have better tools, and that is what next-gen is all about for us: having better tools.

**NAG: Can you talk about the difficulty levels, because previous *Witcher* games have had some tough moments.**

**JM:** Monsters do not scale! But yes, I know what you mean. A lot of people complained that we dropped them

in the deep end with a dragon at the beginning of *The Witcher 2*. So that's one thing we've learnt from the community as well: smoother learning curve. But! We're still keeping it as a "hardcore" game. Let's say with the leshen, which you saw, and you're not prepared or you're too weak, then you can't take him out and you'll need to level up. So he won't be weak if you're weak; you will have to build up your character.

**NAG: Actually that leads to our next question: there was no mention of levelling and skill unlocks during the presentation. Anything you can share about those?**

**JM:** Definitely branching skill trees. Also we want to make the alchemy tree more useful because a lot of people ignored it in *The Witcher 2* – they were like "Nah, sorcery skill! Magic! Zap! Don't need potions!" So now we're going to make crafting much more useful in *The Witcher 3*. We're not forcing it on you, but we're making it so you can't resist it.

**NAG: So the islands that we just saw now, those are a relatively small portion of the game. So there's obviously a mainland as well.**

**JM:** Yes, so we have the Skellige Islands and then the mainland. There's a dark and murky area called "No Man's Land"; it's more ravaged and inspired by Slavic mythology. Then up in the north we have the metropolitan called Novigrad, which is kind of like a medieval Amsterdam – it's huge and has lots of political intrigue; a much different type of conflict to open combat. So this gives players variation; some areas have Scandinavian and Nordic influences, others are Slavic inspired (people who played *The Witcher 1* will probably recognise elements in this area).

**NAG: This is probably an irritating question, but people always ask this: how long would it take you to travel from one side of the game world to the other?**

**JM:** Oh wait, we calculated this... umm...



**ABOVE:** The sirens may look beautiful in the water, but once they're out, they turn into your mother-in-law from hell.

We did it like a year ago. Well, straight, with no obstacles, and only on the mainland, from the north to the south, it's about forty minutes to an hour. Oh, and that's on a horse going full pace!

**NAG: Artificial barriers? Those irritating invisible walls?**

**JM:** OK, there's always an edge to the world, but we're not going to put a barrier in the middle of the world. It's fully explorable in the middle. At the edge we're going to be using the system of natural barrier all the way around. It's really important for us not to break immersion, so when you're running you're not going to get notifications saying "please turn back".

**NAG: It's already been said that the game can be enjoyed by those who haven't played the first two, but is there going to be a story recap? Anything extra for long-time fans to look out for?**

**JM:** Definitely saved game ports for PC. And there will definitely be details in characters that will make you say "Ah! I recognise this man, so this is what happened to him after the previous games". There will be stuff for both fans of the series and newcomers.

**NAG: So what will be brought across from *Witcher 2* with saving ports?**

**JM:** We're not too sure about that yet. We're still looking into different solutions. But just PC; consoles would be pretty hard. **NAG**

# Reviews Intro

If you throw down enough peanuts you will eventually attract monkeys. As you can see we threw down a lot of peanuts over the years. Meet your NAG reviewers.

What is the most valuable thing/item/object you own? It doesn't need to be valuable in terms of money or gems or gold.



## RedTide

A box of DC and Marvel cards with all the superheroes on them. The old artwork and even a few characters I've never heard of. They're not valuable but I collected them before collecting comics was cool. I've also got a few Kruger Rands – so actual gold LOL.



## Miktar

There's a lot I own that has sentimental, monetary or functional value. But nothing stands out to me as "most valuable", or as something I couldn't do without. Due to my childhood, having to move around a lot and often leave things I cared about behind.



## Azimuth

I wanted to say my cats, but I realised I don't own them. It's the other way around. So it's probably my achievement for finishing *Guitar Hero II* on expert.



## Mikit0707

I have a copy of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that's 111 years old. It's probably not worth much, but it means quite a bit to me for some weird reason.



## GeometriX

I have a folder on my PC called "ideas" filled with concepts, half-written short stories, design documents, game prototypes, artwork, 3D scenes and all sorts of things I've made over the years. That's my future right there. And yes, it's backed up.



## Barkskin

Hmmm... Tough one. I'm going to have to go with my kettle, even though it's a pretty shitty kettle. Because when the ability to make coffee disappears, my universe collapses in on itself.

## Mini reviews

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

### RISE OF THE TRIAD

As an ode to 1994/1995 Build engine FPS *Rise of the Triad: Dark War*, this modern-day re-enactment revels in the old school of first-person shooting. Like with the original, this remake presents you with a selection of five different members of a special operations team known as H.U.N.T. to play as, each one with their own speed and endurance ratings to cater to your play style. You're then led through a collection of decently designed levels teeming with enemies to shoot, blow up and baseball bat into oblivion.

Gameplay is fast and frantic, and movement is buttery smooth, your character seemingly floating along the floor – just like the '90s did it. Weapons are fiercely over the top, and enemies are prone to explode in showers of gib-confetti as limbs and guts splatter your screen. Enemy variety is disappointingly scarce, but it was similarly so in the original game. Cheap deaths are plentiful, thanks to the many traps hidden in these corridors, and every fireplace or out-of-ordinary texture could hold a rewarding



secret room. It acts, feels and moves like *ROTT*, but it also feels outdated, and suffers from a lack of overall polish. Still, at only \$14.99, it'll provide a fair amount of enjoyment.

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“What is this, *The Day of the Triffids?*”

- Geoff, as two leaves blew into the office from outside.



### Ramjet

A 20 year old Shimpaku Juniper bonsai imported from Japan... if you don't appreciate bonsai, you won't understand.



### SAVAGE

My Indiana Jones, Witch King, and Poison Ivy Sideshow premium format statues.



### ShockG

Don't know if this counts, but certainly my health. That is undoubtedly the most valuable thing I'll ever have (while I still have it).

## 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...

## RuneStorm

### WWW.RUNESTORM.COM

When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade. But what if life then gives you oranges just as you've finished making your lemonade, and now everyone at the lemonade stand wants orange juice instead? That's where the three brothers who make up RuneStorm find themselves now, just, you know, as game developers. Forget the citrus. There is no lemonade. That was a poor metaphor anyway.

To cut a long story short enough to fit into this section: RuneStorm has been kicking around for years, originally carving out a niche with Unreal mods (including the highly popular Ballistic Mod) and finally releasing *Rooks Keep* this year. The game launched to a decent reception, but it was the studio's next release – merely a prototype – that caught the attention of a few big players in the online indie scene.

That prototype was named *Viscera Cleanup Detail* – a darkly comedic take on the cleanup operation in a space station



following the eradication of some or another sort of alien threat. Think of yourself as the janitor who has to deal with the aftermath of *Dead Space*. Based on the hugely positive response to *VCD*, RuneStorm decided to prioritise development of the game and are just inches away from being accepted through Steam Greenlight. They'll still keep up with updates for *Rooks Keep*, but for the immediate future: *VCD* looks to be their next big thing.





## PLATFORMS

Wii U

## REVIEWED ON

Wii U

## GENRE

Real-time strategy

## AGE RESTRICTION

7

## MULTIPLAYER

## Local

2 players

## Online

None

## DEVELOPER

Nintendo EAD Group No. 4 / Monolith Soft

## WEBSITE

pikmin3.nintendo.com

## PUBLISHER

Nintendo

## DISTRIBUTOR

Core Group

## Reviewed

## Pikmin 3

It's a science-fiction garden-horror action-strategy survival story!

Here's a secret few know: *Pikmin* is the best Nintendo franchise. It's understandable if you weren't aware of this fact. The first game was a flawed prototype on a system few people owned. The second, while larger in scope, struggled with a laboured campaign that had too many problems. Both games fought an uphill battle against convention, trying to straddle the line between "puzzle" and "real-time strategy" in ways never seen before. But *Pikmin 3* finally gets it all right.

Three Explorers from the planet Koppai travel to the planet PNF-404 in search of the food their starving planet needs. When they arrive, something goes wrong. Their ship explodes, and the three tiny adventurers become separated in the crash landing. On the planet, they come across strange creatures called *Pikmin*. These plant-like life forms obey the Explorers without question, and quickly become a vital tool for their survival.

The *Pikmin* come in a variety of types. Some can be thrown far, others are hard as rock and can shatter glass, and the new winged *Pikmin* can fly anywhere. You need

to utilize the different types of *Pikmin* to overcome obstacles and solve puzzles. PNF-404 is a dangerous place. Predators want to eat the *Pikmin* and Explorers. But swarm enough *Pikmin* on a predator, and the hunter becomes the hunted.

By collecting fruit, the Explorers stockpile food. The more fruit you collect, the more days you give yourself on the planet. A "day" in *Pikmin 3* lasts 13 minutes, from sunrise to sunset. It's amazing how much you can get done in that time, if you know what to do. It also facilitates short, fun play sessions.

## SWISS ARMY CONTROLS

If you have a Wii U Pro Controller (the one that looks like an Xbox 360 controller), you can play *Pikmin 3* in the "original" GameCube style. It's fairly easy to control your squads, but you don't have as much freedom to aim where you throw your *Pikmin*.

If you want to use a Wii Remote and Nunchuck, you can play "New Play Control" style which was introduced when *Pikmin* and *Pikmin 2* were re-released on the Wii. Since the Wii Remote acts like an "air mouse", you have pinpoint accuracy in

1 There is a large variety of control schemes: Wii U Pro Controller, Wii Remote Plus with Nunchuk, the GamePad, or Wii Remote + GamePad. Each has its own benefits/drawbacks. You can swap between them at any time on the fly, so find the one that's comfortable for you.



## BINGO BATTLE

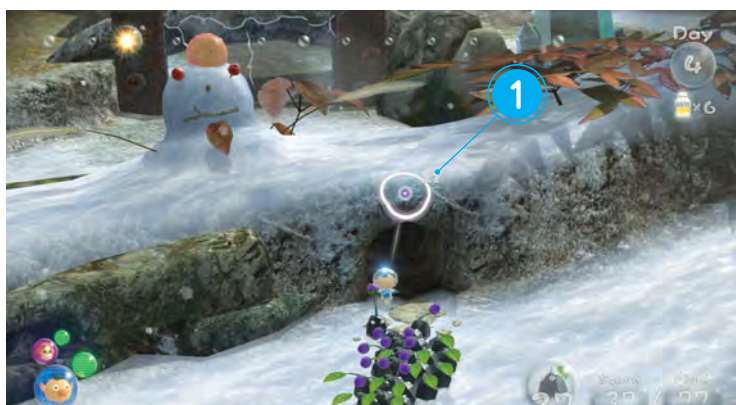
If head-to-head is more your thing, Bingo

Battle is a fast-paced, customizable competitive mode for two players. There

are 12 courses to unlock, each more dangerous than the next, and you can customize a host of match options. You can set the number of starting *Pikmin*, how many Explorers per team, or turn it into capture-the-flag.

The base Bingo Battle mode however, involves trying to find the fruit shown on your personal bingo card, that'll make four-in-a-row. So you're never sure if the fruit you need are the same ones your opponent is going for. There are many ways to trip up your opponent, such as using special items or stealing their fruit if you can overwhelm their *Pikmin* count.

The chaotic nature of how *Pikmin* work, all the little things that can happen mid-battle, it all adds up into something quite unique. It's a pity you can only play it locally; online play for this mode would have been the cherry on top.





2 You're able to go back to previous days and attempt to improve how much you got done that day, how many Pikmin you create, or how much fruit you gathered. Only if you actually improve that day, does that become your starting point moving forward, wiping out your progress from that point.

2

*“The Pikmin come in a variety of types. Some can be thrown far, others are hard as rock and can shatter glass, and the new winged Pikmin can fly anywhere.”*



aiming where you throw your army, which really helps with larger monsters that have specific weak spots.

No matter which control scheme you use, the GamePad shows your map, except if you're playing "off-TV" using only the Gamepad. Then it shows the main action, and the map is brought up by pressing a button. The GamePad provides a host of important functions. You can use it to send Explorers directly to an area, great for multitasking. By splitting up your Explorers, you can harvest more Pikmin, collect fruit, and battle enemies all at the same time. Their path-finding is flawless, and the Pikmin that follow them won't wander into water.



### MISSION MODE

For solo play, or two players playing cooperatively, Mission Mode tests how well you understand the game's mechanics and are able to multitask. All modes have bronze, silver, gold and platinum goals, as well as global rankings where you can compare your score to that of players all around the world.

"Gather the Fruit" is the most straightforward: within a limited time, on one of several specially designed maps, try to collect as many fruits, treasures and creatures in the most efficient, optimal way possible.

"Battle Enemies" has maps filled with

enemies, each enemy worth a specific amount of points. Figuring out which enemies to tackle in which order isn't easy.

"Defeat Bosses" is your basic boss rush. As bosses become unlocked through the campaign mode, here you try and kill them as quickly as possible. All the bosses have hidden tricks to kill them faster, knowledge you can take back into the campaign to improve your total score at the end. **NAG**  
- Miktar

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It took Nintendo nine years, but third time's the charm. This is the prime-time *Pikmin* game it's always wanted to be. Lush, interesting environments, the

**Pikmin are much easier to wrangle, and the story mode has a much better pace compared to the first two games. This is the *Pikmin* you want to play.**

### PLUS

Looks great / Plays great / Multiplayer is a blast  
Lots of replay value

### MINUS

No online multiplayer or co-op



PLATFORMS  
PC  
REVIEWED ON  
PC  
GENRE

Real-time strategy  
AGE RESTRICTION  
18

MULTIPLAYER  
Local  
None

Online  
8 players

DEVELOPER  
Relic Entertainment

WEBSITE  
www.companyofheroes.com

PUBLISHER  
SEGA

DISTRIBUTOR  
Ster Kinekor Entertainment

## Reviewed

# Company of Heroes 2

## Don't eat the yellow snow

There's a regular occurrence that happens almost without fail in this industry: when a studio or publisher has undergone excessive business or financial strife, its games suffer. It makes sense: games cost millions of dollars to produce, and a good portion of that cost is spent on the last mile of bug-fixing and polishing. But there's much more that's wrong about *Company of Heroes 2* than what could be resolved with a few tweaks at the end of the road. There's something wrong at the core.

