

SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING GAMING, COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

NAG

Vol. 16
Issue
NINE

PC / PLAYSTATION / XBOX / NINTENDO

**9 REVIEWS
INCLUDING**

**BATMAN:
ARKHAM ORIGINS**
ASSASSIN'S CREED IV:
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Regulars

- 8 Ed's Note
- 10 Inbox
- 14 Bytes
- 51 home_coded
- 72 Everything Else

Opinion

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

Previews

- 40 WildStar
- 42 Shroud of the Avatar: Forsaken Virtues
- 43 Wii Fit U

Reviews

- 50 Reviews: Introduction
- 50 Mini review: Desktop Dungeons
- 52 Battlefield 4
- 54 Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag
- 58 Batman: Arkham Origins
- 62 Call of Duty: Ghosts
- 64 Puppeteer
- 66 Pokémon X/Y
- 67 NBA 2K14
- 68 F1 2013
- 70 Deus Ex: Human Revolution – Director's Cut / The Typing of the Dead: Overkill

Hardware

- 74 Tech News
- 76 Dream Machine
- 78 Lazy Gamer's Guide: Nintendo 2DS
- 80 Lazy Gamer's Guide: Rikomagic MK602
- 82 Versus: AMD Radeon R9 290X versus NVIDIA GTX 780 Ti
- 86 GALAXY GTX 780 Hall Of Fame
- 88 GIGABYTE P25W Gaming Notebook
- 89 Plantronics RIG
- 90 GIGABYTE GV-R9270XOC-2GD / HP SlateBook x2
- 91 Crucial M500 960GB SSD
- 92 MSI R9 270 GAMING | MSI AG2712A All-In-One PC
- 93 MSI R9 280X GAMING 3G
- 94 Astrum X-723U 2.1 speaker set / Corsair K70 Gaming Keyboard
- 95 Kingston Hyper-X Genesis 2400MHz 16GB

Contents

Features

28 RAGE 2013

rAge 2013! Are you sad it's over? We're sad it's over. Still, we'll always have the memories. Join us as we look back on all the gloriously geeky goodness that this year's expo had to offer.

36 BLIZZCON 2013

It's no rAge, is it? Still, we hear Blizzard puts on a decent show when they put their backs into it. Joking aside, we've got all the announcements, all the wonder, all the quirkiness, all the Blizzard your heart desires nestled usefully within this collection of words 'n' pictures.

44 THIEF

Will it live up to all the expectations fans have of it? The short answer: *we don't know*. Still, it's got Garrett in it, and apparently he's got a bag full of arrow-tricks up his thieving sleeve. Sounds about right. Truth be told, we're cautiously excited for the new *Thief*. Read on to find out why.

84 MSI MOA 2013

MSI continues to show overclockers loads of love with their annual Master Overclocking Arena. This year a smaller, more intimate, invite-only event saw some of the world's best overclockers face off for maximum glory. Neo was there, liquid nitrogen in hand.



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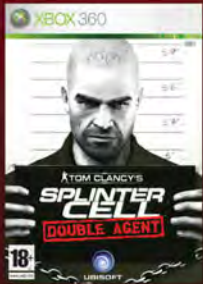
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NEW KID ON THE BLOCK



I promised myself that this wouldn't happen. We'd always lightheartedly mock RedTide for leaving the Ed's Note until the last moment, but here I sit, on the day we go to print, typing these words.

"It's the most important page in the magazine," RedTide would tell us – his excuse for leaving it for the last minute – which we always thought was just his way of inflating his own ego, but he's right. The Ed's Note sets the tone for the whole magazine; it's my opportunity to tell you all what's happening, where we're at in terms of stuff, and how things got that way. It's funny; I remember the first time my name appeared on this page over five years ago: I wrote a short boxout called "My first 2(.4) weeks at NAG" which was, not coincidentally, done at the last minute as well. I seem to thrive on stress.

In case you missed the Most Important Page in the Magazine last month: I'm NAG's new editor. RedTide is still around but he's decided that he needs more time to goof off so he appointed me to this role. My first issue has been far more chaotic than

I expected, but this time of year is bad for everyone anyway, so I guess my expectations were just a little unrealistic.

We've got a lot of fantastic content in this issue, with reviews of some of the hottest games of the year, including the two big shooters: *Call of Duty*

Ghosts and *Battlefield 4*. I do wish that people would stop comparing them directly, since they're such vastly different games aimed at different types of players, but I suppose the comparisons are inevitable. I'm looking forward to spending more time with *Battlefield* this time around. *BF3* simply refused to run on my home PC so the whole "OH EM GEE this is just *Battlefield 3.5* LOL!" argument doesn't really affect me. I'm expecting to do a lot of shooting down jets with tanks and making it my primary goal in each match to cause as much revolution as much as possible. I really dislike that word, but the idea behind it is fantastic.

This month also sees us finally getting around to delivering our rAGE feature and video. We tried to make it happen in November but time and space are things that don't function in a predictable way in this business, so it's now in this issue and will tell you all about the greatest technology expo in the country. If you missed out on the show this year we're sure you'll find it very informative.

PS: I already mentioned this in the home_coded section but I'm the editor now so I can do what I want: the NAG game, *Roxy's Quest*, is on the cover DVD. It's only around 20 minutes long and I know there are still a few bugs lurking about, but I'm sure you'll have a lot of fun with it. Please don't mail me with bug reports, but be sure to send through any feedback on the gameplay you might have. We're already plotting and scheming for a sequel so your comments will not go unread.

Have a great one, folks! **NAG**
-GeometriX

"In case you missed the Most Important Page in the Magazine last month: I'm NAG's new editor."

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

Letter of the Month December 2013

From: Jessica Meyer
Subject: Gaming in the classroom

As a teacher, every day I face the uphill battle of motivating kids to learn through an antiquated system of text books, exams and endless assessments. The fact is every student has access to more information through technology than they will ever receive in their 12 years of basic education. So why don't we use it?

Games present players with and objective, a set of rules and a reward. To complete a good game you constantly have to explore and adapt and in doing so you engage the parts of your brain that deal with problem solving, reward, motivation and desire. This brain region is rich in dopamine cells and helps guide decision-making and the pursuit of desired experiences and goals. The gamers in my classes, even those with so called "learning disabilities", have better problem solving skills, are more creative and learn new skills faster than others in

their age group. Just imagine a classroom where teachers act as admins and students learn history by completing quests in an open world RPG, or do experiments in natural sciences using Kinect. Any subject immediately becomes interesting and engaging when presented in an interactive way and today's games and technology make this more possible than ever before.

The fact remains that humans learn through play. So it follows that the more play there is in the classroom, the more students will learn. Gaming has affected modern society in many ways and if games can be art, they certainly can educate as well.

That fact that you're a teacher who thinks this way makes me happy. I've always felt like the school system failed me because I wasn't the exact right kind of kid that the system knows how to work with. I spent a lot of time playing games instead of studying and, you're right, these games

managed to hold my attention just fine, when something actually important like English or accounting seemed inconsequential and boring.

A friend of mine who is also a teacher recently had a lot of success in introducing "gamification" elements to his classroom: encouraging students to participate and reward them with "XP" that could be exchanged for things like a five-minute recess or a get-out-of-jail-free card for missed homework. Okay, maybe not the most orthodox approach but these are things that kids need: intellectual respect and sometimes a bit of freedom. Mind you, this was done at that very same school I went to, so maybe it's just suitable for the trouble kids.

You've got your head in the right place, and I sincerely hope you follow through with your ideas if you can get the system to budge just a little bit. Good luck, and be sure to keep us posted! Ed.

From: Candice Francis
Subject: My homies!