I don't expect every sequel to be a massive evolution from its predecessors, but I do expect more stuff to do, hugely improved visuals (especially for a PC game) and interesting new gameplay dynamics after seven years. Instead, *COH 2* is so similar to

the first game that it could just as easily have been an expansion than the standalone game it is. Every unit feels familiar, but not in that "the smell of grandma's cooking" kind of way, but like that eerie feeling you get when you revisit your childhood town and see the same sad old man selling ice cream and cigarettes at the crappy corner cafe, just like he's been doing for the last 30 years.

The game comes in three parts: campaign, Theater of War mode, and multiplayer. The campaign follows the story of a Soviet Lieutenant who tells his story of hardship and struggle throughout his years serving as both a military leader and, later, as a propaganda journalist (despite his reservations). Relic's treatment of the campaign has made big waves in the industry and, without going into too much detail, is a poor show all-round that depicts the Russians as cowardly troops who follow psychopathic and stupid leaders. The story does very little to live up to the "Heroes" part of this game's title.

It'd be one thing if the campaign was simply politically incorrect, but then it falls rather flat when it comes to delivering gameplay experiences. To call the missions boring would be unfair – they're quite well crafted experiences that check every box you'd expect – but there's this constant feeling that you've done this all before – either in the previous game and its expansions, or even sometime earlier in the campaign. And while the "big" new features – ColdTech and TruSight – are well designed, they feel more like gimmicks that have little significant bearing on gameplay. ColdTech, in particular, is more annoying than anything.

The additional Theatre of War mode is quite fun, but one has to wonder why at least some of these interesting gameplay situations weren't integrated into the main campaign. The multiplayer mode, at least, is sure to offer the same entertainment you've come to know and love. **NAG**

- GeometriX

1 Special mention has to be made of the cutscenes. While we appreciate the effort to use the game engine to generate pre-rendered cinematics as a matter of cost or time saving, the result is low-quality, poorly animated and highly dated affairs.



2 Relic is using the same engine from *Company of Heroes*, but it's been updated with new effects and higher-resolution textures. As a result, the game is pretty demanding on your PC, so don't be surprised if you're forced to drop down the details to something that, unfortunately, looks rather a lot like the first game.

# 70

It plays the same; it looks the same; it is the same. If you've played the first game and its expansions to death and simply can't live without more

*Company of Heroes*, you'll enjoy this, but it's not the sort of game that anyone really needs to play.

### PLUS

It looks and sounds good / Theater of War has some fun missions / Multiplayer is solid

### MINUS

Ugly cutscenes / Poor treatment of the subject matter / Too much of the same as the first game



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PLATFORMS  
PC  
REVIEWED ON  
PC  
GENRE

Action role-playing game  
AGE RESTRICTION

16  
MULTIPLAYER

Local  
None

Online  
4 players

DEVELOPER  
NeocoreGames

WEBSITE  
[www.facebook.com/VanHelsingTheGame](http://www.facebook.com/VanHelsingTheGame)

PUBLISHER  
NeocoreGames

DISTRIBUTOR  
NeocoreGames



Reviewed

# The Incredible Adventures of Van Helsing

Not Incredible, but still pretty awesome

Not since *Sacred* (2004) have we seen a *Diablo*-esque game of this type. What *Van Helsing* may lack in overall polish or content, it more than makes up for with an incredibly well-designed combat system and genuinely witty banter between the two main characters. The plot, though incomplete right now, isn't half bad either.

You play as Van Helsing, son of *that* Van Helsing, accompanied by the lovely (and beheaded) Katarina. Even though there's only one playable class, *Van Helsing* provides ample customization variety. You toggle between sword-based melee and gun-based ranged attacks on the fly, both styles with their own skill trees and magic spells. All attacks have a kind of "power up" system that lets you add extra oomph to an attack on demand, if you have enough "rage" built up. It would take too long to explain the nuances

of the combat here, which is a pity.

Katarina is a functional and very useful companion. You decide which skills she learns, when she should be using health potions, if she should pick up items or not, if she should stay ranged or attack up close, and like the pet in *Torchlight II* she can be sent off on an errand to sell items and buy potions. She acts as a great counterpoint to Van Helsing's stoicism, throwing barbed insults at the up-and-coming monster hunter, but tempered with a genuine respect and warmth.

The world being hand-crafted, everything is placed with purpose. There are plenty of secrets to find, and pop-culture references to stumble across. Monsters have a degree of randomness in where they spawn, but only when returning to cleared areas. This does limit the variety when doing subsequent playthroughs some. The upshot: when loading a previous save, you're placed exactly where you left off instead of at the start of the randomly-generated map, like in *Diablo III*. Boss encounters deserve special mention for being imaginative and well-designed something quite rare in the genre.

But how is the loot, since that's what this genre is all about, right? To NeocoreGames credit, they seem to have a firm grasp on the kind of granularity itemization in games like this need. Items come in all the expected flavours (normal, magical, rare, legendary, and set) and house a lot of the kind of stats that assist in build diversity. You might suddenly find an item that makes you consider changing your entire build paradigm, just to benefit from the item's unique properties. Items may have hidden properties as well, only uncovered once certain criteria are met (damage dealt, enemies killed, etc.).

Everything is wrapped up nicely in a powerful game engine with an absurd amount of detail settings. The screenshots don't do it justice. **NAG**

- Miktar



1 At the mid-game, you engage in a few literal tower defence missions, placing traps and fighting streams of monsters.



**89** If you've been craving an action-RPG experience and nothing has worked for you so far, not *Diablo III* nor *Torchlight II* or even *Path of Exile*, why not give *Van Helsing* a try. For the price, it's worth a shot.

**PLUS**

Well-written dialogue / Lots of fun pop-culture references / Combat feels meaty and fun

**MINUS**

Still buggy in places mostly online / Ending comes rather abruptly

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\*Not pictured

 mantality

 UBISOFT

PLATFORMS  
360 / PC  
REVIEWED ON  
360  
GENRE

Third-person action / stealth

AGE RESTRICTION

16

MULTIPLAYER

Local

None

Online

None

DEVELOPER

Realmforge Studios

WEBSITE

darkthegame.com

PUBLISHER

Kalypso Media

DISTRIBUTOR

Silverscreen Trading

Reviewed

# Dark

Don't look at me... I'm a monster! ROFL

1 The game has an alternate vision mode which highlights enemies blood-red to make them easier to track. It can also be upgraded, as can your Shadow Leap ability, which lets you teleport large distances in a flash – but it makes a noise that could alert nearby foes.



**D**ark's manual boasts a message from the game's developers which says something or other about how they plan to make vampires scary again with the release of this game. I can safely report that I do not find vampires any scarier than I did before playing *Dark*, so it looks like Realmforge Studios botched things up a bit on that front. And that's just the start of many problems in *Dark*'s shaky delivery. Although, to be fair, it's much appreciated that the bloodsuckers that inhabit *Dark*'s world are mercifully spared of any sunlight-induced sparkling or other such wankery [real words people, real words, Ed].

You're cast as Eric Bane, some guy with a supernatural obsession with hoodies who's just been bled dry and transformed into a vampire. In the process, he's gone and let his memories disappear, which means he has no idea who he really is, what direction his life's meant to be headed in, or who even turned him into a vampire in the first place. This is an issue, because if Eric doesn't drink the blood of his sire soon, he'll gradually turn into a mindless, animalistic ghoul. Thankfully, some vampire chums at a flashy, loud nightclub (that only really ever plays one song on repeat) present Eric with a workaround – find a super-powerful vampire and drain them of all their delicious blood, which will save Eric from his ghoulish fate.

What this entails is visiting numerous locations packed with guards (armed with increasingly powerful weaponry – you may

be a vampire, but bullets can still cause all kinds of trouble with your desire to stay alive), ghouls and other foes. Rather than simply charge through levels devouring everything in sight, stealthy play is at this game's core, so you'll need to sneak around and avoid detection if you hope to survive. The problem is that the game's stealth mechanics are intrinsically flawed to the point of being either frustratingly difficult, or laughably easy.

You're presented with two basic ways to kill enemies – a quiet, insta-kill execution, or the louder option of feeding on enemies to drain them of life-juice. To perform either, you need to sneak right up beside enemies, and the controls are so finicky that this process is unbelievably frustrating. If you're detected, there's no melee combat system – you're expected to run up to enemies and perform the abovementioned execution moves. I like the small touches in the levels that attempt to mix things up – like motion-detecting information terminals that activate when you get close, alerting nearby enemies. You've got a number of other vampire powers (many of which are powered by the blood you'll drain from enemies) which can be upgraded as you progress to liven up your sneaky journey. Overall, even as a budget title, I can't recommend *Dark* as something you should venture near. **NAG**

- Barksin



**58** *Dark* is built on a solid premise. While its undying focus on purely stealthy gameplay is commendable, it stumbles and falls flat far too often to actually

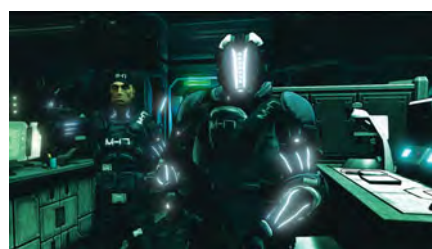
provide any lasting enjoyment. Frustration is born of its shaky design, and even though it randomly shows sparks of promise, it's just not worth your time.

**PLUS**

Occasional glimpses of potential

**MINUS**

Sloppy, frustrating stealth mechanics / Strange design sensibilities / Buggy



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# NAG

## PLATFORMS

PS3

## REVIEWED ON

PS3

## GENRE

Role-playing game

## AGE RESTRICTION

16

## MULTIPLAYER

## Local

None

## Online

None

## DEVELOPER

Spellbound

## WEBSITE

www.nordicgames.at

## PUBLISHER

Nordic Games

## DISTRIBUTOR

Silver Screen

## Reviewed

## Arcania: The Complete Tale

### Revisiting the Gothic world

The original *Arcania* was released around five years ago for the PC and Xbox 360.

One would assume, therefore, that this long awaited PS3 version (which includes the original *Arcania: Gothic 4* and the *Fall of Setarrif* expansion) has been trimmed up and given the best kind of treatment during the porting process. It's been five years, after all.

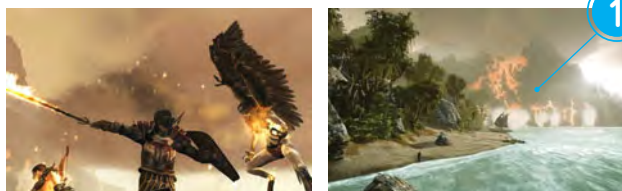
Unfortunately you would be mistaken. While it took a long time for this game to arrive on PS3, one cannot help but wonder what the developers have been doing all this time. The result is a title that, while enjoyable for forgiving types, feels anachronistic. And, to make things worse, it comes with the bugs and issues that plagued the original release.

There are a few aspects of the game that do earn it some merit, but most players – particularly those experienced in the genre – will find that the lacklustre presentation, relatively small world and huge number of fetch quests don't do much to further the experience.

Things like this simply shouldn't happen, particularly after such a long period between the original release and this PS3 version coming to shelf. The opportunity to add some much needed polish to the overall experience and iron out a number of technical issues was completely squandered here. And that's a sad thing because this could have been a better game with some work. **NAG**

- Shryke

1 Not much has changed in the *Empire of Myrtana* after five years...



50

After a five year gap between the original release and this one, one would think that the developers took some time to iron out technical issues... oh well...

## PLUS

Long play time / Lots of options

## MINUS

Anachronistic presentation / Technical issues

## PLATFORMS

PC

## REVIEWED ON

PC

## GENRE

Simulation

## AGE RESTRICTION

13

## MULTIPLAYER

## Local

None

## Online

None

## DEVELOPER

The Sims Studio

## WEBSITE

www.sims3.com

## PUBLISHER

Electronic Arts

## DISTRIBUTOR

Electronic Arts

South Africa

## Reviewed

## The Sims 3: Island Paradise

A life of leisure

The *Sims 3* has become quite a large thing to have installed on your PC. If you have all the expansions installed, you're looking at a considerable amount of hard drive space gobbled up by pets, duvet covers and DIY dining room tables. Unfortunately, not all of these expansions have been worth the effort and space.

*The Sims 3: Island Paradise* doesn't really fall into that "waste of effort category", but neither does it rise up to the status of "must-have". It treads something of a middle ground that some will love, and others will be able to live without. As a full-priced expansion, it does leave a bit to be desired, not coming close to others in that category.

The seaside was missing from the *World Adventures* expansion, now *Island Paradise* addresses that so your Sims can live the holiday life by the coast they've always wanted. With numerous new construction options, Sims can enjoy life in an island house, or even a house boat. There are a couple of new skills and career options, too, like running a very lucrative resort. Learning the scuba diving skill will enable the player to meet this expansion's weird life-form... mermaids.

There is a lot of exploring to do, like *World Adventures*, so the expansion effectively combines everyday life with holiday activities. The new residential area is great, too, but *Island Paradise* falls short on the overall offerings scale. **NAG**

- Shryke

2 Life by the sea is a decent new idea for *The Sims 3*



70

It's a worthwhile expansion, but some may feel that it doesn't offer enough to justify being a full-priced product.

## PLUS

New environment / New construction options / House boats!

## MINUS

Doesn't offer enough / Mermaids are annoying

**PLATFORMS**

Wii U

**REVIEWED ON**

Wii U

**GENRE**

Platform

**AGE RESTRICTION**

3

**MULTIPLAYER****Local**

4 players

**Online**

None

**DEVELOPER**

Nintendo EAD

**WEBSITE**

newsupermariobrosu.

nintendo.com/

newsuperluigi/

**PUBLISHER**

Nintendo

**DISTRIBUTOR**

Core Group

*Reviewed*

## New Super Luigi U

We always knew Luigi was the hardcore one

This is a great example of how to employ DLC in a way that isn't designed to simply monetize a game for the sake of monetization. While not remarkable in any way, *New Super Luigi U* adds value to an experience people might want more of, and who are willing to pay a reasonable price for a reasonable amount of content.