I love NAG. I've always been on the fence about it as a magazine but I've officially decided now that its an amazing magazine. I realised this, when November rolled around and stacked up under my coffee table with my cook books and Cosmos, was a huge pile of NAGs. A friend (and fellow NAG reader) came to my house around the time and enquired as to why I had this fat stack of them when I could just read it off the NAG website and I said, well partly because I have psychotic hoarding tendencies, but

also mainly because the magazine is super homey. Everytime I buy an issue simulataneously with my groceries I have this warm fuzzy feeling and I just hug the magazine to my chest in the middle of the supermarket, not caring that people are giving me weird looks. When I read it I have this strange familial feeling, almost like every writer is talking to me personally. Everything is relatable. Even if sometimes one of the writers talks about games that were before my time, they make me want to go out and experience that game just to know what they're talking about. After



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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this realisation, I decided to move my stack of NAGs to my desk next to my PC. Some of my gamer friends have rolled their eyes at this decision, while my non gamer friends mindlessly page through them, because not only is it a great magazine but its "real purrrty" too. The November issue in particular has gotten experiencing an array of emotions. With Tarryn's great article about having babies as a gamer parent, which I can totally relate to because I think about shiz like that too, and the news that redTide was resigning as editor. When i heard this, I gasped like I was watching one of those terrible teenage drama/ supernatural television series' and the main character bursts into flames (just kidding. I wish he would and that screen writers would stop mixing the supernatural with teenage hormones but alas as long as there are teenage girls in the world there will always be people killing all I hold dear with horrible tv shows. Gawds, I miss Angel from Buffy) ANYWAY whoa that was off topic. I would just like to say that I will miss redTide as editor and I also look forward to what Geoff has to offer as the new editor. Keep making me feel like you're all my homies, NAG. If so, your magazines will always have a place on my desk.

Angel is, as far as I'm concerned, better off on his own show. When Angel branched off it freed up the writers to experiment with new stories, characters and humour. Buffy as a show will always have a place

in my heart, but Angel just kicks ass. Really anything that Joss Whedon does is great.

Thanks for your letter though, and I appreciate the challenge ahead of me as well as anyone else. To be honest I've been doing half of RedTide's job for the last year anyway, so this is more of a formality right now than anything else. Either way, it's going to be a fun and interesting time ahead, so stay tuned and let's see where the road takes us! Ed.

From: Arnold van der Merwe

Subject: The Border between Gaming and Reality

I think there should be a border a between gaming and reality. Now before everybody scream at me and ask if I am an idiot, let me explain myself...

If the graphics and everything of gaming become too good then gaming could be the same as reality but better. Everybody would stay home and just play games, instead of going out and enjoying themselves. Especially with the Oculus Rift coming along it would make a huge jump towards reality.

There is a border between gaming and reality and I think Battlefield 4 is so close to that border that DICE can taste it. I just hope that all the companies realise there must be a border between gaming and reality. I hope everybody at NAG realise what I am trying to say.

If you think there's no border between gaming and reality then you need to start sharing whatever it is you're on. I get that there's augmented reality and virtual reality and all those sorts of things, but for most of us there's a pretty clear line between the world that allows us to run around shooting random people and that which doesn't.

Seek professional help or spiritual guidance. Ed.

From: Aiden Delpert

Subject: Let there be poetry

So I have been reading the NAG for quite some time and i always love reading the Inbox section to see what my fellow gamers are thinking about, but something occurred to me the other day whilst on the loo. I dont think that I have ever seen anyone write a gaming poem. So thats where my idea for this letter came from. This one is for all you guys at the NAG office, keep up the great work and i hope you enjoy:

NAG by Aiden Delpert

Every month on that special day
I walk to the SPAR just down the way,
And run to the isle where the
magazines lie, To pick out my NAG,
the one I'll buy After I pay, I give the

ON THE FORUMS

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Q: BlizzCon has just happened! What do you wish Blizzard had announced at the convention?

**"Warcraft Adventures:
Lord of the Clans, duh."**

Nferno

**"Warcraft 4 - I just want
another Warcraft RTS.**

Please..... :>("

Bouncer

**"Either an HD remake of
Blackthorne or a fully-
fledged sequel."**

Sea Otter

**"New single player action RPG
set in Warcraft universe."**

Shaderow

cashier a grin If only she knew what
lay within,

When I get home, I rush inside
And in my room is where I hide
Not a single sound is heard from me,
For the next hour, or two, or three
Inside I find the most amazing things,
New games, reviews, Miktar's
Meanderings

And when I reach the final page,
And think to myself "Jeez that was amaze!"
I realise that I am far from done,
There's still a DVD into which I
must plunge

And as the day ends, so does my NAGING
And I feel like a computer that is
constantly lagging But I know not to
worry, I know not to fear, For in one
months time, the next one is here ;)

*Unless you're shopping in the
Maldives, it's "aisle", not "isle". Still,*

*I can't really complain because
you wrote a poem longer than I've
ever managed. I usually get bored
halfway through and start doing that
thing where rhyming becomes less
important. Then the flow disappears
and before I know it I've spiralled into
pure free-association and nothing
really makes sense any more.
So, well done! Ed.*

From: Henrico du plessis

Subject: Replay/pause button

Don't you guys over there at your
awesome stations at nag ever wish
that life had a esc button (I know I
do). One button(just one) where you
could access a menu of some sorts,
where you can tune down or tune up
the worlds volume to your liking. Or
maby someone in particular. A button
that could let you replay ANY moment
in your life or just skip a boring
conversation that you have heard a
hundred times already(just like you



Joanne Joan Henning, "I had made something to honour the most graphically stunning game ever, Crysis. So here is my view on it."

skip a cut scene in a game) just think of all the options that you could adjust, make day into night and vice versa using the gamma option. Improve your eyesight with the resolution and graphics options. Make your house a sort of private lobby room where you can go to for entertainment and so on when you "log out" of real life when you get bored. One of the best things is that you can carry tons of stuff and never get tired from dragging it all along because it is all in your inventory that you can access at a moments notice. And the pause button will be pretty awesome too. If you are tired in the middle of work, pause life and take a nap. Wake up feeling like a new person. Hope that I win the competition of the letter of the month. I havnt won anything usefull ever in my life.

I guess it'd be useful, but it sounds more like you should be dealing with your issues in life rather than thinking of over-the-top ways of avoiding them. Or maybe you're just a control freak. I get that.

But imagine a world where people can just quick save and load any time they want. I remember chatting with some friends a while ago about the idea and we decided that it'd be fair if everyone got a fixed number of reloads during their life, but once you've used them all, you're done. You could live as callously as you wanted up until that point, but when it's all over, you'll suddenly have to drastically change the way you do things.

It'd be a fun but absolutely chaotic world. Thank goodness gamers don't get to decide the natural order of things. Ed.

From: Kyle
Subject: Online reviews
Hello little pixies

Yesterday I was at an impasse over whether or not to buy Call of Duty Ghosts. To aid me in my decision I hit

the internet (understandably NAG has yet to release a review). The problem I encountered was that reviews can sometimes be untrustworthy or unfair.

The IGN review seemed positive over all with a few concerns about certain aspects, but the Rock Paper Shotgun review was clearly written by someone who started playing the game with the mindset that it would be bad. So it continued, one horribly written review after another.

The second problem is user comments. I scrolled through the comments of the reviews trying to find opinions from players that own the game. Instead I'm bombarded with a bunch of no lifers mind numbingly stupid comments about a game and franchise they allegedly stopped playing when CoD MW was released because "every CoD after MW that was @#\$#@". I'm astonished at how narrow minded and utterly pathetic these * are.

I bought the game and will form my own opinion on it, because out of all the reviews I read the only one that seemed fair was the IGN review and they seemed to like it, as well as my Steam friends that seemed to like it(Though they did warn me of some bugs, oddly very similar to the issues I've encountered in Battlefield 4). On a side note NAG reviews can sometimes be biased towards games your reviewers like(Which is not necessarily a bad thing, I would rather read a positive review than a 200 word moan about a game someone didn't want to play), that being said I use NAG more as a "don't buy this" guide as NAG gives games a fair chance, and if they fare poorly by a magazine that gives favourable reviews, then you know it sucks!

I really do like NAG and you've never steered me wrong in a purchase. I bought Mass Effect because of you and boy was that a great buy! Thank you :D! So keep up the good work!

Ps: Is it not possible for NAG to apply for review copies of games prior to release?

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.



This months fan art winner receives an Xbox 360 wireless controller with a charge kit, valued at R699. Sponsored by the awesome people at Prima Interactive.

THE SHORTS

Extracts of n00b from NAG letters

"WHAT IS HALF-LIFE???"
- Brent Cox

"I forget to buy nag for 1 issue and all of a sudden the editor is leaving his post. WHYYYYY!!!!!!!"
- bleekan

"So as a conclusion Please make many a sad gamer's 2014 and consider bringing rAge to Cape Town. Please think about it. PleasePleasePlease-PleasePlease!!!"
- Chris Links

Personal bias is something that is unavoidable in reviews. People seem to think that reviews are these bleached-clean affairs of impartial judgement, but that's just not true. All game journalists began as regular gamers (or rather, still are) and we're humans at the end of the day, with our own hang-ups and preferences. There's no science here, just opinions.