Sitting on top of *New Super Mario Bros. U*, this expansion adds in an entire second campaign that takes place on the same world map as the main game but with entirely new stages. The caveat: each one has a time limit of only 100 seconds. Combined with Luigi's characteristically drift physics and his unique "flutter jump" which gives him a bit more height, *Luigi U* is tough. If you want to get all three Star Coins found in each stage, and still make it to the end, that's even tougher. There are no checkpoints in Luigi's stages, but they're individually much shorter, which makes multiple attempts somewhat less grating. For true chaos, you can play *Luigi U* with up to four players simultaneously, and the tablet-assisted Boost Mode makes a return.

*New Super Mario Bros. U* is required if you buy and download *Luigi U* off the Nintendo eShop, but not if you buy the stand-alone retail disc of *Luigi U*. **NAG**

- Miktar

**79**

An expansion pack done right, *New Super Luigi U* is an entire campaign dedicated to the other brother. His stages may be shorter (part of the difficulty), but each is just as carefully crafted as those in the main campaign. If you think Mario's too soft, then you'll want to try a nice hard Luigi.

**PLUS**

Really ramps up difficulty / Each stage is unique / Weegie

**MINUS**

Really hard wow / You have to want it

**PLATFORMS**

PC

**REVIEWED ON**

PC

**GENRE**

Puzzle / platformer

**AGE RESTRICTION**

RP

**MULTIPLAYER****Local**

None

**Online**

None

**DEVELOPER**

Facepalm Games

**WEBSITE**

facepalmgames.

com/the-swapper

**PUBLISHER**

Facepalm Games

**DISTRIBUTOR**

Facepalm Games

*Reviewed*

## The Swapper

In space no-one can hear your existential crisis

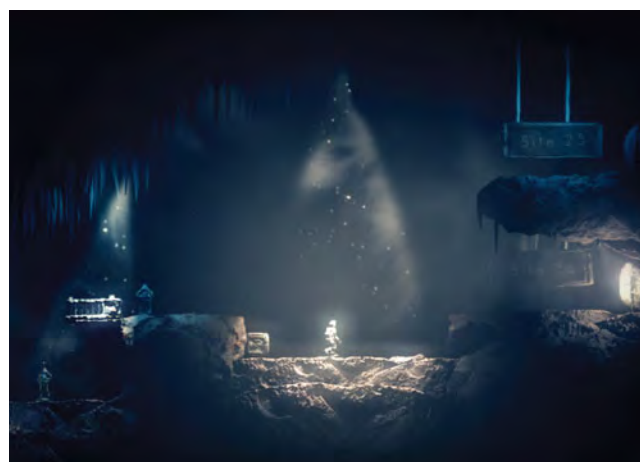
The "artistic" puzzle/exploration game with strong philosophical undertones seems trendy of late. Especially with all these indie developers vying to be the one to finally get games recognized as "art". But as Facepalm Games seems to understand, art isn't about the destination. It's about what brought you there.

*The Swapper* does not lack for artistic content. All of the visuals are made from clay models and other real-world materials, given a fancy shader to make your unnamed spaceman's flashlight bounce off their surfaces realistically. It's beautiful in its simplicity and effectiveness, invoking a mood very reminiscent of the cult-classic 1972 sci-fi movie *Silent Running*.

The Mr. Spaceman you play as comes across a strange device that lets you create clones and swap between them. All the clones mimic your movements exactly. The first time you get so caught up in solving a puzzle that you forget which one was "you" (which you then accidentally kill), is a very memorable moment. If a clone dies, it's no big deal. You just make another. But there's only one of you. Right?

The puzzles get tricky, but frustration is offset due to the open-world nature of the space station. While you are gated somewhat, multiple puzzles are available to you at any time. Exploration leads to discovery, and clues about the strange sentient rocks everywhere in the station. **NAG**

- Miktar

**87**

With its unique visuals, *The Swapper* plays out as a decent science-fiction short story. It's got all the good bits: strange life forms, a too-quiet space station, and a device that really shouldn't exist in the first place. It presents an existential quandary, and leaves it up to you how you want to feel about it.

**PLUS**

Creative puzzles / Wonderful aesthetic / Unique appeal

**MINUS**

Short



## Reviewed

# Rogue Legacy

The family that slays together...

**PLATFORMS**  
PC  
**REVIEWED ON**  
PC  
**GENRE**  
Platformer / roguelike  
**AGE RESTRICTION**  
16  
**MULTIPLAYER**  
Local  
None  
Online  
None  
**DEVELOPER**  
Cellar Door Games  
**WEBSITE**  
www.roguelegacy.com  
**PUBLISHER**  
Cellar Door Games  
**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Cellar Door Games

**M**uch like the seminal *Spelunky*, or *Binding of Isaac*, this is a game that expects you to constantly die. In fact, dying is how you progress.

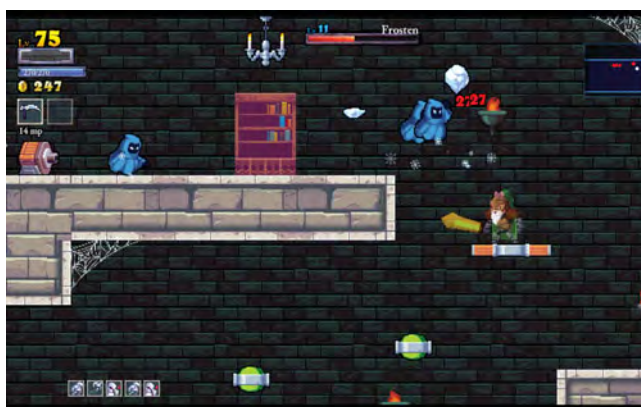
The goal of *Rogue Legacy* is to explore a randomly generated castle, which is divided up into four unique areas. Each area has its own boss, and once you've defeated all four you can go to the final boss. But it won't be you who bests this mysterious castle. Instead, the task falls to the long lineage you create. When you die, all the gold you've gathered thus far falls to your heir.

You choose from three heirs each time you start a run through the castle, each with random abilities or traits that alter how you play. Some traits are whimsical, like colour blindness. Others are more serious. As you bankroll more and more gold, you can purchase permanent upgrades for future characters: better armour, more character classes, runes that let you fly, jump higher, or regain health by killing enemies.

Because of the three randomized choices given to you each time you start, there's less pressure on individual sessions. Sometimes you get lucky, and one of the choices is a class you like, with traits that help. Other times, all three are duds, so you do the best you can. It's a great system that avoids much frustration. **NAG**

- Miktar

▶ When you die, you're presented with a literal line-up of every monster you killed up to that point, which is quite satisfying.



## 88

Each time you enter the ever-changing castle, you get a little bit better, kill a few more things, and learn a few new tricks. With the gold gained, you unlock permanent upgrades, helping you progress even further, delve deeper, and survive longer. *Rogue*

*Legacy* can be brutal, but finally killing one of the bosses is about as rewarding as it gets.

### PLUS

Tight controls / Catchy music / Well-designed boss encounters / Very replayable

### MINUS

Can feel like a bit of a grind / Super-tough at points

## PLATFORMS

PC

## REVIEWED ON

PC

## GENRE

Platform / action-adventure

## AGE RESTRICTION

16

## MULTIPLAYER

Local

None

Online

4 players

## DEVELOPER

Francisco Téllez de Meneses

## WEBSITE

www.unepicgame.com

## PUBLISHER

Ninagamers Corp.

## DISTRIBUTOR

Digital Distribution

## Reviewed

# Unepic

Sings the song of our people...

**T**here is a goofy charm to *Unepic*. The unlikely hero, Daniel, is a total dweeb.

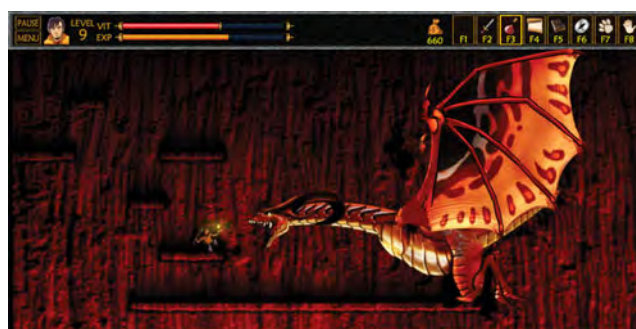
But he's *our* kind of dweeb, and a bit of a stereotype: great at video games, huge sci-fi movie fan, plays some table top role-playing games (but is disdainful of them), pot-head, and very unlucky with the ladies. While playing a table top session with friends, Daniel heads to the bathroom but instead finds himself in a huge castle full of monsters and puzzles. No problem, Daniel is, as we say, "genre aware".

While he might think it's a hallucination, caused by his friends slipping some drugs in his beer, he's pretty adept at handling the situation.

*Unepic* is a huge game, full of items to find, monsters to slay, experience to gain (which is used to upgrade Daniel's abilities), and packed with the kind of lame game-related jokes we all make when we think we're with friends. The corny dialogue reads like bad fan-fiction, which would be a problem except when combined with the hardcore style of older games like *Maze of Galious* (which is the direct inspiration for *Unepic*); it actually comes together in a way we don't see too often anymore. All the silly, bad and difficult things synergize into a unique fingerprint you'd find on the hearts of many '90s PC gamers. **NAG**

- Miktar

1 The hero, Daniel, is surprisingly malleable, able to learn everything from daggers to wands, and a variety of magic spells, depending on where you assign skill points gained via levelling.



## 80

*Unepic* doesn't look amazing, the controls take some getting used to, the dialogue can make you cringe with all the bad video game jokes, and the hero is a total space-case. Which is why the game works darn well: all those "issues" are actually traits, required to make *Unepic* function as the love-letter it's intended to be.

### PLUS

Huge environment to explore / Lots of secrets and references / That indie charm / Pretty epic

### MINUS

Some jokes fall flat / Clumsy controls





Reviewed

## Shin Megami Tensei IV

Nothing is what it seems...

**PLATFORMS**

3DS

**REVIEWED ON**

3DS

**GENRE**

Role-playing game

**AGE RESTRICTION**

18

**MULTIPLAYER**

Local

None

**Online**

None

**DEVELOPER**

Atlus

**WEBSITE**

www.atlus.com/

smt4/

**PUBLISHER**

Nintendo

**DISTRIBUTOR**

Core Gaming

Group

An "anachronism", is defined as a chronological inconsistency in some arrangement, like a juxtaposition of events, objects or customs from different periods of time. A microwave, in the treasure room of a 15<sup>th</sup> Century medieval castle, is an anachronism.

So why is there a microwave in this castle's treasure room? And why do the priests pay so much for bringing them such "relics"?

*Shin Megami Tensei IV* is anachronism embodied. It would be impossible to talk about the plot without spoiling it, other than to say the game has a strong story with inventive ideas, especially for the genre. The opening may seem like a familiar setting with recognizable tropes, but...

It is surprising, how strong the individual components that make up *Shin Megami Tensei IV's* experience are. The story is excellent, the environments you explore in third-person are detailed and look great on the 3DS; the combat system – while rather unforgiving at first – clicks together like a well-oiled machine once you get it going. The demons you hunt have elemental weaknesses (much like in *Persona*). By exploiting that weakness, you gain additional turns to make against them. But that goes both ways – the demons you "capture" by convincing them to join you, trickier than it sounds, have the same weaknesses. You don't need any prior knowledge of the series to enjoy *IV*. **NAG**

- Miktar



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On the surface, this looks like yet another medieval-era inspired turn-based Japanese RPG. But appearances can be deceiving. The combat is quick, often all-or-nothing. Exploration is tense, dangerous. Most of all, *Shin Megami Tensei IV* predicates itself on being *interesting*. If the first 30 minutes don't grab your attention, the rest likely won't. But if it *does*, you're in for a ride.

**PLUS**

Captivating story / Svelte and quick combat system / Great environment visuals

**MINUS**

Daunting at first / Difficult until you learn the tricks / Mildly adult-themed monsters



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**PLATFORMS**  
360 / PC / PS3 / PSV  
**REVIEWED ON**  
**360**  
**GENRE**  
Racing  
**AGE RESTRICTION**  
3

**MULTIPLAYER**  
**Local**  
2 players  
**Online**  
12 players

**DEVELOPER**  
Milestone

**WEBSITE**  
www.motogpvideogame.com

**PUBLISHER**  
PQube  
**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Apex Interactive

Reviewed

# MotoGP 13

Meat slab on a rocket...

**M**otorcycle racing simulations have always delivered a mixed bag of reactions. Either they're far too flippant, which includes titles like *Nail'd*, or they just don't get the feeling of being on a motorcycle right... like pretty much everything else. Although there has been progress over the years, capturing the true feeling of barreling down a straight at skin-peeling speeds is elusive.

See, riding a motorcycle is a complex operation, and knowing how they react is important when the rider is basically a crash-test-dummy atop a rocket. But games in the past simply haven't managed to get the physics quite right, making the riding of said rocket either far too easy, or too difficult – or not realistic at all.

*MotoGP 13* manages to almost crack the perfect feel. If you undertake a race in this game with realistic settings, you will be juggling numerous elements like front and back braking, acceleration and balance in a complex finger-ballet that really hints at the intricacies of handling a two-wheeled racing machine.

For those that don't want to get quite so complicated, *MotoGP* manages to keep the feel more or less intact while dropping difficulty levels, thanks to a number of driving (or should that be riding?) assists. On the whole, Milestone has managed to create probably the best motorcycle racing



simulator to date in the form of *MotoGP 13*.

Let's not get all excited, though, because they did drop the ball when it comes to presentation. See, while the game feels great, it doesn't look spectacular. The looks aren't bad, but they certainly aren't what they should be. They seem a little old, to be honest, particularly in the smaller racing classes. The bigger bikes got the lion's share of the attention, both in terms of looks and sounds, but neither of these areas shine.