Ideally what you should do is find a few reviewers who you really "get", and stick to reading their reviews. Think of us like your friends – we make recommendations more than anything else, and just like your actual friends sometimes we can be full of crap at times. But you'll always get honesty with us; we try not to sugar-coat, and we tell it like it is.

PS: We always do try to get early access to review code, but sometimes things just don't work out. Ed.

ON FACEBOOK

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Michael Vuyo Mtshali

When is the new nag coming out! In the name of Zeus, would you at least post the cover to show it is coming!

Jens Du Plessis

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Loyiso Mlandu

Nag magazine u never let me down every month is something better then the last you guys rule keep it up

Hj Thaysen

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G, Gamer



Packing up the past

I have this scene that plays out in my head – it’s a somewhat recent thing that’s been triggered by the rapidly approaching change in gaming hardware. By the time this issue of NAG finds its way to you, we’ll have just over two weeks to go before next-gen console gaming kicks off in South Africa. The PlayStation 4 will arrive in stores across our country on 13 December, and while the beginning of a new generation of gaming hardware is undoubtedly exciting for those of us who haven’t allowed their cynicism-encrusted selves to take over, it brings with it a degree of retrospect and planning for posterity.

Anyway, I mentioned a scene: it’s me, slightly greyer and with perhaps even worse dress sense. I like to think I still own a *Masters of the Universe* T-shirt. My son, now about seven or eight years old, stands next to me trying to contain his excitement. I’m leaning over a large cardboard box that I’ve just dug out of whatever store room we have in our home. The box has been sealed for years, but the content therein hasn’t slipped from my memory at all. In fact the contents are responsible for some truly terrific memories.

As I remove the tape and lift a flap of the box, my son, hardly able to contain his curiosity, leans forward to peer inside. “Hang on,” I suggest to him before he takes a step backwards, “just hang ten; it’s not going anywhere.”

I reach in and pull out a few game cases, handing them to him before he bursts from the anticipation. “Are these old games?” he asks.

“Yep, they’re old PlayStation and Xbox games. These are the games that were made for the consoles I used before the ones we have now. They’re a whole gaming generation old by now; you weren’t even born when I played most of these. See any you want to try?”

That’s about as far as the scene plays out because I have no way of knowing which games might grab his attention. Will cars be his thing? Will *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit* be the one that he settles on while I’m plugging in the old Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3? Maybe he’ll be into pirates, and in which case will it be *Assassin’s Creed IV* that catches his eye or *LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean*? What about aliens and science-fiction? Will the covers from the *Mass Effect* trilogy prove too tantalising to pass up, or will the cartoonish charm and vivid colours of *Rayman: Legends* appeal to his age?

It’s a frighteningly sentimental scene; I get that. It’s also, in a sense, reassuring knowing that the games I’ve spent almost the last ten years falling in love with will be there for him to maybe fall in love with as well. Because this is the first generation of console games that I’ve owned, this is also the first time I’m in a position to pack up old hardware and games with the knowledge that I can unpack them in a few years’ time and find that they still work. You can’t do that with the 25 years’ worth of old PC games I have lying around, that’s for sure.

While there’s a gap in the scene, it ends with the two of us on the couch, each with a controller in our hands. We’re playing... *something*, but I can’t see what it is just yet.

- Miklós Szecsei -

Sony’s PS4 terms of use warn your voice and text communications may be recorded



Are you a proud owner of a shiny new PlayStation 4 console? Have you read the software usage terms that you blindly accepted the moment you turned on the machine and set it up for the first time? Don’t worry, nobody ever reads those things.

If you did bother to read the document then you’re probably already aware of the fact that Sony has reserved the right to record and monitor all of your voice and text communications that take place via the PlayStation Network. While that

sounds somewhat sinister it actually isn’t at all. The clauses have been included so that if anyone on the PSN sends threatening or hateful communications to other users or Sony employees, Sony has the right to monitor further activity and shut down the offending person’s account at their discretion. It’s basically community moderation and it’s nothing new.

Of course, when Microsoft’s Kinect is wrongly accused of doing this same thing, the Internet implodes. Stay balanced, Internet!

“If the game is a missed opportunity, then it’s going to be a missed opportunity for years. Even when I pitched *Child of Light*, they mentioned *Beyond Good & Evil*. They said ‘*Beyond Good & Evil* was not a success, and we made that mistake once.’ And it’s like, yeah, but it’s 10 years ago...”

– *Ubisoft Montreal’s Patrick Plourde*, explaining to *GamesIndustry International* the difficulties of getting a AAA-focused publisher to greenlight riskier projects like *Ubisoft’s eye-catchingly beautiful Child of Light*



Frostbite still MIA on Wii U

Despite EA's initial confidence in developing games for the struggling Wii U and PS Vita platforms, Ghost Games creative director Craig Sullivan confirmed that the studio will not port *Need for Speed Rivals* to either machine. The reason? It's simply not worth it.

"Honestly, it's not the kind of stuff that I like talking about in detail, that much. We did a load of extra work on the Wii U version [of *NFS: Most Wanted*], and we had a lot of guys working on that stuff, you know?" Sullivan told gaming website thesixthaxis. "It didn't really sell that many, in terms of the Wii U market. I would love for it to have, because we put so much effort into that, trust me. I'd love for it to be way bigger than it was, and the same for the Vita."

With over 200 people working across five platforms, the team was already stretched to ensure a minimum level of quality is met, and adding on Wii U or PSV releases would have impacted that quality on other platforms.

The implications are far greater than simply missing out on a *NFS* port, however: the Wii U has no ports of any Frostbite 3 games (*BF4* is giving it a miss, too), which means we won't see most of EA's big hitters on the platform until that happens. The longer this goes on, the worse it is for Nintendo.

Sid's sequel takes to the skies

2K proved that there is a market for premium mobile games with the release of *XCOM* for what many consider to be a "staggering" \$20 price-point on the App Store, but *Civilization* creator and all-round smart guy at 2K, Sid Meier, seems to think this is a potential way forward for the publisher and the industry.

The company's next title along these lines is one from Sid's own stable, a sequel to the well-received *Ace Patrol*, sub-titled *Pacific Skies*. The game recently launched on Steam and iOS for just \$5 on both platforms, and will hopefully do its bit to help align mobile gamers with the concept of paying for a game like a normal human being.

"A lot of feedback we got from players of the original game, especially on iOS, was, 'I just want to buy the whole game. Don't give me little piece here, a little piece there,'" said Meier. "And that's how we're comfortable selling games, but again we're exploring this new marketplace and trying out different things."



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The Game Stalder



This is not all of me

If you're reading this magazine, you're a gamer. "Well thanks for pointing that out Ms Obvious, it's a gaming magazine." Yeah OK fine, but what else are you passionate about? We all talk about the games that we love *ad nauseum*, and for those of us that wait in anticipation of the latest titles, to say that we're passionate about games is rather an understatement. While many of us don't conform to the stereotype of the basement dwelling gamer however, proving we have interests outside of video games can become a challenge. Many people hear "gamer" and tend to switch off.

The thing is, when you work in the video game industry, much as we might love our jobs, we don't just sit around and play games all day (well, not ALL the time). What for most people constitutes their hobby and relaxation time is our work, and it means that we have interests outside of video games. While perhaps many of those outside interests do fall into what would typically be considered "geeky" pastimes – comic books, movies etc. – I am always interested to see that so many of the gamers I know have diverse and unique hobbies that are completely unrelated to video games.

You might be surprised to learn that a number of prominent people in the local gaming industry play paintball for example, some of them even competitively. Others are ardent fitness fanatics and spend a great deal of time at the gym, and a completely separate group of gaming friends do crazy things like run marathons and cycle (I might go to gym but I'm not as active as that!) I know people who gave up what many people consider to be the ideal gaming job in order to become photographers, and still others who are passionate about (and really good at) cooking.

I know these thoughts are all just kind of bunched together in one somewhat incoherent outpouring, but I think my point is more that as gamers we are a diverse and varied bunch of people, and no matter how much you love games, it's likely, or even perhaps necessary, that you have interests outside of sitting in front of the TV or monitor staring at the screen for hours on end. I'm not going to argue about the whole inactive gamer stereotype, I'm not saying anyone is lazy and unhealthy, I'm merely arguing in favour of diversity.

From a personal perspective perhaps many of my outside interests are still considered "geeky", but I have an extensive graphic novel and book collection and I spend large portions of my time reading. I enjoy watching movies. I have an art background and still draw and paint when I can. My husband, who is also an ardent gamer, plays football socially in addition to an interest in games, comics and movies.