The tracks also leave a lot to be desired in visual terms, even if they are faithful recreations of a number of the best loved bike racing circuits in the world. And we're not even going to talk about the menus...

While the game offers numerous modes for the player to enjoy, probably the best value for money lies in the extensive career mode. The player will need to work through the Moto3 (250cc) and Moto2 (500cc) classes to get to the big, 1,000cc MotoGP machines. From there they can carry their career on pretty much indefinitely. There is no time limit on the career, which is great for enthusiasts (although more casual players may get tired of it after a while).

If your enthusiasm for the title will enable you to get past the presentation problems, *MotoGP 13* presents a very good motorcycle simulation experience. **NAG**

- Shryke

78

It's not perfect, but *MotoGP* has made many steps in the right direction for the motorcycle simulation genre.

**PLUS**

Good physics / Very accessible

**MINUS**

Presentation could have been better / Best for enthusiasts

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



*Well, almost everything.*

# EVERYTHING ELSE

Bits and bobs that can all be filed under gaming lifestyle

## FEMME FATALES

Did you know that Snow White had a sister by the name of Rose Red? Neither did we, until we read the back of the box that contains this 9-inch vinyl statue. The rest of these statues vary from the disturbing (in the case of Darkchylde) to the ridiculously over-sexualised (ahoy there, Anne Bonny) to the just very silly Executioner Dawn. These figures are well enough sculpted and painted, at least, so they wouldn't be out of place in any decent collection. Whether the subject matter is your cup of tea is entirely up to you, but we'll give them a miss, thanks.

Supplier: Dark  
Carnival  
RRP: R120 - R650



### CAR KEY SPY CAMERA

Spy on your friends, your partner, your parents or your brother (that last one is probably a really bad idea) with this little piece of high-tech investigative gear. It supports motion detection and can take still shots or video, but there's no mic so it can't capture audio. Still, it's a pretty cool little device, and is worth owning if only for the fact that you can tell people you own a spy camera and are officially 1% James Bond – It even has a BMW logo on it (almost definitely not licensed).

**Supplier:** Mantality  
**RRP:** R395 (excludes SD card)



### WORLD OF WARCRAFT RAWGRLRLRLR-RLGLRL!!! LIMITED EDITION STEIN

Beer! *World of Warcraft!* Unpronounceable words! This stein says it all... and so much more between the lines. It's as sturdy as a dwarf and as gaudy as a flea-market jewellery store, but it's so well made that we'll forgive the garish colours courtesy of artist Matt Cavotta.

**Supplier:** Dark Carnival  
**RRP:** R2,000



### PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES FUN-DEAD SET

This is one of those products that almost gets it right and definitely falls under the category "impulse buy", especially if you often drop R350 on things you don't really need. The tallest figure in the set is the Yeti Zombie and stands at just 6cm so prepare to spend some time looking for the Cherry Bomb under your couch. The rest of the set includes the Snorkel Zombie, Peashooter, Zombie and Squash. The figure selection is a bit odd as you can't really defend or attack with what you have in the box. It's not supposed to be playable as such but perhaps a little more thought could

have gone into this. Also missing is a cardboard stand up background or something to pose them against. It's not a terrible product and it's well made but a little superfluous at the price. Still, who doesn't love this game?

**Supplier:** Dark Carnival  
**RRP:** R350.00



### BLOX VINYL FIGURE: STAR WARS:

These are bobbleheads. Before we continue a question comes to mind. Why does the world need more bobbleheads? They're fun for a while in a car, sitting in traffic jiggling merrily away with each stop start in morning traffic. Each one different but overall happy little things, always so jolly while you slowly lose your mind wondering why the highway is always so jammed for no reason. They mock you with their happiness. These ones are big 18cm tall by 15cm wide (average), so they're no good for your car but rather your desk. But desks don't move around unless you drive your knee into one and then you're right back to angry. At least if an earthquake hits you'll be able to see a happy jiggling head while the life is slowly crushed out of you.

You get a sturdy, well-made, well-sprung little guy for your money.

**Supplier:** Dark Carnival  
**RRP:** R240.00 (each)



### POP! TELEVISION: GAME OF THRONES 03: DAENERYS TARGARYEN

It might look like a bobblehead but it's not, what we have here is the wonderful, glorious and sexy Daenerys Targaryen as a vinyl figure. In the Edition One set you can also buy Tyrion Lannister, Ned Stark (with detachable head (just kidding)), Khal Drogo, a White Walker and Sandor Clegane (The Hound). Daenerys is well made, stands 9.5 cm tall and comes complete with an attached baby dragon. If you need a token of power on your desk that you can touch before heading off to that all important "thing" then look no further than the mother of Dragons! Just don't get lost in her perfect dreamy eyes.

**Supplier:** Dark Carnival  
**RRP:** R180.00



# TECHNEWS

## KNOW YOUR TECHNOLOGY

### SECURUM

A copy protection product developed by Sony DADC for the sole purpose of preventing duplication devices and reverse engineering of commercial software. The method of disc protection in current versions is data position measurement; this may or may not be used in conjunction with online DRM components. SecuROM limits the number of PCs activated at the same time from the same key. Most titles now also include a revoke tool to deactivate the license; revoking all licenses would restore the original activation limit.

### DVD-COPS

Closely related to StarForce in how it works, DVD-Cops protection uses the geometry of the media rather than a hidden "mark". As a copy, the optical media will have different geometry than the original and as such data position measurement needs to be used. The geometry is not known before the media has been produced;

therefore a code expressing the layout of the disc must be entered the first time the software is run.

### SAFEDISC

A disc based copy protection program created by Macrovision Corporation that adds a unique digital signature to the optical media at the time of replication. Each time a SafeDisc-protected program runs, the SafeDisc authenticator performs various security checks and verifies the SafeDisc signature on the optical media.

### STARFORCE

A software copy protection mechanism developed by StarForce Technologies which makes copyrighted content (usually software) difficult to reverse engineer by installing itself as a device driver on the system. The current version of StarForce includes web activation suite and disc check suite which provides an almost two-tier approach to copy protection.

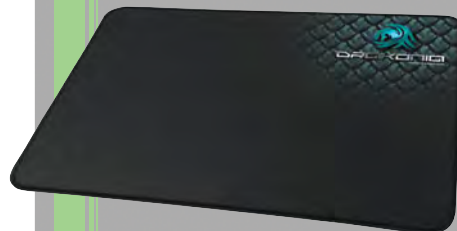
### STEELSERIES SIBERIA V2 HEAT ORANGE LIMITED EDITION

Identical to the Siberia v2 headset, this Limited Edition features a Heat Orange illumination that can be programmed with a variety of modes including on/off, pulsation, intensity and trigger. R1,299 | [www.lookandlisten.co.za](http://www.lookandlisten.co.za)



### SHARKOON DRAKONIA GAMING MOUSE MAT

Sharkoon also have the perfect partner for your laser mouse: a durable textile mouse pad. The 355 x 255 x 2.5 mm large pad has a nano-coated playing surface with a non-slip rubber base and double stitching around the edges to prevent fraying. R99 | [www.esquire.co.za](http://www.esquire.co.za)



Razer used a 10,000 user crowdsourcing initiative to introduce a new file transfer feature to their Razer Comms all-in-one VoIP software.

"We started working on Razer Comms in 2011 as a 10 percent side project of sorts, mostly during lunch breaks, for our own personal gaming use," said Min-Liang Tan, Razer co-founder, CEO and creative director. "Razer Comms now has a dedicated team of experienced software

**DID YOU KNOW?**

engineers at its helm. The number of patches and feature additions that we've implemented according to gamer feedback speaks to this software's relevance. It is definitely here to stay and evolve."

Razer now has high-speed servers in eight different locations across the globe to reduce latency and improve the overall audio quality for the software, upgrading noise suppression, echo cancellation and voice volume normalization.

## # 10 Gbps

### BY THE NUMBERS

The USB 3.0 Promoter Group have announced the completion of the USB 3.1 Specification which adds enhancements to enable SuperSpeed USB to operate at up to 10 Gbps. This latest release of the specification is available for download from the USB Implementers Forum (USB-IF) website [www.usb.org](http://www.usb.org).

# Mosh Pit

## SHARKOON DRAKONIA GAMING LASER MOUSE

With its bright green dragon scales and an illuminating tribal dragon logo, 5,000 DPI resolution, 11,750 FPS frame rate, 30 G acceleration and 150 IPS speed, this gaming mouse looks and feels the part. R359 | [www.esquire.co.za](http://www.esquire.co.za)



## ASUS TRANSFORMER AIO P1801

The Transformer range from ASUS has always fascinated us with its ingenuity, and this next iteration of the concept takes the idea even further. The device starts as an Android tablet (a massive one at that) which can be docked into the PC base to form a Core i3-based Windows 8 PC. The bundle includes a Bluetooth keyboard and mouse, and touch-screen support carries through to the Windows 8 Metro interface. R14,999 | [za.asus.com](http://za.asus.com)



## MONSTER ISPORT VICTORY

The iSport Victory, aside from its sexy looks, also has some sexy features. The patented SportClip stays in your ear and the exclusive Omnitip adjusts to any ear shape. The earphones are also sweat-proof, washable, and have antimicrobial eartips. They work with helmets, goggles, and glasses and sport an in-line mic with controls for iPad, iPhone and iPod. R1,999 [www.phoenixsoftware.co.za](http://www.phoenixsoftware.co.za)



"The effect that key titles have on hardware sales is phenomenal. Enthusiast PC Gamers embrace content creation and modding, so when titles like Bohemia Interactive's *ARMA 3* are in the pipeline, we start to see anticipatory hardware sales. In fact, we are estimating over \$800 million of PC builds influenced primarily by this title. A major component of this situation is that many games are placing increasing demands on the CPU. The result is that swapping out the graphics add-in board is not enough this time around and gamers are building (and ordering) overclocked PCs from the ground up."

**Ted Pollak, Senior Gaming Analyst at JPR.**

The Worldwide PC Gaming Hardware Market report series by Jon Peddie Research covers 33 countries.

# DREAMMACHINE

This month we change the AMD Dream Machine memory to the new Corsair Vengeance Pro 2,666MHZ 16GB set. A lot of money to pay for 16GB, but the performance and overclocking headroom is there. This is also our second month with the Z87 chipset, as it still proves to provide the most well rounded platform the industry has to offer. Perhaps next month we will switch back to X79 with the release of Ivy Bridge-E, but that remains to be seen on how it does in testing.



**PSU**  
**Cooler Master Silent Pro M2 1500Watt PSU**  
R3,499 / [www.coolermaster.com](http://www.coolermaster.com)



**STORAGE DRIVE**  
**Seagate Barracuda 3TB**  
R1,699 / [www.seagate.com](http://www.seagate.com)



**KEYBOARD**  
**GIGABYTE Aivia Osmium Mechanical Gaming Keyboard**  
R1,299 / [www.rectron.co.za](http://www.rectron.co.za)



**SOUND**  
**Creative Sound Blaster ZxR**  
R2,799 / [www.corex.co.za](http://www.corex.co.za)



**GRAPHICS**  
**Gigabyte GV-NTITAN-6GD SLI**  
R13,999 each / [www.gigabyte.com](http://www.gigabyte.com)



**CHASSIS**  
**Corsair Obsidian 900D**  
R4,299 / [www.corsair.com](http://www.corsair.com)



**COOLER**  
**NZXT Kraken X60**  
R1,950 / [www.nzxt.com](http://www.nzxt.com)



**HEADPHONES**  
**Plantronics GameCom Commander**  
R4,569 / [www.gamergear.co.za](http://www.gamergear.co.za)



**OS DRIVE**  
**OCZ Vector 256GB SSD**  
R3,799 / [www.ocz.com](http://www.ocz.com)



**DISPLAY**  
**ASUS VG248QE**  
R5,999 / [za.asus.com](http://za.asus.com)

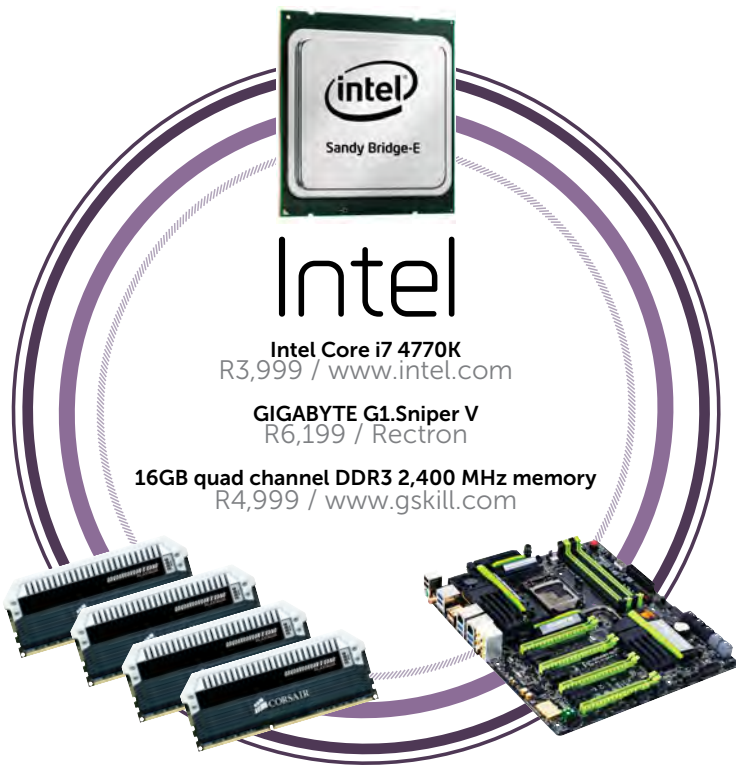


**MOUSE**  
**Razer Ouroboros**  
R1,399 / [www.corex.co.za](http://www.corex.co.za)



**MOUSE MAT**  
**Razer Ironclad**  
R599 / [www.corex.co.za](http://www.corex.co.za)





Intel

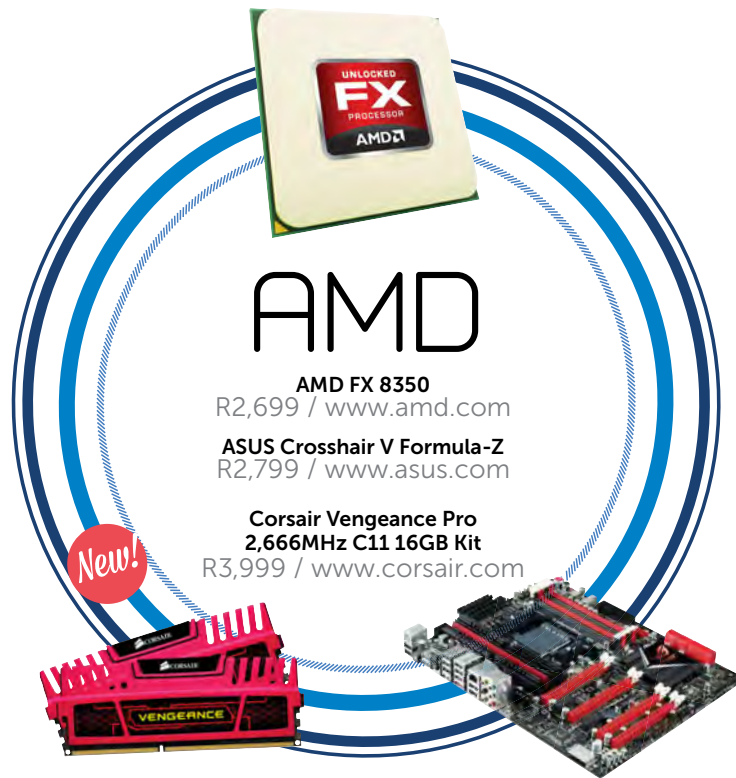
Intel Core i7 4770K  
R3,999 / www.intel.com