I am always pleased to hear people talking about their other passions, because much as when I go to events we all end up talking games for much of the evening, it's always interesting to hear what these enthusiastic and passionate gamers do when they're away from their consoles. People who play games for a living are generally pretty darn interesting at the best of times so imagine what they do for fun!

This is not all of me. Of course I am a gamer but much like you, I am more than that.

- Pippa Tshabalala -

C&C canned, baby thrown out too



Just as we were easing into the idea of the new *Command & Conquer* game, EA swooped in, canned the game, and shut down the studio. Wow.

A few of us at NAG have played the game in the past and rather enjoyed it, but it appears as though the feedback received during the game's recent alpha testing phase was hugely negative. Of course, with the game's highly controversial move to microtransaction supported free-to-play, balancing grind and payment options was going to be the key to a successful game (the gameplay itself was pretty solid), so it's likely that this is what ultimately caused the game to be terminated.

The news was confirmed by a post on the game's website in which developer Victory Games declared the game to be dead in the water.

"Your feedback from the alpha trial is clear: We are not making the game you want to play," the post reads. "That is why, after much difficult deliberation, we have decided to cease production of this version of the game. Although we deeply respect the great work done by our talented team, ultimately it's about getting you the game you expect and deserve."

"This does mean that the Victory Games team will be disbanded," the post continued. "Wherever possible, we are working to help these talented people find other opportunities with EA."

All money invested by players during the alpha phase will be refunded.

It's been suggested that the game could be revisited at a later date, which has us just ever so slightly hopeful that we could finally see the *Generals 2* we all wanted from the beginning.

Strange and wonderful



Amanita Designs, that wacky Czech indie game dev studio perhaps best-known for *Machinarium*, has confirmed that they're currently working on *Samorost 3*. The game will maintain the point-and-click adventure

elements that first put Amanita on the map with the original *Samorost*, and is sure to be every bit as odd and beautiful as the rest of their games.

It's expected that *Samorost 3* will launch in 2015 on PC, iOS and Android.

DriveClub slams on the breaks

If you're planning on picking up a PS4 at launch (which should be right around the time you read this), then you should know that there's set to be one less title that's eligible for your shopping trolley. *DriveClub*, from *MotorStorm* developers Evolution Studios, has been pushed out to an "early 2014" release.

"The team requires more time in order to deliver on their vision – and I'm fully confident the game will surpass your expectations," SCE Worldwide Studios president Shuhei Yoshida said in a comment on PlayStation Blog.

This comes after the word that *Watch Dogs* will also not see the light of day this year, but Yoshida is quick to mention that the platform still has a healthy line-up of launch titles including *AC4*, *COD: Ghosts*, *BF4*, *Killzone: Shadow Fall*, *Knack*, and many indie games.

Will develop games for food

A game called *FORCED* recently popped up on Steam and, if you didn't look any closer, you'd think it's "just another indie game", but the thing about indie games is that they so often have a fascinating story, but the story of *FORCED* is by far one of the most interesting ones out there.

It began three years ago, when a then small game development team going by the name of BetaDwarf illegally and secretly took up residence in a classroom in Copenhagen. They moved in, complete with beds, fridges and microwaves, and worked/lived there for seven months before being discovered and promptly kicked out. After ongoing battles with finances, a nearly-failed Kickstarter campaign (which managed to scrape together over \$65,000 in the eleventh hour), and a relocation to more legitimate premises, the team continued to expand and the game pressed on. But, when it all looked like it was ready to fall apart, BetaDwarf's CEO Steffan Kappelgaard took out a personal loan valued at R2,000,000 to buy the team another four months.

They soldiered on, living like the practically homeless people many of them were, on top of each other and crammed into every available space in the too-small house they rented in the Danish countryside, and finally, *FORCED* was released. The game is currently available for purchase on Steam and, even if the sound of four-player co-op tactical RPG/puzzle action doesn't appeal to you (it should), consider making a purchase purely to show your support for these struggling artists: they've certainly earned it.

The Double Fine Effect

This bit of news immediately smacked of Double Fine's trouble with budgeting the mountain of money they got for *Broken Age* and their subsequent decision to release the game in two parts. And while the circumstance here is only remotely similar, it made for a fun headline, so we've created a tenuous link to the two.

Anyway, Revolution Software has decided to take their successfully Kickstarted adventure *Broken Sword: The Serpent's Curse* (which is headed by series creator Charles Cecil) and divide it into two episodes – one to be released on December 4th of this year (on Steam at least, with Vita and Android versions to follow), and the other in January next year. Separately, each episode will cost £9.99 (around R150), but you can buy them together for £14.99 (R200). Backers will automatically receive both episodes.

Now, before you panic: splitting the game into two is not due to a lack of sufficient funding, but rather due to an overabundance of it. It enabled the team to be hugely ambitious, creating enough content to fill two episodes, and apparently "each episode is a full-sized game in its own right".

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The Indie Investigator



When bad coding is good coding

Nobody likes to throw away hard work. One of the first steps to successful game development, however, is understanding that some things are just built to be discarded. The benefits of rapid prototyping have been explained before, being the best way to explore as many ideas as possible to find the best one.

But what happens when you find that super duper game concept and want to take one of your prototypes further? Well, a good idea may be throwing it away and rebuilding it from scratch. Yep, that's right: even when you get the correct idea, you chuck it anyway.

One of the factors that slows down a rapid prototyping process the most is paying attention to best practices and forward thinking. Now, the concept of "best practice" is there for a reason and you really should be paying attention to whatever you learned in ComSci class if you're coding pretty much anything. But it's also worthwhile noting what purpose such lessons are there for if you want to speed up your development process and create short-term projects.

When I originally released the alpha of *Desktop Dungeons*, the game as it stood had been in development for a mere two days. That's 48 hours from conception to audience-playable – a rather bare-bones version of the product that was destined to come later, but an identifiably "complete" game experience regardless.

The development process sacrificed long-term stability and project expansion for short-term gains, with faster and easier output. It allowed the biggest and most important ideas to go into the game before everything got coded into a corner, and it was well worth it. Within a few months, the alpha had reached its limit, bursting at the seams like a clumsy Jenga tower of bad development techniques, but it did its job and provided a valuable marketing boost for the final game which would come later. People were playing and enjoying it immensely, despite its limitations. Instead of perfectionism, a rather distinct attitude of "good enough" got the game far enough to be considered and appreciated.

Most of my games around this period took a matter of days to construct, using the simplest tools possible and whatever programming hack-job I decided to make of the code. The clumsier my coding, the faster the prototype would emerge. Instead of taking weeks to test a single idea, I could bring out several games in a burst and find the best one. It was through this rapid cycling of hastily-constructed ideas that I was able to get to *Desktop Dungeons* in the first place.

Your prototypes don't need to be individual masterpieces. They don't even need to be engineered that well. You can break every rule in the book, indulge and be as lazy as you want. If, at the bottom line, you send what you want to your audience at that very moment, your prototype has done its job. By removing yourself from the rigid constraints of "good practice" in this particular environment, you'll also find developing easier, more *laissez-faire* and a helluva lot more fun to do.

Apply this to art, music or whatever other discipline you want: it pays to remember what the meaning and intent behind the term "rough draft" actually is.

- Rodain Joubert -

Sorry Sony fans, no Titanfall for you



When it was first announced that *Titanfall* would be a Microsoft exclusive title, we think it's safe to say that a few people were surprised. After all, EA is the publisher here, and you'd think they'd want to pull in as much cash as possible for their hefty investment. As it turns out, there is now zero chance of this first game (in what we assume will be a series) reaching beyond the PC, Xbox 360 and Xbox One.

"In the case of *Titanfall*, it's a brand new IP, and it's exclusive only for the life

of the title on Xbox One and Xbox 360 and PCs," said EA CFO Blake Jorgensen during a recent investor call.

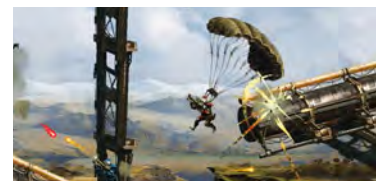
The statement was later confirmed by Microsoft's Larry "Major Nelson" Hryb on Twitter, in which he said the exclusivity is not timed, but permanent.

While this is definitely bad news for PS3/PS4 gamers, there's hope that the future will see *Titanfall* eventually make its way onto the platform – we saw a very similar situation with *Mass Effect* some time ago so it's not unlikely.