GIGABYTE G1.Sniper V  
R6,199 / Rectron

16GB quad channel DDR3 2,400 MHz memory  
R4,999 / www.gskill.com

Intel Dream Machine:

R61,107



AMD

AMD FX 8350  
R2,699 / www.amd.com

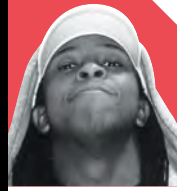
ASUS Crosshair V Formula-Z  
R2,799 / www.asus.com

Corsair Vengeance Pro  
2,666MHz C11 16GB Kit  
R3,999 / www.corsair.com

New!

AMD Dream Machine:

R55,408



## HARDWIRED Beats by whom?

I can't help but feel that most of what I write here is dealing with ignorance from power users/enthusiasts and so-called hardcore gamers more than anything else. Once again while prowling the forums I've come across several keyboard Rambos and others of their ilk who are doing not only Joe Average a disservice, but the industry as well.

It's unfortunate that to be considered a power user or enthusiast one needs not knowledge but rather deep pockets or the absence of financial discretion. In light of this situation I thought I'd address the "Beats by Dre" hate that seems prevalent in just about every gaming/tech forum I've come across. Primarily the negativity around this brand is from ignorance and just a general dislike of popular culture and all things associated. Hardcore gamers, much like enthusiasts and power users, for some reason believe we are at the fringe of society. Ours is to dislike anything that's remotely popular or attractive to those who do not subscribe to our sub-culture. "Surely if Joe Average appreciates any piece of technology, it has to be inferior. For these people know nothing and marketing works on them unlike us who buy purely based on imperial evidence and merit."

That seems to be the attitude and, as you can imagine, it's not only misguided it's rather juvenile. I repeat again, the advent rise of gaming and its explosion is not due to the hardcore crowd but its newfound accessibility to Joe Average. If the premier gaming platform remained that interfaced with via a keyboard and a mouse, it would not have grown to anywhere near the proportions it has. Gaming becoming less technical in mechanics and more narrative driven amongst other things has made this phenomenal growth possible. It is now a major vein in pop culture, the very same culture which we view with disdain.

Virtually all forum members in these communities will say all "Beats by Dre" headphones are overpriced pieces of garbage. The vast majority of those saying this don't own a set, never have owned a set and likely never will. The counter argument would be, of-course they wouldn't; they don't believe the headphones are any good. However, I put to you this: the very same people are unwilling to spend the \$250 USD or more on any set of headphones, regardless of the brand. They have just never invested that much in a set of cans. Therefore, said people do not have the capacity to appreciate mid to high-end headphones. Let's be real here, these are people with experience with gaming headphones that at most retail for about \$160 USD and these are pseudo 7.1 cans that almost always deliver suspect audio and time and time again are outperformed by stereo headphones. These same individuals use on-board sound solutions (if they didn't, the sound card market would be booming, yet it's not, and is rather in its twilight years).

Here's another thing to think about: the deal between Monster and the music producer had everything to do with branding and marketing and virtually nothing to do with R&D at all. Prior to this partnership, fewer people would spend that kind of money on headphones, but through a strong affiliation with a producer celebrated in pop culture, the buying public sensitive to that felt compelled to pay significantly more for headphones and appreciate better audio, perceived or real. The quality of Monster headphones didn't change; they were always high-end headphones and thus remained so, except that more people were buying. Just because something is popular or a commercial success, it does not mean it's inferior. Simply put, we should grow up.

- Neo Sibeko

# The Lazy Gamer's Guide Razer Atrix

Website [www.corex.co.za](http://www.corex.co.za) RRP R2,499

Owning an arcade fighting stick is like slicing off a chunk of gaming's history and keeping it in your home as a button-covered pet. As with actual pets, there are numerous breeds of fighting stick, and you'll want to get one that's tailored to your taste and matches your personality. Assuming you're not going to attempt to Frankenstein your own bad-ass arcade stick (as we've done in the past), picking the perfect one can be daunting, and

considering the high price tacked onto so many of them, fighting game fans might lose their minds sorting through what's out there. Razer's Atrix (which is designed for Xbox 360, but can be used on PC as well) has been built with the aim of simplifying the process, crafting a one-size-fits-all fighting stick that's smoothly customisable and built using top-class components that'll make any fan of virtual brawling drool. Let's have a look at it. **NAG**



## TECHNICAL

### BUTTONS

Ten Sanwa Denshi tournament-grade buttons

### JOYSTICK

Sanwa Denshi ball top (bat top alternative included in box)

### TOP PANEL

Can be customised with personal artwork

### CONNECTIVITY

4m detachable USB cable / 2.5mm audio jack for Xbox 360 headset

### PIMP MY FIGHT STICK

The top panel artwork can be replaced with your own custom work of art. A template can be downloaded from Razer's website that'll help you ensure it's a perfect fit.

### ARCADE-STYLE CONTROL

The eight-way joystick and ten buttons (Start and Back buttons exist on the side of the Atrix) are arranged in a traditional arcade layout, which is sure to please hardcore fighting game fans. Moreover, the button layout can be customised at will to suit any fighting style or preferred hand positioning. Even the joystick's restrictor gate can be swapped out for a four-way gate if you'd like.



### EXTRAS

Also inside the Atrox you'll find a magnetised screwdriver (flat and cross tip, useful for all that modding you're likely to do with your new fighting stick), a detachable USB cable and an extra American-style bat top joystick.



### SUMMARY

#### PROS

- Impressive build quality
- Hugely customisable components
- Internal storage

#### CONS

- Nothing springs to mind

#### ALTERNATIVES

- Mad Catz Super Street Fighter IV FightStick Tournament Edition

### POP THE HOOD

Press the release button on the bottom edge of the Atrox and its top panel pops open to reveal the fighting stick's innards.

### QUALITY CONTENDER

Fighting stick aficionados will know that when it comes to getting your hands on premium arcade components, Sanwa Denshi is the go-to manufacturer. The Japanese company is renowned for its high-end offerings, and Razer clearly knows this, infusing the Atrox's ball top joystick and buttons with Sanwa Denshi's distinguished superiority.

### STORAGE AND MORE

The Atrox's hollow inner can be used as a storage compartment, but more importantly, it's where you access all the technical bits for customising the buttons and joystick. The bottom of the compartment boasts a honeycomb design which advanced modders can use to securely mount any additional goodies using good old screws.



# The Lazy Gamer's Guide Oculus Rift



Website [www.oculusvr.com](http://www.oculusvr.com) RRP TBC

The consumer version of the Oculus Rift isn't out yet, but we've had the pleasure of strapping the developer kits to our faces to see whether or not the tiny start-up company named Oculus is on to something. We hadn't even had the Rift ramming glorious 3D images into our eyeballs for three seconds before we realised that Oculus is most definitely on to something. In short, the Rift is staggeringly awesome. The final

consumer version will be a far more refined experience and boast a greater screen resolution and lighter weight. We can't tell you much more about the final version's specs, because Oculus themselves aren't even sure just yet. Suffice it to say that the developer kit was already something we'd pay lots and lots of money for, so the final consumer version should be at the top of every PC gamer's wish list from now on. That's an order. **NAG**

## TECHNICAL

### INPUT

DVI and HDMI

### RESOLUTION

1280x800 (developer kit); ≥ 1920x1080 (consumer version)

### ASPECT RATIO

16:10

### Screen Size

7" (developer kit)

### FOV

90 degrees horizontal; 110 degree diagonal (developer kit)

### WEIGHT

379g (developer kit)

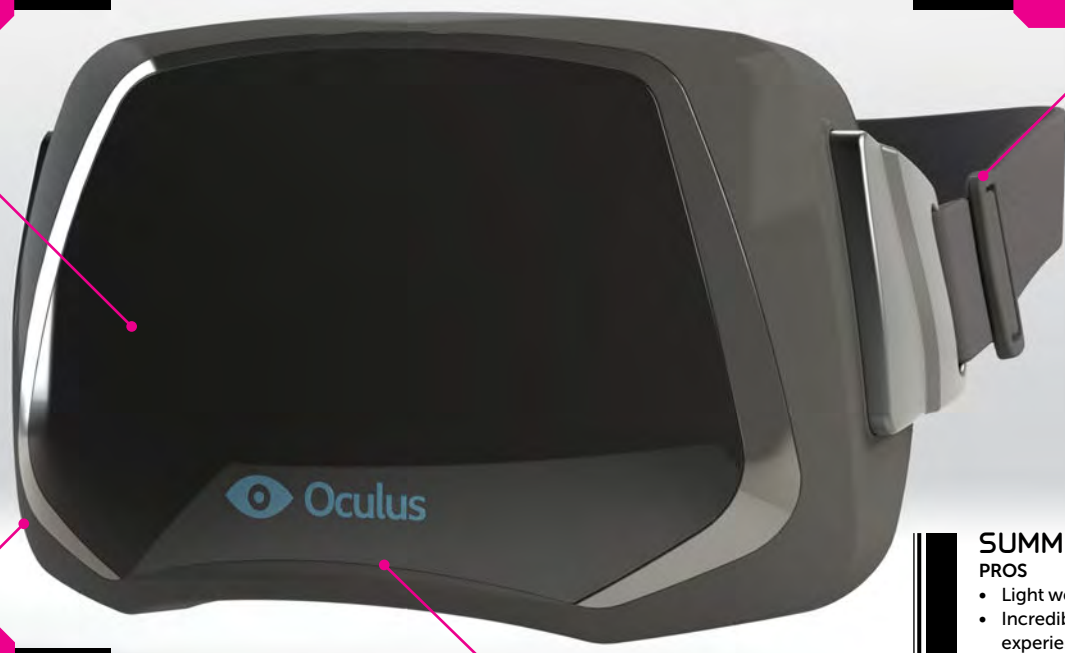
The Oculus Rift comes with three sets of interchangeable lenses in order to cater for people with varying vision requirements, such as being near-sighted versus far-sighted.

The Rift plugs into a small input box, which in turn plugs into your PC via either DVI or HDMI with a converter plug.

Three straps on the developer kit are fully padded and fully adjustable, meaning that once fitted properly the Rift isn't going anywhere. The consumer version will likely use a smaller, lighter screen which will obviate the need for a third support strap.

Super comfy foam means that the Rift fits snugly across your cheek bones and above your eyebrows. On top of making the fit very comfortable, the foam doubles as a light filter to block out any ambient light that might break your immersion.

The screen of the headset can be extended further away from the eyes so that people with glasses can still use the Rift.



## SUMMARY

### PROS

- Light weight
- Incredibly immersive experience
- No latency in head tracking

### CONS

- Screen door effect on the developer kit version's image
- It's not out yet

### ALTERNATIVES

- None



Designed for Enthusiasts.  
Engineered for Performance.

# Obsidian Series 350D

MICRO ATX PC CASE



## The Micro ATX case for high-performance system builds.

The Obsidian Series 350D Micro ATX PC case is designed for building compact high-performance systems with Micro ATX and Mini ITX motherboards. The compact size is ideal if your space is limited, but there's plenty of room inside for liquid CPU cooling, dual hard drives, dual SSDs, and dual full-length graphics cards.

Like all Obsidian cases, the 350D is designed for fast and neat builds, with tool-free access and drive installation. Smart features like a native 2.5" SSD cage make the most of its small size, and the cooling-focused interior has five fan mounting points, with room for two 240mm radiators.

Learn lots more at [corsair.com/350D](http://corsair.com/350D)



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# ELGATO GAME CAPTURE HD

Supplier Gaming Cartel Website [www.gamingcartel.co.za](http://www.gamingcartel.co.za) RRP R2,400

## BUNDLE

Inside the box you'll find a short HDMI cable and a custom PS3 component cable. There's a quick start guide, but no software, so you'll have to download it yourself (just over 30MB). The file size is small enough to not be an issue for most users, and we really appreciate having all the necessary cables in the box as a fair trade-off for the minor inconvenience.

## INPUT/OUTPUT

Your options here are HDMI in/out and a custom component input for PS3 using the bundled cable. Having fewer options is good for those looking for a quick fix, and, while the component-to-HDMI conversion isn't perfect, it's a very convenient solution.

## CAPTURE

The Elgato continues its simple approach to

capturing throughout the software. It might seem bare-bones, but really, everything that you'd need is present. There's support for live voice-over capturing with a mic connected to your PC. Video capture quality tops at an excellent 31Mbps, and the software includes support for live-streaming through YouTube and Twitch.tv. It's also always capturing in the background thanks to its Flashback Recording feature, which means you can retro-actively record any of your award-winning gameplay moments you may have missed.