You had us at Contra

Bullet Bros looks awesome. Described as a modern-day *Contra*-style shooter (with extra credits for citing its other influences as *Super Mario Bros. 3*, *Bionic Commando* and *Blaster Master*), the real magic of it is enabled by its wacky physics-enabled gameplay. It allows for physics-y fun with the game's varied vehicles, which can be upgraded and even linked together with other stuff to create ridiculous new vehicles. It's also got a healthy obsession with bros, much like South Africa's very own *Broforce*.

Creator Jason Stokes (former environment artist at ArenaNet on *Guild Wars* and its sequel) plans to make it at least as big as the original *Contra*: ten levels, each with a boss at the end. Naturally, there'll be local co-op as well, with the two playable Bros having the capability to link together to become more formidable. Other important features include a grappling



hook, deployable defensive sandbags, and grenades, obviously. To realise his full vision for the game, Stokes has turned to Kickstarter – but at the rate it's going at the time of writing, it's unlikely it'll actually reach its goal. It'd be a shame, because anybody who says this of developing their game should be given all the money in the world:

"Any time I laugh, or when people are playtesting it, if they laugh at something ridiculous, even if it's a physics glitch where a helicopter flips upside down and chops you in half, that I never even intended to happen, I'm leaving that stuff in."

Blurring the lines

Hey, remember that really neat arcade racer called *Blur*, from Bizarre Creations, the studio that Activision unceremoniously shut down when the game didn't do quite as well as they had unreasonably expected it to? Yeah, that *Blur*! Well it's back! As a mobile game! It's free-to-play! Use your imagination to determine which of these exclamation marks imply sarcasm!

The game is called *Blur Overdrive* and features much of the same gameplay mechanisms from the full-size game, except it's been given an aerial perspective and filled up with enough microtransactions to make a grown man child cry. Other than that, it's actually rather fun. The game, which is currently available on Android and soon on iOS, has been developed by relatively unknown studio Marmalade Play, who seem to specialise in populating game stores with generic 99c or free-to-play shovelware.

Yay this industry!



Hey Epic! Where's Fortnite?

It's been a long time since we last heard any news on Epic Games' *Fortnite*, and we were starting to get a little worried that perhaps it'd seen the axe. Never fear, however, because Epic's appeared with some heartening news that the project is still very much in development.

In case you need a refresher, *Fortnite* plays a bit like a mix of *Minecraft* and *Left 4 Dead* with a cartoony *Team Fortress 2*-style aesthetic (and an offbeat sense of humour to match), with players spending in-game days scrounging for resources and building impressive (and not-so-impressive) structures, fortifications and defences to protect them from a variety of enemies that appear when in-game night falls. There'll be all manner of wacky weaponry to craft, experiment with and upgrade, and last we heard it's designed with multiple players in mind. It's all powered by Unreal Engine 4, so it's pretty too.

Epic's apparently handed development of *Fortnite* to multiple Epic-branded studios, including People Can Fly – developer of *Gears of War: Judgment* and much-underappreciated gem *Bulletstorm*. In addition to the news of *Fortnite*'s continued development comes news that People Can Fly is no longer so distinctively named, because the studio has been renamed as Epic Games Poland. With any luck, they'll pull a *Bulletstorm* and help make *Fortnite* every bit as brilliant as it deserves to be.

Xbox One: compulsory day-one update before games will run

When Microsoft performed its string of reversals shortly after E3, it was announced that the Xbox One would require a day-one update. What wasn't known was just how essential this update would be. It turns out that without the update, your new Xbox One is essentially a paperweight. That means no gaming on your new gaming console, and whether you're trying a digital game or physical game, nothing is going to run without that update.

Microsoft's senior director of product management, Albert Penello, when asked what somebody could do with an Xbox One that hasn't received the day-one update, responded: "Nothing. You need the day one update. You're gonna need to take this update. It's not gonna be really an optional thing."

The reason is simple: the Xbox One consoles that were manufactured for launch were built with an old operating system. In order for Microsoft to implement many of the policy reversals from June this year, the update needs to be applied.

By the time you read this, the Xbox One will already be available in launch territories around the world. At time of writing we're still waiting for a local release date. The one possible positive of South Africa having to wait longer is that we may get batches of consoles with an updated operating system, thereby obviating the need for a system update the moment you turn it on. Obviously for many in South Africa that could be a lifesaving change as Internet connectivity is a potential problem.

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Miktari's Meanderings



Generation eight?

It doesn't feel like there's a new generation of consoles launching soon. At the time of writing, the PS4 launches in a week. The Xbox One, in two weeks. Yet, it feels like there's nothing important happening this month.

Sure, I've seen some advertisements on TV. Microsoft has one showing a giant mech busting some guy out of a drab boardroom meeting. There's a zombie in it. And sports. Y'know, exactly what we would expect from Microsoft's advertising division. Everything in the ad is appropriate and thematic, yet utterly drab and uncreative. Sony has their "Greatness Awaits" campaign, which seems to echo what the advertising campaign for the Xbox 360 was. Mostly dudes with guns blowing stuff up, and the occasional reference to a lauded franchise that we're all supposed to pretend is some hallowed property that transcends time. Look, *Killzone* is cool, but Sony, you're trying way too hard to make it your *Halo*. You don't need a *Halo*. You've got a ton of great franchises that you've swept under the rug.

I guess I won't be happy until I see a new *Jak and Daxter*, but that's me.

So about this upcoming generation (that already started with the Wii U, but whatever). Every previous console generation has promised some new quality of gaming. Something immediate, usually visually, that was like nothing available before. But this time the new generation is launching with mostly the same games the current generation plays, only at slightly higher resolution, with slightly greater levels of detail. Even the exclusive original games for Xbox One and PS4 are more or less stock standard entries in the same franchises that exist on the current consoles, with only a moderate increase in graphical effects to differentiate them. This isn't necessarily a failure of the next generation to be as impressive as it's supposed to be, but rather the inevitable result of diminishing returns. We're now three generations past the advent of accelerated 3D graphics. The technology and the games have simply matured, the rate of change is slowed. Now the scale of triple-A gaming itself promotes homogenization and discourages risk-taking on wildly inventive games based on play mechanics that nobody knows if they'll succeed or not.

And so in the end, the new generation of consoles basically feels about as epic as buying a new video card for your PC. Coming home, plugging it in, and enjoying turning the graphical settings up by another notch. The new generation of consoles are exactly that: a video card upgrade. The only measure by which to separate them now is their services. Sony is very focused on the social aspect of gaming, with Twitch.tv streaming, sharing of gameplay clips, and so on. In a way, Sony is bringing current PC gaming conventions to console. All they lack is a *League of Legends*. Whereas Microsoft is trying to turn the Xbox brand into your all-in-wonder multimedia device with heavy emphasis on television shows. With Xbox One, it's less about the games, and more about the *experience*, it seems. I just can't take Kinect seriously. This is a personal preference, I know, but I hate talking to a device. I don't want to control something by speaking at it, only to have it misunderstand half the time.

Human beings barely understand when I talk to them, what hope does a console have of parsing my complex, stoic mutterings?

- Miktari Dracon -

Modern Warfare's writer penned the new Battlefield



FPS big-hitters *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield* are hardly known for their narrative virtues, but there's still someone, or a group of someones, whose job is to make all the little soldier men tick away in a meaningful way and connect together the bits where you shoot bad people in the face. In a rather fantastic turn of fate, the person in charge of doing that in *Battlefield 4* is the same guy who was responsible for the story in *Modern Warfare* and its sequel.

This connection has much to do with former Infinity Ward boss Jason West, who, after snuggling up with

EA, ended up having a chat with DICE about a few things, including building a compelling narrative. He dropped in the name Jesse Stern, who had been hunting for a new writing gig (he almost ended up with David Cage on *Beyond: Two Souls*) and shortly after, Stern decided to fly out to Sweden to meet with the team during the initial development phase of *BF4*. As it turned out, everyone got along very well and the rest is history, once again proving that this industry is smaller than you think when you know the right people.



I've dealt with your DRM infestation. Now, about my reward...

Anyone who spends at least 30% of each and every one of their days lamenting the scourge of DRM and the negative effect it has on the experience of legitimate purchasers will be happy to hear that CD Projekt RED is taking a unique stance in their approach to DRM with *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt's* PC version. In that there'll be none of it. Ever. The news arrived courtesy of an open letter to the community, hand-delivered by CDPR's co-founder / joint CEO Marcin Iwinski.

"I'd like to say it loud and clear: The PC version of *The Witcher 3* will have absolutely no DRM from day 0. Zero. Zip. Nada. It doesn't matter if you choose to buy it on GOG.com and support us directly or buy the game in box format, you'll still get the 100% DRM-free experience. And this goes for the whole world."

As is to be expected, this led to a different form of whinging when the Internet responded with "LOL but Steam is DRM?", prompting Iwinski to respond again that they'll definitely be on Steam and that while Steam is its own form of DRM, wherever CDPR has control of the matter, the third *Witcher* title will be devoid of copy protection.

Ouya isn't done yet

Saying true to their word that there'll be a new Ouya console every year, the company's CEO Julie Uhrman recently spoke about the little console's failings and goals moving forward.

"Our plan is to have Ouya 2.0 sometime next year; we haven't finalized the date of that," Uhrman told Polygon. "We're still determining what exactly we want that to be."

Uhrman explained that the feedback they received from the public regarding their many mistakes in the last year (shipping Kickstarter units late, that horrible vomit advert, underpowered hardware, poor controller, among others) has been the centre of attention at Ouya HQ; everyone has had their heads down and is working on all angles for the console's future.

There's even talk of moving to a new chipset, which may see the Ouya stepping away from NVIDIA's Tegra platform. The controllers will also be redesigned, with improved triggers and analogue sticks being highest on the list of priorities.



Call of Duty: Ghosts makes even more money than you thought it would

Poor *Grand Theft Auto V*. That astonishing day-one sales record of \$800 million you set back in September was much too short-lived for our liking.

Ghosts – the seven-hundredth title in the venerable *Call of Duty* franchise – has once again supplied publisher Activision with a ridiculous stream of endless cash to the tune of \$1 billion within its first 24 hours. It's hardly surprising, given the series' track record.

Now, bear in mind that the figure pertains only to units sold by Activision to retailers, and the announcement of these figures stopped short of revealing the actual number of units sold to eager consumers. Activision CEO Eric Hirshberg says the publisher expects *Ghosts* to be the most successful next-gen launch title "by a wide margin" when the PS4 and Xbox One see release.

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~ Support Lines ~



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

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E-MAIL support@xtremems.co.za
Number: 0861 987 363

PUBLISHERS Microsoft Xbox
NUMBER 0800 991 550

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
E-MAIL zasupport@ea.com
TELEPHONE 0860 EAHELP/324357

The tale that will never be



With THQ now long-gone, any hope of a true sequel to *Space Marine* is pretty much dead as well. Sure, SEGA could pick up the pieces through its acquisition of Relic and its new BFF status with licence owners Games Workshop, but with the game's director Raphael van Lierop now off with his own studio and already working on a successfully Kickstarted project called *The Long Dark*, what was the *Space Marine* future that could've been?

"I had some big plans for Titus," van Lierop said in an interview with Polygon. "The second part of his story was to focus on a 'Titus Unleashed' plot – basically there were forces arrayed against him that would see his loyalty to the Adeptus Astartes pushed to its limit, and his

reaction would be to kind of 'go rogue,' and we'd see a different Titus, not quite as in control as we saw him in *Space Marine*. He would be kicked out as a consequence – exiled, which would basically be a death sentence for him."

But the story was designed as a trilogy, and the third part of Titus' apparently epic tale would see him return from exile and form a new *Space Marine* chapter – a potentially massive undertaking in terms of Warhammer 40K lore – and "clean house", as van Lierop puts it.

Unfortunately, the wheels were already falling off at THQ as *Space Marine* began its wrap-up, and it seems as though van Lierop is happy that the game managed to see itself through to completion at all.

Valve promises no exclusives on SteamOS

Valve recently showed off a prototype of the Steam Machine! And it's pretty much exactly what we expected: a fairly inconspicuous box that houses hardware that'll run games via Valve's proprietary operating system SteamOS. Fancy! More importantly, however, Valve has made their policies regarding SteamOS exclusivity deals very clear: they'll have none of that, thanks.

What this effectively means is that Valve is philosophically opposed to negotiating deals that could, say, result in certain games only being available on Steam OS and nowhere else. "Whenever we talk to third-party partners, we encourage them to put their games in as many places as possible, including not on our platforms," explained Valve's Anna Sweet to IGN. "Because we think that customers are everywhere, and they want to put their games wherever customers are. That would go against our whole philosophy, to launch something that's exclusive to SteamOS or Steam machines."

Microsoft believes Xbox One will be with you for a decade

It seems Microsoft's mighty convinced about the potential success of its new console, if the confidence of Craig Flannagan – Microsoft Canada's Xbox director of marketing – is anything to go by. Flannagan said to GamesIndustry International that the launch of Xbox One is easily the biggest launch Xbox has ever done, and that they've pre-sold a little over double the number of Xbox 360s that were sold before launch. In addition to showing absolute pride in the console's hardware and launch line-up, Flannagan also pointed to Xbox LIVE and Xbox's focus on social features as factors that'll give the console the edge over competitors.

"Xbox One is going to start ahead, in terms of the experience we can deliver," he said. "And because we're built for the future, we're going to



stay ahead. I think there is not a better experience you can buy this holiday, and there will not be a time this generation where there's a better experience you can buy than Xbox One...And it's probably going to be a pretty long generation. We're probably here for a while because we're built for the future. This is a console that will last you, conservatively a decade, if I had to put a bet down today."

It's a pity South Africa's decade of Xbox One is set to officially start a few steps behind all those launch territories, 'ey?



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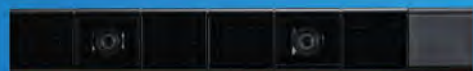


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*PS4 Vertical Stand



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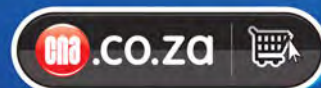


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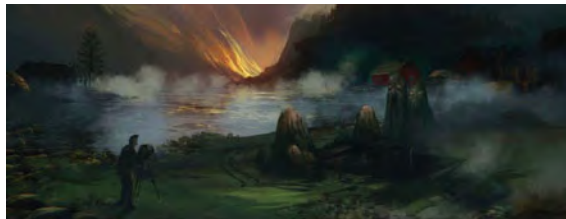
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When Dreamfall isn't enough



Red Thread Games – the Norwegian studio founded by Ragnar Tørnquist, designer of the beloved *The Longest Journey* series and director of uniquely themed MMO *The Secret World* – have announced that they're working on a new title by the name of *Draugen*. This is in addition to Red Thread's on-going development of *Dreamfall Chapters: The Longest Journey*, the series' upcoming entry which was successfully crowdfunded last year. And compared to *Dreamfall's* focus on traditional adventuring, the horrors of *Draugen* sound quite different.

Its story is based on Scandinavian folklore (which immediately has our interest engaged), and this is how the official website describes it: "*Draugen* is a first-person survival horror adventure, set amongst the deep fjords and towering mountains of Norway's awe-inspiring west coast. The game is a dark and disturbing journey into the pitch black heart of Norwegian national romanticism, as seen through the eyes of an American nature photographer, botanist and entomologist."

You'll explore a remote fishing village to gather clues and find the truth behind "a terrible tragedy". The settlement's every inhabitant has mysteriously vanished (which is a fundamental requirement for horror games), and terrors occupy the night. Sounds like a good time, doesn't it?