## EDIT AND SHARE

This is where the Elgato offering falls flat. Video editing is minimal, with nothing much more than the ability to splice together clips and export them using one

of the preset options. This is great if all you want is a straightforward, simple way to capture and share your videos, but those who'd like a bit more power and control might be frustrated. Then again, those people might already have some decent video editing software, so this may not be an issue depending on your needs.

## CONCLUSION

The Elgato is incredibly simple to use, and if that's what you want, then you'll love it. Almost everything you'll need to record and share video is in the box, and, while its editing software is laughable, we do think most people should be able to get by well enough, or turn to a third-party application if necessary.

# Elgato Game Capture HD

VS

# Roxio Game Capture HD Pro





**Note:** Both devices can only capture HDMI when used with an Xbox 360, and must use component to capture from a PS3. This is due to the PS3's use of encrypted HDCP through HDMI, so you are somewhat limited in terms of the quality you can capture from Sony's console as a general rule with these sorts of devices.

We've seen high-end capture devices in the past, but for the average gamer the level of expertise or sheer amount of cash they'd have to dole out was prohibitive. HD capture devices have finally managed to meet that happy medium between affordability and functionality. Right now there are at least a handful of these devices floating around the market, and this month we've selected two of them and put them head-to-head.

## ROXIO GAME CAPTURE HD PRO

Supplier Direct Distribution Services Website [www.directservices.co.za](http://www.directservices.co.za) RRP R1,799

### BUNDLE

This bundle is a little disappointing, with nothing more than the device, a USB cable and installation CD. You will need an additional HDMI cable if you're connecting from an Xbox 360, or a component cable for your PS3.

### INPUT/OUTPUT

You've got the option of HDMI in/output as well as component in/output, and you can use HDMI output even if you use component to receive the signal from a PS3. While purists might enjoy the component in/outputs for PS3, the lack of such a cable in the box could be a potential issue for any user who's only ever used HDMI previously, as that will require an additional purchase. Either way – you're buying an extra cable.

### CAPTURE

Roxio's capture software comes with just a few options, and the video compression is limited to 15Mbps. That's perfectly fine for video capture, but those who wish to snap screenshots from the footage might find it a little rough around the edges.

The software is in general a bit of a let-down, with no option for live mic input. It also lacks the Elgato's super-neat Flashback feature, but there is support for live-streaming through Justin.tv. At least everything is neatly arranged and you won't ever find yourself confused about how to do anything.

### EDIT AND SHARE

Finally, this is Roxio's time to shine: they have bundled a nice little editing package, and it should be just advanced enough to satisfy

any amateur or mid-level needs.

While there's no support for multi-track editing, and the live scrubbing is very laggy, you can quickly drop in transitions (from a selection of over 200 cheese-tastic options), text overlays, video effects and voice narration, and put to use a few extra features like speed changes and clip trimming as needed. When you're done, choose from the wide variety of export options and away you go.

### CONCLUSION

Roxio's capture device features a bundle sorely lacking in cables, but once you've made the additional purchase or successfully fished around that weird drawer in your office, this is the bundle that ultimately offers more potential from a software point of view. **NAG**



**CHIPSET**  
Intel Z87  
**MEMORY**  
4x 240-pin DDR3  
**CPU SUPPORT**  
LGA 1150  
**EXPANSION**  
4x PCI-E 16X,  
3x PCI-E 1X  
**SIZE**  
ATX

SPECS



# GIGABYTE Z87X-OC

Supplier Gigabyte Website [www.gigabyte.com](http://www.gigabyte.com) RRP TBA

**B**efore we get into anything else, we should let you know that the Z87X-OC along with the G1.Sniper 5 from last issue should be GIGABYTE's proudest moments. Unlike any other time before, they have managed to hit the ground running with at least two boards that are worthy of the highest praise.

The OC board in particular is what the overclocking community has perhaps needed for so long, but was never made available. Much like the MAXIMUS VI EXTREME in this issue, the OC is a testament to just how great a motherboard can be when designed with a single purpose and focus. GIGABYTE with respect to this has never been closer than now with regards to what the best in the industry has to offer.

Sadly for us in South Africa, the OC board at the time of writing had not reached our shores and there was no indication that it ever would. A real pity, because this board only costs a little more than what the Z77X-UD3H which we loved so much. For this kind of investment, there has never been a better motherboard. The component quality, features and engineering efforts evident on the Z87X-OC leave us wondering if there's any profit at all for GIGABYTE. The numbers just don't come together, because what we have is a better board than last year's Z77X-UP7 that cost more than double the price. Sure enough the Z87X-OC lacks 4-way SLI support, but

it will do 3-way SLI and 4-way CrossFire. Moreover it comes to us with GIGABYTE's smoothest BIOS to date. It's similar to what is on the G1.Sniper 5 but built specifically with overclocking in mind.

It has even taken a page from the recent ROG boards and provides some memory overclocking profiles which will make reaching those very high speeds much simpler than doing it manually. In addition to all that, GIGABYTE has packed so many tuning buttons on to this board that the more expensive OC Force model at more than twice the MSRP can't match it. We'll look at that offering at another time, but suffice to say we don't believe it's possible for it to be twice the board hence warranting its cost. Alas we'll leave that analysis to that review when we actually have the board to test.

Had it not been for the MAXIMUS VI EXTREME, this would possibly have been the ultimate overclocking board for the chipset. In fact we would go so far as to say, if you're truly serious about competitive overclocking you should consider investing in it no matter which other one you may have already. At such a low price and with so many overclocking features it would be ridiculous not to add this to your arsenal. This is especially true if you're on a budget, as the Z87X-OC should cost less than the UD4 and such boards, while being better by far.

BENCHMARKS	
BASELINE: ASUS MAXIMUS VI EXTREME	
	13,122
3DMark 11	13,258
Cinebench 11.5	10.13
	10.17
AIDA 64	30,559MB/s
copy	32,112MB/s

Considering everything that GIGABYTE has accomplished with the Z87X-OC, we were compelled to give it a perfect score, but this was not meant to be for one reason only, and that is the BIOS. While vastly improved it just isn't as smooth as it should be. It may seem a little thing to complain about, but consider that this is an overclocking board, so the chosen demographic for it will spend lots of time tweaking in the BIOS and this experience should be flawless. Currently it's not quite there. Don't let that deter you though, this board is good, it's actually quite incredible and is probably a must-have. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



**GIGABYTE has, for the second time with the Z87 chipset, executed almost flawlessly.**

**The Z87X-OC is the best overclocking board GIGABYTE has ever produced.**

**PLUS**

Should be very affordable / GIGABYTE's best BIOS interface to date / Overclocking features galore

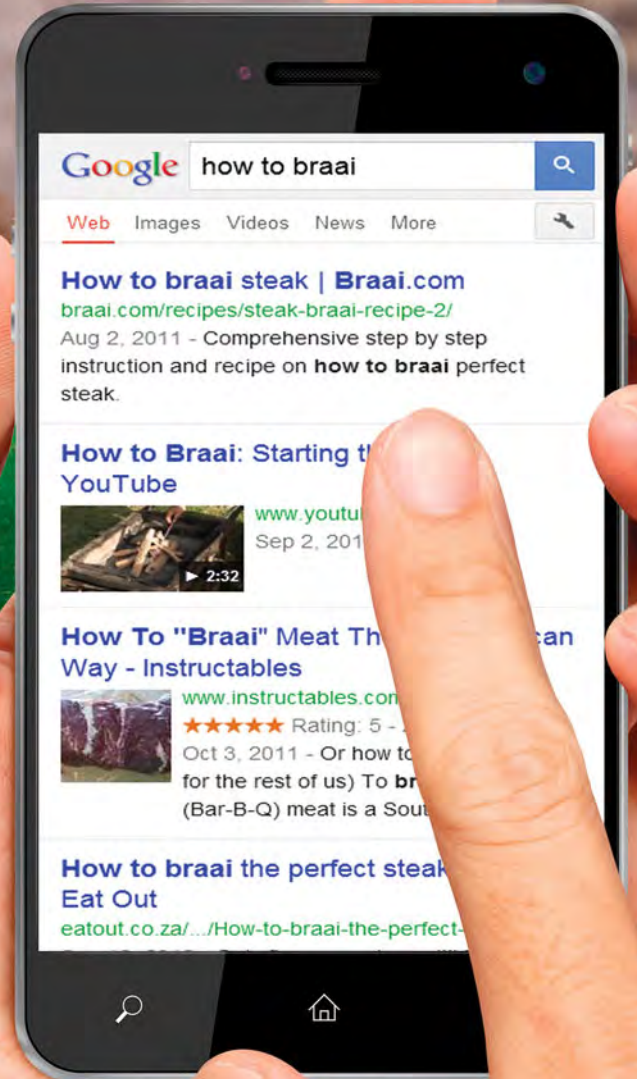
**MINUS**

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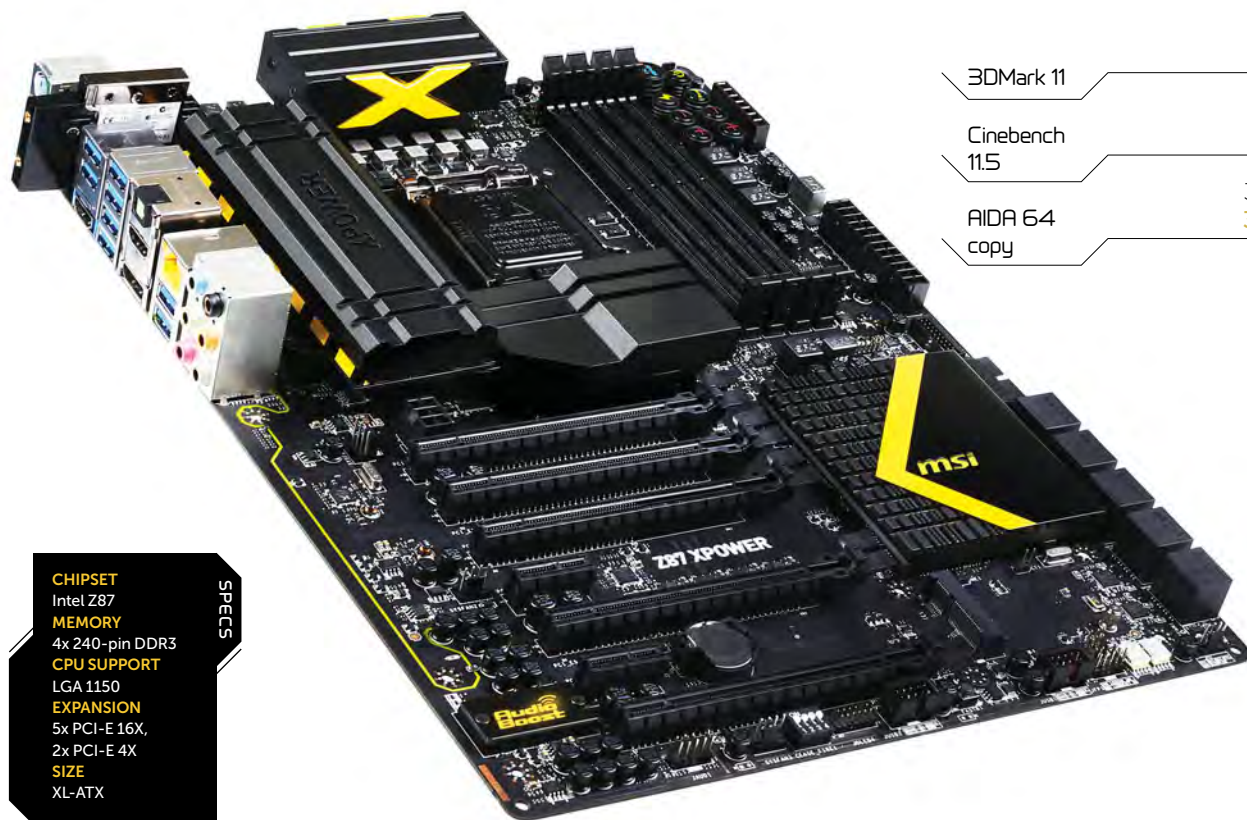
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**BENCHMARKS**

BASELINE: **ASUS MAXIMUS VI EXTREME**

	12,963
3DMark 11	<b>13,258</b>
Cinebench 11.5	10.11
	<b>10.17</b>
AIDA 64 copy	30,013MB/s
	<b>32,112MB/s</b>



**SPECS**

**CHIPSET**  
Intel Z87

**MEMORY**  
4x 240-pin DDR3

**CPU SUPPORT**  
LGA 1150

**EXPANSION**  
5x PCI-E 16X,  
2x PCI-E 4X

**SIZE**  
XL-ATX

# MSI Z87 XPOWER

Supplier **Corex** Website [www.msi.com](http://www.msi.com) RRP **R6,299**

Here's an example of why more isn't always better. If you read our previous issue's review of the MSI MPower MAX, you'll find that we scored that board highly. Rightfully so as it was the best motherboard MSI had ever produced and, even after taking a look at the Z87 XPOWER, the MPower Max remains contextually superior.

The Z87 XPOWER is the premium Z87 board from MSI. That is, it has more added than the MPower max did not have. This includes 4-way graphics, better audio, more ratio buttons and a host of other features. The board has so much more than the MPower max physically, that it's had to grow in size to the XL-ATX form factor. Feature for feature, there's no comparing the two boards as the XPOWER is clearly superior.

The question however is not whether the board has more features, as that's a given, but how much those features are worth. This sadly is where the XPOWER may have bitten off more than it can chew. Essentially for almost double the price, you are getting a motherboard that isn't actually better in any practical way.

When we first heard of this motherboard we suspected this may have been the case and upon receiving it we confirmed this. It's not so much that the Z87 XPOWER is bad, it's far from that actually, but more that it doesn't add anything significantly useful for

overclocking. The little additions however will cost you a lot. As a single purpose-built motherboard you're left with a good offering but one that doesn't quite justify its price. Mind you, this is not a situation caused by our local DIY market or the pathetic rand. This discrepancy in pricing exists in the US and other regions as well. The Z87 XPOWER just costs a lot of money.

That aside, we found that the Z87 XPOWER does make overclocking on the desktop slightly easier than on the MPower max. Adjusting the bclk a step at a time is very handy when shooting for those validation scores. You can actually do this on the MPower Max as well but having separate CPU ratio and Bclk is great. Best of all you can adjust both the CPU clock and bclk on the fly during a benchmark, something that would prove rather difficult on the MPower Max. So in that regard, yes the Z87 XPOWER can be argued to be better depending on how important those features are to you.

The final nail though in this board's proverbial coffin though has nothing to do with MSI directly but the existence of the ASUS MAXIMUS VI EXTREME. These two boards are light years apart in everything and there's just no comparing them. Yet the Z87 XPOWER will cost you much more. In light of this, there's really no reason to want to buy the Z87 XPOWER. The MPower Max is

still worthwhile because it is much cheaper, but this situation with the Z87 XPOWER begs us to question the relevance of this motherboard.

As stated in another Z87 motherboard review in this issue, this situation may not be unique to MSI but may affect other vendors as well who have boards that cost more than the MAXIMUS VI EXTREME. It's an absurd situation really as would a 2013 BMW M3 retailing for more than a 2013 Bugatti Veyron. Yet this is very analogous to the situation we have here. The Z87 XPOWER is only for the die-hard MSI fans. **NAG**

- **Neo Sibeko**

**6** The Z87 XPOWER board is supposed to be the ultimate version of the MPower Max. However the MPower Max is just as good at almost half the price.

**PLUS**  
Click 4 BIOS / On-board overclocking buttons  
Looks incredible

**MINUS**  
Isn't actually better than the MPower Max / MAXIMUS VI EXTREME costs less

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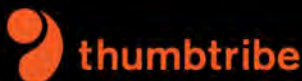
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**SPECS**

CORE  
GK110 (28nm)  
1150MHz  
PROCESSORS  
1,536  
RENDER OUTPUTS  
32  
MEMORY  
4,096MB GDDR5  
7.0GHz (224.32GB/  
sec)  
API  
DirectX 11  
OpenGL 4.3  
OpenCL 1.x  
PhysX

**BENCHMARKS**

BASELINE: EVGA GTX TITAN

3DMARK - Fire-Strike	7,507 <b>9,116</b>
CATZILLA - Tiger	10,692 <b>13,483</b>
HITMAN: Absolution	(DX11 ultra detail) 4xAA: 54.47  (DX11 ultra detail) 4xAA: <b>68.97 fps</b>

# EVGA GTX 770 Classified

Supplier EVGA Website [www.evga.com](http://www.evga.com) RRP R6,999

Now that the NVIDIA 600 series of graphics cards is behind us, we can comfortably say that we are glad that episode is over. Especially from an overclocking point of view, the GTX 680 proved to be a nightmare. Only one person was able to overclock it convincingly and even then, the HD 7970 GE was more than capable of matching and beating it in the benchmarks.

A great little GPU for NVIDIA, but one that was problematic for competitive overclockers. Fortunately – as stated in our previous GTX 770 reviews – NVIDIA fixed several issues that had plagued the GK104's initial outing and this time we have a GPU that is effectively without limits. This is especially true when dealing with the GTX 770 Classified.

Unlike the previous Classified cards, this one features the newer and possibly better ACX cooler. A dual fan solution makes use of heat pipes that have direct contact with the GPU core. It's a better solution than the original cooler EVGA used to use, but only in open box configurations. The blower type cooler used on the older Classified cards is still better in a closed system as it blows warm air out the rear of the case instead of downwards.

Which cooler you prefer will depend on the case you have and what it is exactly you want to do with the Classified card. For our purposes the new cooler is better

and it has to have something to do with the eye watering 1,400MHz we were able to operate the GPU at using the reference cooler. This is the highest GPU speed we've ever recorded without using exotic cooling and certainly puts it far ahead of any GTX 770 we've tested previously. At this frequency, the graphics card was able to break 8,000 points in 3DMark's Fire-Strike test. Compared to the GTX 680, the 770 is thoroughly faster.

Electronically, as is always the case with EVGA's cards, it's impeccable. This isn't a surprise though as the PCB is identical to the one used on the original 680. The only discernible difference is the Samsung GDDR5 memory used as opposed to the Hynix memory. This is to be expected as only the Samsung memory is rated for 7GHz operation at the nominal voltage.

Just in case you were wondering if it's possible to flash your GTX 680 into a GTX 770 Classified? Yes this is possible in theory but in practice you'll run into a lot of trouble and that's because your 680 with the Hynix memory will likely not be able to maintain those high memory clock speeds and you'll get corruption or no display output at all. Whether NVIDIA did this intentionally or otherwise is unknown, but the boot up clocks or settings on the GTX 770 are somewhat incompatible with what the GTX 680 can manage, which prevents the otherwise "free" upgrade from happening.

This graphics adapter is near perfect, but we do wish that EVGA and other vendors actually had taken the time to add some active cooling or beefier heat sinks to the VRM. This is especially true for the high-end cards such as this one. The VRM cooling is always disappointing and it makes that area of the card warmer than the GPU. The card is meant to operate in this way and there's no risk of premature failure, but for our piece of mind we'd appreciate a cooler PWM.

Other than that, we are huge fans of the EVGA GTX 770 Classified and it is definitely the best GK104 based GPU money can buy. **NAG**  
- Neo Sibeko



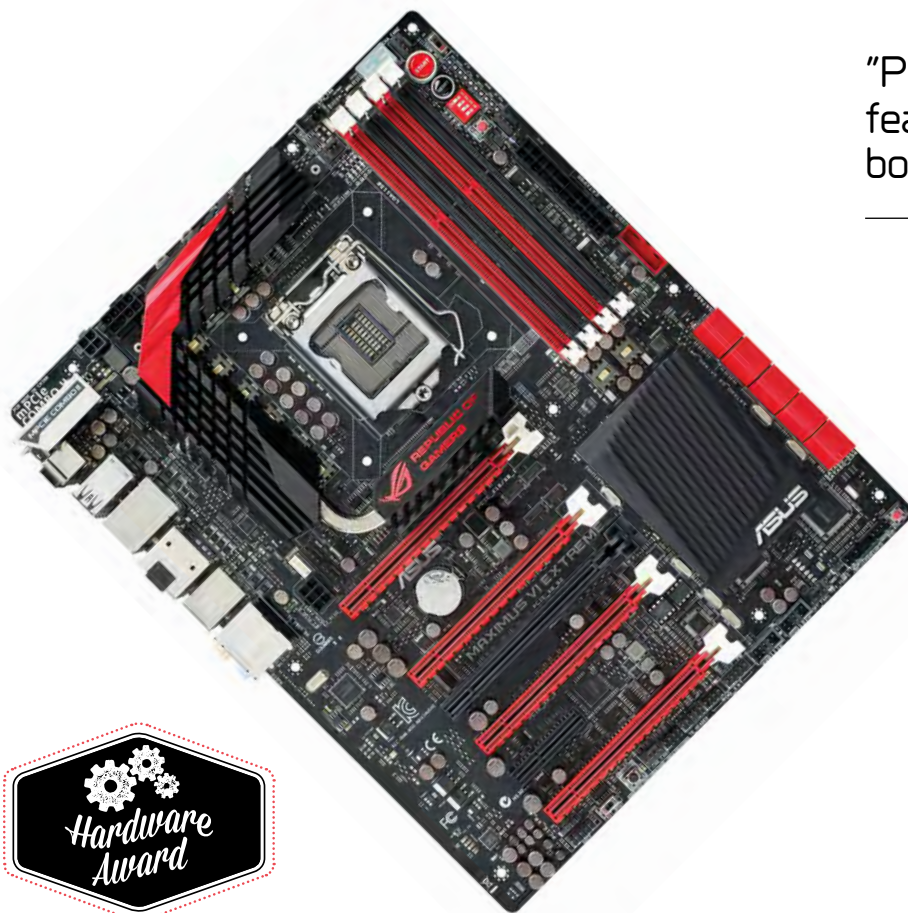
EVGA has managed to come out ahead of some very stiff competition to produce not only the most impressive GTX 770 electronically, but the fastest with the most overclocking headroom.

**PLUS**

Looks great / Very good performance  
Built for extreme overclocking

**MINUS**

May be hard to find locally / Weak rand makes for bad pricing



"Physically it's just as feature packed as any other board, if not more so."

**BENCHMARKS**

BASELINE: **ASUS MAXIMUS VI EXTREME**

3DMark 11	13,258
Cinebench 11.5	10.17
AIDA 64 copy	32,112MB/s



# ASUS MAXIMUS VI EXTREME

Supplier **ASUS** Website [www.asus.com](http://www.asus.com) RRP **R5,199**

**SPECS**

**CHIPSET**  
Intel Z87

**MEMORY**  
4x 240-pin DDR3

**CPU SUPPORT**  
LGA 1150

**EXPANSION**  
5x PCI-E 16X,  
1x PCI-E 4X

**SIZE**  
ATX

**W**e've always had great respect for the ASUS ROG team. It took many years for them to hit their stride but once they did, they were unstoppable. The MAXIMUS VI EXTREME is a classic example of just how proficient the team has become at building high-end motherboards. Their graphics cards aren't as good unfortunately, but where motherboards are concerned, they are peerless and have been for several generations.

The Z87 platform is largely a boring one; it isn't special in any way save for some ridiculous memory overclocking capabilities that no other platform can begin to match. Frequencies well above 4GHz have been recorded with DDR3 which was never meant to scale anywhere near that speed. This goes to show just how incredible the IMC is on the Haswell CPUs. Short of that however it's marginally better than Ivy Bridge.

Fortunately that hasn't stopped motherboard vendors like ASUS producing incredible products like the MAXIMUS VI EXTREME which, as we stated earlier, is peerless. There may be boards that stand out, but none put together such a compelling package.

Just like with the MAXIMUS V EXTREME, the BIOS that ASUS has designed is impeccable. It's not only the exhaustive overclocking options that are made available that will impress you, but just how well explained they are as well. The

BIOS interface is simple, ultra slick and well designed. There are no gimmicks and frills. It's a purist BIOS that somehow manages to be pleasing to the eye while featuring more options than any other BIOS on any other motherboard ever. That includes anything DFI ever designed at its prime.

Physically it's just as feature-packed as any other board, if not more so. In a standard ATX form factor, the ROG team has managed to add 4-way SLI support, which is rare these days, with most boards opting for an E-ATX or XL-ATX form factor. Add a very impressive OC panel to the package and you have a board built from the ground up for overclocking but still more than sufficient for gaming.

Why then do we not have it with a perfect score in the new Dream Machine? Well it's simply because the Sniper 5 still has vastly superior audio and the dedicated gaming NIC for whatever that's worth. If it wasn't for that it would be the new Dream Machine foundation. Let it be said again that this is the ultimate Z87 overclocking motherboard. Moreover the MAXIMUS VI EXTREME presents numerous problems for the competition because it costs less than the ultra-high end Z87 boards from the closest competing vendors by as much as R1,000. Each of those alternatives is nowhere near what the ROG team has produced. Thus it may be a problem for competitors justifying those high prices when it is clear as day that

the MAXIMUS VI EXTREME has set the bar.

If this review reads too favourably, that's because the MAXIMUS VI EXTREME really is that remarkable. At the Intel/Corsair OC Main event earlier this year, this motherboard won 10 out of the possible 11 benchmarks, where all the major vendors with high-end boards brought their best to bare. That kind of domination is not a coincidence but it goes to show that the MAXIMUS VI EXTREME is in a different class compared to the rest.

This one is an easy board to recommend as it practically sells itself. If you want the ultimate overclocking board for Z87, buy the MAXIMUS VI EXTREME; it's just staggering how good it is.

- **Neo Sibeko**

**10** The ROG team has done it again, setting the bar for overclocking on the Z87 platform. It's as perfect a motherboard as can be made.

**PLUS**  
Incredible BIOS / Exhaustive overclocking features / Keenly priced

**MINUS**  
Nothing

## Antec iso

**Supplier** Corex

**Website** www.antecmobileproducts.com

**RRP** TBA

**W**e saw a couple of good products at Computex that we are sure to bring to you in detail in future, but right now the iso earphones are one of the better offerings from the A.M.P. (Antec Mobile Products) range. They certainly look great and the build quality speaks for itself. As a high-end version of the dBS earphones, the iso is certainly doing the job.

There are a few issues though, such as the odd manual which isn't clear on how to work the noise cancelling or how to pair it to your chosen device. The bass reproduction does leave you slightly underwhelmed and you can't use the iso set for regular stereo mini-jack connections. It's exclusively Bluetooth. That means virtually no compatibility with older iPods and other portable players. An odd design decision, as simply making the control unit removable would have prevented this oversight.

Other than that, we don't have much to complain about. Noise cancellation, while not the best in the business, does actually work which goes a long way to improving the sound quality. At the selling price, (likely to be above R1,000) it's a difficult set to recommend outright. It is functional and does exactly what it claims, but we do feel that the execution could have been a little better, as this is a lot of money to pay for simple Bluetooth connectivity and average noise cancelling capabilities. Still, if you must have a set the iso will do just fine. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



SPECS

**OPERATING TIME** 8 hours  
**RANGE** 10 M  
**NOISE REDUCTION** 15 – 30 dB



The iso earphones are average earphones, which are made worthwhile by the Bluetooth and noise-cancelling functionality.

**PLUS**

Active noise cancelling / Bluetooth connectivity

**MINUS**

Average sound quality / Control unit is a little too big



## Wacom Cintiq 13HD

**Supplier** Wacom Distributors South Africa

**Website** www.directservices.co.za

**RRP** R14,899

**D**espite having some competition in the lower segment, Wacom pretty-much rules the roost when it comes to high-end drawing tablets and screens, and that's exactly where the Cintiq 13HD slots in. While the 13HD isn't nearly as costly as the mammoth 24HD, it still delivers an excellent experience for artists looking for a direct-input touch screen for use with their desktop systems.