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Wii

Skylanders: Giants starter pack	Out now
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	Out now
Just Dance 4	Out now

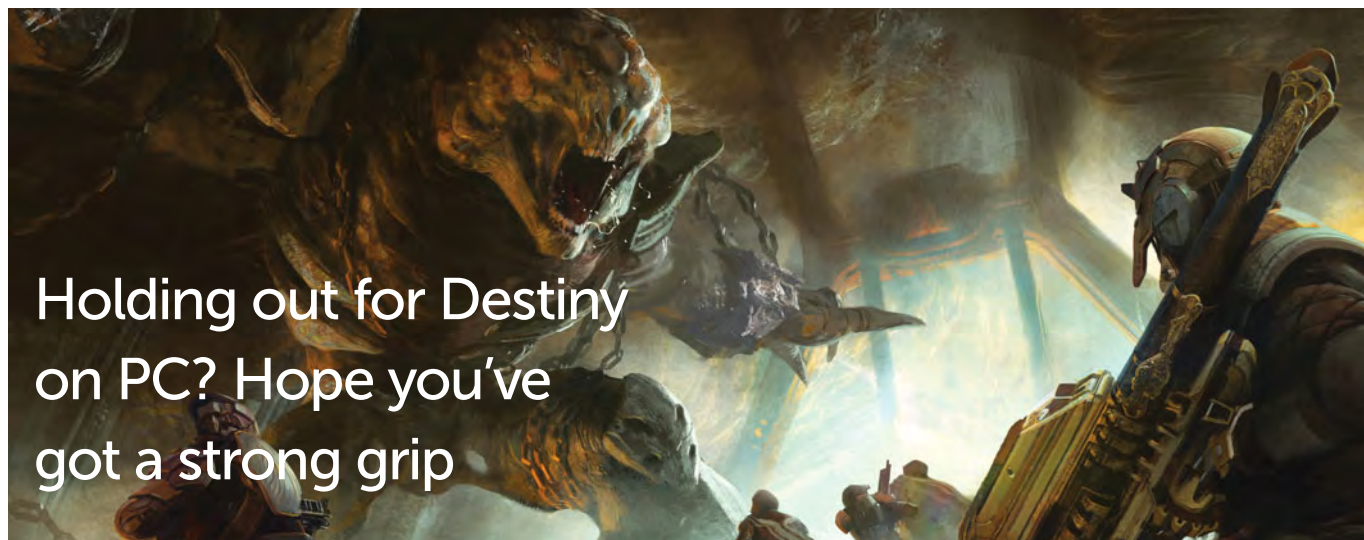
BDS

New Super Mario Bros. 2	Out now
Mario Kart 7	Out now
Super Mario 3D Land	Out now

Techland's Hellraid slips into the mists of 2014

Hellraid, Techland's fun-looking first-person action RPG with a cooperative focus that makes it look a bit like *Borderlands* fused with *Dark Messiah of Might & Magic*, is joining the long list of games that were originally meant to see the light of release this year but have slipped into the realm of 2014.

The delay is attributed to numerous niggles found by players in closed testing. Producer Marcin Kruczkiewicz states that, were Techland to release the game this year, they "would have to make too many compromises and the final product probably wouldn't meet all [their] promises and players' expectations". The team is reworking the magic system, for example, hopefully making it as satisfying as possible, and they're also pumping time into adding new gameplay features that aim to provide a more gratifying experience in both single player and four-player co-op.



Holding out for Destiny on PC? Hope you've got a strong grip

Destiny, Bungie's upcoming MMOFPS that has many people needing cold showers, is heading to the PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox 360 and Xbox One. Were you one of those who uttered an audible pffft followed by, "I'm sure it'll hit the PC soon; I'll pick it up then"? Bad news for you and your audible pffft: Bungie has abandoned any plans they

might have had to bring the game to PCs.

When *Destiny* was initially revealed, a PC version was still very much in discussion. Now, however, that *very much in discussion* has changed to a *very much likely not ever*. Bungie community manager and senior writer for the game Eric Osborne is responsible for dashing the hopes of would-be *Destiny* PC

gamers when he revealed that right now, Bungie is completely focussed on consoles.

"We know there are a lot of people out there asking for PC and we know that there are a lot of gamers that would willingly give us money," he explained, "but what we have to do is make sure we're focused enough to bring a good experience to any platform that we ship on."

It seems as if resources are an issue, which is surprising considering Activision is the game's publisher. "What we 100 percent are not going to do is spread ourselves so thin that it negatively harms the other platforms. So right now we have the four platforms, which is a lot to focus on."

While it sounds unlikely, at least it isn't a flat-out "no", right?



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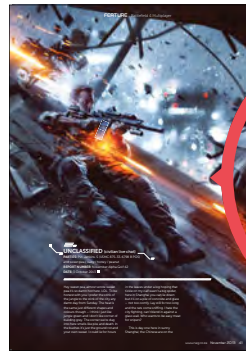


Foxy Roxy

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 10th 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 with the subject line "December Roxy", and of course your contact details, and you could win a prize.

NOVEMBER WINNER



Andre Booysen, page 41

THIS MONTH'S LOOT

A *Game of Thrones* boardgame valued at R750 plus a R100 gift voucher. Sponsored by Exclusive Books.



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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 **WRC4** for PC, 360 or PS3 from Apex Interactive. Send your captions to letters@nag.co.za with the subject line "December caption".



NAG's lame attempt at humour
It all goes downhill after marriage.



Last months winner
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South Park: The Stick of Truth delayed



If you saw *South Park: The Stick of Truth* at rAge 2013 and were so impressed by all of its *South Park*-ness that you started putting all your spare five rand coins in a piggy bank that you planned to smash to pieces and collect the accrued game-buying treasure within come the game's 10 December release date... well, you can stop doing that. Or at least, you can allow that pink ceramic pig to live a bit longer, because the game's release has been bumped three months into the future.

Thankfully, the new release date of March 7th 2014 is in aid of making the game better, which is always a worthy cause for a release slip. "We always wanted the game to feel like you're actually in an episode of *South Park*," say *South Park* creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker. "Getting the game up to the crappy standards of the show has been a real challenge and we're excited to say it's taken way longer than we thought it would."

The battle for mobile

Hot on the heels of *Battlefield 4*'s release, EA's executive VP and head of mobile Frank Gibeau confirmed in a discussion with the *NY Times* that the company is working on bringing the series to mobile in a big way.

Of course, *Battlefield 4* already has a mobile component in the form of Commander Mode, which allows players to lead their allies from the comfort of a smartphone or tablet, but

this new prospect seems to be greater-reaching than that.

"We are working on a mobile game of *Battlefield* that will be high-end and high-performance," said Gibeau. "But we're embarking on something no one has ever done before — to get these games to inter-operate between platforms. Will it work? It already has in some cases. Not all franchises will make the transition. *Battlefield* might be a little harder."

RELEASE LIST **BT GAMES**

Dates subject to change without notice

December week 1

Gran Turismo 6	PS3
Bravely Default: Flying Fairy	3DS
Scribblenauts Unlimited	3DS

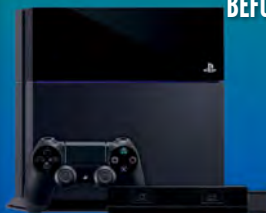
December week 2

Angry Birds Star Wars	PS4
Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	PS4
Battlefield 4	PS4
Call of Duty: Ghosts	PS4
Injustice: Gods Among Us	PS4
Just Dance 2014	PS4
Killzone: Shadow Fall	PS4
Knack	PS4
LEGO Marvel Super Heroes	PS4
Madden NFL 25	PS4
NBA Live 14	PS4
Need for Speed: Rivals	PS4
Turtle Beach Ear Force P4C Chat Communicator	PS4

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RAGE 2013

THREE DAYS OF GAMING PARADISE

If you're reading these words then there's a 99% chance that you've heard of rAge, which means for those who have been smoking your big brother's gym socks for so long that your brain is as effective a storage facility as yesterday's custard slice special, here's some big news: rAge 2013 has come and gone, and it was awesome! We were there (obviously*), so we thought it'd be super neat to tell you all about it. It's never too early to book your flight up to JHB for 2014!

*There seem to be a few people who still don't know that rAge is our show, but if that fact hasn't sunk in by the time you've read this feature then there's no hope for you. We're pretty sure you can still serve the human race by applying for a job at a circus or picking the lint out of RedTide's belly button.



MEGAROM

Megarom is one of South Africa's biggest video game importers and distributors for all major platforms. Boasting the biggest stand at rAge, Megarom showcased an impressive 13 titles, including blockbusters such as *Assassin's Creed IV* and *Call of Duty: Ghosts*. They also hosted a behind closed doors look at *Watch Dogs*, presented by Ubisoft Montreal developers.

ASSASSIN'S CREED IV: BLACK FLAG

The sixth major title in the *Assassin's Creed* franchise received the VIP treatment with a stage presentation from Ubisoft's Antoine Fortier-Auclair, who showed off the game's expansive world and naval combat.

SOUTH PARK: THE STICK OF TRUTH

Written and voiced by the creators of the hit TV series, the game's hilarious dialogue and cut-scenes are backed up by proper RPG pedigree with interactive turn-based combat, levelling and skill systems, multiple classes and of course, loot.

THE CREW

A new contender in the racing game market, *The Crew* features gameplay that is more *Fast and Furious* than Formula One. This Ubisoft title boasts a 20-hour campaign, multiplayer integration, open-world racing and RPG elements.