To be clear, this isn't a device that you can use independently; it's a USB touch screen that requires connectivity to a PC to function. Performance-wise, the Cintiq handles itself very well – at least as well as the Intuos – and delivers almost lag-free pen inputs that come as close to digital paper as you can get right now. It's certainly not lag-free, but the delay is so slight that it'll take just a bit of time to get used to it before you're a convert.

Everything about the Cintiq 13HD speaks to its heritage: the unit is elegantly designed and lightweight – suitable for use on the lap or desktop. And, while it will likely feel better next to a small laptop screen than a desktop one (it behaves as a standard HDMI display), the fact that it requires external power will prevent it from achieving the same portability.

Aside from a few design niggles, the only thing keeping the Cintiq from greatness is its cost. At nearly R15k it's coming in way above the price of a tablet PC, but one simply can't argue that it's not worth it. If you've got the money, then you'll love the Cintiq 13HD, but for existing Intuos or tablet PC owners, this might be a stretch. **NAG**

- Chris Savides



SPECS

**DISPLAY** 1920X1080 LED  
**PEN RESOLUTION** 5,080 LPI  
**SENSITIVITY** 2,048 levels  
**CUSTOMISABILITY** 4 user-assigned buttons, replacement nibs (included)  
**PEN SWITCHES** Tip switch; 2 side switches; eraser



As the entry-level Cintiq, the 13HD delivers on performance, but that price could be enough to put off anyone but the most committed of digital artists.

**PLUS**

Slim and lightweight / Crisp display / Great specs

**MINUS**

Pricy / Requires external power

# Corsair Vengeance Pro 2,666MHz C11 16GB Kit

**Supplier** Rectron  
**Website** [www.corsair.com](http://www.corsair.com)  
**RRP** TBA



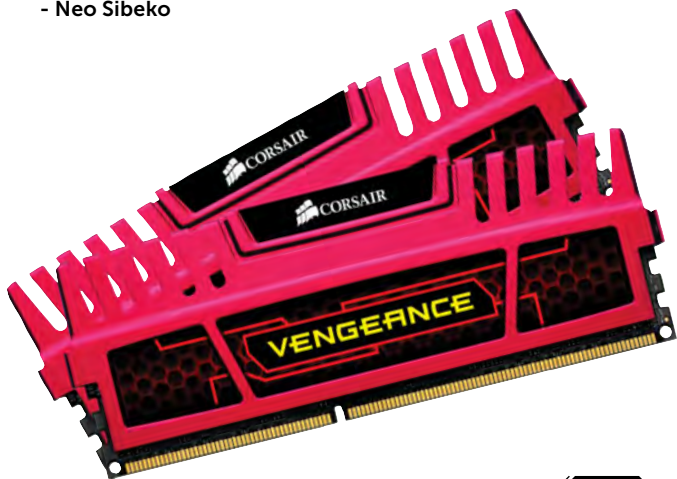
**M**emory prices have gone up and it looks like they may continue to rise for some time still. As the last year of exclusive use of DDR3 for Intel, it's caused memory manufacturers to not only limit production, but the demand for DRAM in other industries has further catapulted the RAM pricing upwards.

Not a bad thing considering just how dire the DRAM market had been for years. It may be cause to complain for us, but in the end it ensures a healthier market. In the meantime then it's best to get as much RAM as you possibly can and this is especially true when you're using an AMD machine. There's no telling when AMD will move to DDR4, so high-speed DDR3 is what you're going to be using for a while.

What better RAM than the Corsair 2,666MHz 16GB set? C11 isn't exciting, but what you're after here is frequency. The C10 Vengeance Pro kit costs significantly more and won't net you more performance on top of being harder to find. These days the performance DRAM market is about IC sorting and that kind of sorting is expensive, with the cost being passed on to you.

For overclocking on the AMD platform, we'd go with this kit, as all you're going to be shooting for is memory frequency records much like on Z87. For those who use an APU, the high-speed memory will net you massive gains in GPU performance, as frequency will net you far bigger gains than latency. In essence, this kit, while not designed for either AMD or Intel chipsets, seems to fit best on our current AMD Dream Machine. Not only is it very simple to overclock, but going all the way to 2,800MHz requires no tuning of the settings whatsoever. You simply select 2,800MHz and you're on your way. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



SPECS

FREQUENCY 2,666MHZ  
TIMINGS 11-13-13-35



The Corsair Vengeance Pro 2,666 isn't as good as the Dominator Platinum 2,666 C10 in our current Dream Machine, but this set is significantly easier to find and close in performance.

#### PLUS

Will easily operate at 2,800MHz

#### MINUS

Set will likely be very expensive



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# NAG

## MSI N650 Ti Power Edition

**Supplier** MSI  
**Website** www.msi.com  
**RRP** R2,019

At the time of writing, NVIDIA's 700 series of graphics cards was still incomplete. There existed the 780, 770 and the 760. However, everything lower than that was relegated to the 600 series and it is in light of this that we bring you the 650 Ti review seemingly so late into its life span.

Since its initial outing, NVIDIA released a Boost Edition with much higher clock speeds and better memory bandwidth, but all that comes at a higher price. For some users though, this additional outlay isn't possible and as such you're still confined to the R2,000-price bracket where this graphics card can be found.

For your money you get a respectable GPU. It won't play *Crysis 3* at the highest setting, nor should you expect it to, but it's good enough to play most games at standard settings at 1080p. Not bad for the price at all. With some overclocking we found that we could boost the paltry 86GB/s memory bandwidth to above 100GB/s which comes in very handy when you're trying to turn up the eye candy. This is one area where the card is severely starved and overclocking the memory can lead to tangible performance gains in games.

The Power Edition, as per MSI standards, features a nifty cooler that is not only better in performance than the reference NVIDIA solution, but much quieter as well. GPU temperatures remain exceptionally low and this will allow even further overclocking should you so choose to go that route. We found though that, as stated earlier, that's not where the real bottleneck is, so the shipping clocks are best left as they are. Overall this is a worthwhile purchase for those on a budget. Please do take note though that this graphics card has recently said to have reached EOL (End Of Life) status, so if you do want to buy it, get it sooner rather than later. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



**SPECS**  
**CORE** GK106 (28NM) 928MHZ  
**PROCESSORS** 768  
**RASTER OPERATORS** 24  
**MEMORY** 1024MB GDDR5 5.4GHz (86.4GB/sec)  
**API** DirectX 11 / OpenGL 4.3 / OpenCL 1.x / PhysX



This graphics card has been superseded by the Boost Edition which is a little faster, for a little more money. The N650 Ti Power Edition however is still a potent little card.

### PLUS

Plays all games at full HD resolution / Overclocking yields some tangible gains

### MINUS

Pedestrian by MSI standards / 1GB of Memory

## SteelSeries Apex

**Supplier** Megarom  
**Website** www.steelseries.com  
**RRP** R1,299

When we reviewed SteelSeries' Apex [RAW], we found it to be an excellent choice for anyone on the hunt for a gaming keyboard that skimps on a few of the more superfluous features, but still packs all the necessary punch to make it attractive to gamers. Now we've got our hands on the Apex – the [RAW]'s beefier, more feature-rich sibling. And as you'd expect, it's basically the [RAW] but with *more stuff*.

It shares many of the quirky design ideas flaunted by its sibling. Interchangeable feet let you adjust the resting angle of the Apex, allowing you to adjust its tilt to your preference. Those two extra arrow keys make an appearance as well, letting you move diagonally (upwards/forwards, but not downwards/backwards) in whatever situation calls for diagonal movement. It shares the [RAW]'s gigantic spacebar, which is obviously a plus because you can never have too much spacebar.

In terms of additional features, you'll find stuff like backlighting that boasts 16.8 million variable colours rather than plain white backlighting. It's also got something called ActiveZone, which allows you to set individual backlighting for five different zones on the keyboard. It's got dedicated media keys, and five more macro keys on top of the [RAW]'s 17 (it also boasts four macro layers instead of two). Two USB ports turn the Apex into a USB hub.

It's powered by the SteelSeries Engine – a decent software suite that lets you alter the keyboard's advanced functionality. Overall, the Apex is a worthy competitor in the crowded gaming keyboard market. The non-mechanical keys make for a pleasant typing experience, and the Apex's features are attractive enough to make it worth considering if you absolutely must have more than what the [RAW] offers. Bear in mind that, at R300 more than the already pricey [RAW], the Apex is an expensive keyboard. **NAG**

- Dane Remendes



**SPECS**  
**MACRO KEYS** 22  
**MACRO LAYERS** 4  
**BACKLIGHTING** Yes, adjustable intensity  
**ANTI-GHOSTING** Six simultaneous keypresses, 20 anti-ghosting keys in total



It's perhaps not as outwardly impressive as some of gaming's flashier keyboards, but the Apex is nevertheless a fantastic offering.

### PLUS

Everything you need from a gaming keyboard / Comfortable typing

### MINUS

It's expensive



# Patriot Viper 3 2400MHz CL10 16GB Kit

**Supplier** Syntech SA  
**Website** [www.syntech.co.za](http://www.syntech.co.za)  
**RRP** R2,750



It's been a while since Patriot made memory that catered to the enthusiasts. As a once prominent name in the circles of power users, the vendor neglected this demographic. Fortunately they seem to be making steady progress and have begun taking the DIY market seriously again with the Viper 3 series for example.

The set we received was their highest binned 2,400MHz CL10 set. We can't tell you what chips were used here as the heat spreader is near impossible to take off without compromising the ICs, but suffice to say it behaved very much like high binned Samsung ICs. We put that suspicion to the test and found that the memory didn't need much tuning for 2,600MHz and even 2,666MHz. A slight adjustment to the droop in VDIMM for 2,800 was needed, however. If you can provide a sustainable 1.65V to the memory (it's rated at 1.65V anyway) you should be more than capable of speeds in excess

of 400MHz higher.

We couldn't quite manage 2,933MHz, but that could have everything to do with the board we tested with and, with some tuning to secondary and tertiary timings, this just may be possible. For most users though, the ability to run 2,666MHz after selecting the XMP profile will be welcomed.

We can't help but wonder though, why this kit wasn't sold at 2,666MHz. After having spoken to another vendor, we were told that it's better sometimes to bin for a higher speed, but sell it at a lower one, that way the memory looks impressive for overclocking. In a way, under promise so it looks like it over delivers. If there was ever any credibility to be given to this theory, the Viper 3 makes for a compelling argument. It really does seem like a 2,666MHz kit that's just been labelled incorrectly. Either way, it makes for one fantastic high-speed DRAM set. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



**SPECS**  
**FREQUENCY** 2,400MHZ  
**TIMINGS** 10-12-12-30



After several years of absence Patriot has finally produced a worthwhile enthusiast set of memory.

**PLUS**  
Easily overclocks to 2,666MHz

**MINUS**  
Memory prices set to soar / Suspect specifications

# NAG

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# Back to basics

Are games art? It's a subject I've previously written about at some length, but the short version is that it doesn't even matter because what exactly constitutes art, not-art, and whatever is relegated to that murky space in between is a question better left to some backstreet gallery installation featuring a rusted toaster, a TV set with a broken screen, and a bunch of Styrofoam bricks spray-painted neon green<sup>1</sup>. In other words, there's simply no one, definitive answer to the question<sup>2</sup> so let's stop asking it.

That's just my opinion, of course, and people who actually make games have their own opinions about it that might be totally different, and maybe it's the very unresolved business of is-it, isn't-it that's resulted in a whole lot of grasping attempts at something more meaningful or subtly poignant than Good Guys Versus Bad Guys<sup>3</sup> Co-Starring Big Guns. And that's okay too because I thought *Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons* was rather wonderful, and if this is what tottering on the precipice of profundity is all about then I'll

definitely have some more of that, please and thank you.

But! That doesn't mean we should think less of Good Guys Versus Bad Guys Co-Starring Big Guns, because one thing being different doesn't necessarily make another thing worse by comparison. The comparison is a false one, anyway, because they're simply not the same thing at all. Apples, oranges, fried chicken, etc.

Like everybody else on the planet, I recently went to watch *Pacific Rim*, and – apart from the giant robots bashing giant monsters in the giant gobs – I... wait, no, that was pretty much the entire movie and it was awesome. I mean, you don't need character development or exposition or plot consistency<sup>4</sup> when you've got giant robots and giant monsters playing *Who Wants to Be an Apex Predator?* at the bottom of the ocean. With nukes. It's basically *Call of Duty*<sup>5</sup>, and that's why I also love *Call of Duty*. You can't spell "vapid entertainment" without the "entertainment", and besides, I get to save the world every time.

With the recent expansion into

more thoughtful genre peripheries, it's so easy to get snobby about games these days – "Oh, you know, I only play *indies*, because they're totally *deep* and stuff, and also something, *something* about corporate something", says that one guy that everybody knows, and he probably wears a fedora – but there should always be a place for robots and monsters on our shelves.

- Tarryn "footnote" van der Byl

<sup>1</sup> But ironically neon green, or it couldn't authentically portray the post-constructive paradigm of neo-sublimationist narrative or, like, the dreams of frogs.

<sup>2</sup> Unless that's the whole point. OMG, art.

<sup>3</sup> Although, for some reason that's invariably skimmed over in the intro sequence, the bad guys are usually non-American and/or non-human so perhaps it's like a really profound statement about xenophobia or aggressive colonialism or international fast food politics something, but nobody noticed because of the mega-dynamic sub-ambient post-fluid physics-enhanced headshot explosions.

<sup>4</sup> Or even a plot, which I've hypothesised must have been sucked into the rift that the monsters were coming out of. The writers literally traded the plot for the monsters. Deal!

<sup>5</sup> Basically, just palette-swap the robots and monsters for Team Freedom and a vaguely defined Middle East-Russia alliance respectively.

# Extra Life

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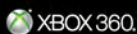


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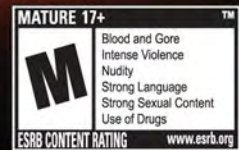


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