NBA 2K14

Developed by Visual Concepts, *NBA 2K14* improves on its predecessor with a handful of new features and refined dribble and shoot mechanics for even crisper gameplay. *NBA 2K14* helps the franchise retain its position as the best basketball sim available.

WWE 2K14

This is the first WWE title published by 2K since acquiring the license from THQ, making it the first in the 2K series. A total revamp of many of the gameplay features of *WWE '13* makes *WWE 2K14* both feel and play better.

F1 2013

Recently released, *F1 2013* is developed and published by Codemasters and is based on the 2013 Formula One season, featuring all the teams and drivers who participated, as well as the tracks which were used.

SKYLANDERS: SWAP FORCE

Activision's upcoming platformer for consoles and handhelds allows players to bring real-life action figures into the game through a mysterious portal. Note that this one is geared towards younger

gamers. [It also featured a minute-long trailer that looped for the entire weekend, blaring directly at the Roxy's Quest stand. Thanks Megarom! -Geo]

LIGHTNING RETURNS: FINAL FANTASY XIII

A direct sequel to *Final Fantasy XIII-2*, the current-gen console RPG features a reworked, more action-orientated gameplay system and customisable characters. Currently in closed beta, it conveniently releases in SA on Valentine's Day.

DARK SOULS 2

The original *Dark Souls* made a name for itself with its brutal difficulty, and nothing's changed in the sequel. Coming March next year for current-gen consoles and PC, this instalment promises a much larger game world and more advanced AI.

MAKING THEIR APPEARANCE ON THE STAGE ONLY.

CALL OF DUTY: GHOSTS

The biggest FPS release of the year, the tenth game in the *Call of Duty* series attempts to keep things fresh with new perks, strike packages and game modes, as well as dynamic map events and the introduction of squads.

XCOM: ENEMY WITHIN

An expansion pack to the critically-acclaimed *XCOM: Enemy Unknown*, *Enemy Within* brings with it new abilities, upgrades and weapons, as well as new enemies, 40 new maps and some additional multiplayer content.

THIEF

Eidos Montreal's reboot of the cult series aims to emphasise the stealth-based gameplay so characteristic of the franchise. Every level has multiple paths and approaches to choose from, as well as environmental features which can be used to your advantage.

JUST DANCE 2014

The series you secretly love (but would never admit), *Just Dance 2014* brings 48 new tracks for you to jump and jive to with the blinds drawn and the doors locked.

SONY

Home to one of the biggest attractions at rAge, the PS4, Sony's stand was packed all weekend with gamers excitedly waiting to get their hands on next-gen hardware. PS4 aside, the highlight had to be the *Gran Turismo 6* booth, complete with two fully enclosed driving set-ups, arcade style.

BEYOND: TWO SOULS

This story-driven title starring Hollywood stars Willem Dafoe and Ellen Page arrived on a tidal wave of hype, but has received mixed reviews since release, with many criticising the somewhat mundane gameplay and confused plot.

INVIZIMALS

A Sony exclusive, *Invizimals* attempts to recreate the Pokémon phenomenon with the ability to capture and trade Invizimals across consoles and handhelds. Note that if you're reading this, you're probably too old for this game.

TEARAWAY

Tearaway is a third-person adventure game exclusively for the PS Vita. The 27 people who own a Vita can choose between a male or female character, based on doodles left lying around the developer's offices (seriously).

KILLZONE: MERCENARY

Another PS Vita exclusive, *Killzone: Mercenary* treads the dangerous ground of a handheld FPS. Much like its predecessor on the PSP, *Killzone: Mercenary* manages to win over critics with solid gameplay and clever design.

GRAN TURISMO 6

A serious racing simulator, *Gran Turismo 6* is designed for car enthusiasts with detailed modelling, hundreds of cars and a hyper-realistic driving experience. This one is for people who want to drive a car, not play a game.

KNACK

This PS4 launch title features Knack, a curious collection of debris who can incorporate various substances into himself to obtain new abilities and become more powerful. Fluid controls and beautiful graphics make this one to watch.

DRIVECLUB

Unlike stern simulators like *GT6*, *Driveclub* doesn't take itself quite so seriously. While it can be played solo, the thrust of this online-focused PS4 exclusive is to form a racing club with friends or strangers.



Cosplay at the NAG stand.





rAge isn't rAge without a 52 hour BYOC NAG LAN. Huge thanks have to go out to our sponsors for making this possible – IS, Intel, HP and Corex.



IN THEIR SHOES

Were we forced to pick any one word to describe the art of cosplaying, we'd use "unwavering dedication". You'll notice this is not one word. We don't much care for rules, see. Cosplayers, however, care very much for rules. Specifically, those set out by the creators of beloved characters in video games, movies, comic books, anime and other entertainment mediums. The unwavering dedication bit then kicks in when avid fans proceed to spend many hours and many thousands of moneys meticulously recreating their favourite personas in both costume and character, dragging their fictional favourites kicking and screaming into the real world.

Cosplay, to put it simply, is fan art made tangible.

rAge plays home to dozens of talented cosplayers who travel to the Coca-Cola Dome from all across South Africa, all of them eager to amuse, entertain and amaze with their costumes. Some outfits are funny and frivolous, others are frighteningly sombre. Some are flamboyant, others demure. Almost all of them are mind-boggling when you consider the amount of work that's gone into their conception. It doesn't stop there, either, with many cosplayers staying true to their chosen character's personality for the duration of their time in costume. There's an annual cosplay competition at rAge, and it's always an awesome event to witness. Regardless of the competition's results, however, all of rAge's cosplayers go home victorious. And they all wield our endless respect.

WANNA BUY SOME CANDY?

rAge isn't purely about showing off unreleased goodies that'll only actually be available for you to throw cash at *in the future*. There's also a ton of stuff on offer on the show floor for you to throw cash at *right now*. rAge 2013 was no different, with a wide range of retailers offering all manner of nerdy and not-so-nerdy delights to grab your interest. Not only that, but excellent show specials meant that you could snatch up all the doodads on your wishlist at a total steal. Don't believe us? Just ask the savvy shoppers out there who wait specifically for rAge weekend to do all their shopping for hardware/games/gadgets/figurines/assorted geeky goodness.

BT Games was there, as always, selling truckloads of games to eager passersby. The Artist's Alley peddled all manner of unique artist-y stuff like awesome framed pixel art and even a variety of leather apparel. Dark Carnival perpetually had a ridiculously long queue of merchandise-loving visitors formed well outside the confines of its stall for practically the entire weekend. CNA, Matrix Warehouse, and even Exclusive Books were there with a ton of board games on offer. These and all the other retailers who were present successfully transformed rAge into a minefield of consumer temptation.

IT'S OUR PARTY

In the midst of all the madness of rAge, the NAG stand stood proud. This year, we divvied up our stand into three distinct segments. One third was dedicated to assorted NAG merchandise. Magazine subscriptions, zombie-flavoured T-shirts (these proved particularly popular) and even fridge magnets rapidly exited our hands and landed in those of eager visitors who happen to have a soft spot for the magazine you're presently holding. Around the corner lay *Roxy's Quest* – a video game made by our very own Geoff "GeometriX" Burrows. One night, while Geoff was sleeping, RedTide covered *Roxy's Quest* in NAG and rAge logos and took all the glory for himself. Nobody's heard from Geoff since. They say that on quiet nights, you can still hear his pained call faintly echoing from within the NAG storeroom.

For the third segment, we found ourselves caught up in a cosplay bonanza. We tried something different this year and hired three amazing cosplayers to draw all of the attention, ever, to our stand. The very gifted trio of KomboKitten, Yamaki and Miguel Lima did their job almost too well, and anyone who ventured too close had their photo taken with the cosplayers in a variety of (often totally awkward) poses. If you had your photo taken with us, remember to visit our Facebook page to find it. Special thanks to our three wonderfully energetic cosplayers (who taught us the anti-value of armour-inhibited bathroom breaks) and to all the staff who made our stand the success it was. Barkskin and SAVAGE especially, for their unwavering weekend-long repetition of "3... 2... 1... smile... look at the camera please... okay *now* smile... next..."

Yay us!

MICROSOFT

Like two magnets pulling in opposite directions, Microsoft's booth sat across the way from Sony's and featured the Xbox One, perhaps more elusive even than the PS4 as it won't be available in South Africa well into next year. It wasn't alone either; Microsoft brought along three big next-gen titles to keep it company.

FORZA MOTORSPORT 5

The *Forza* franchise is generally played by gamers into serious-business racing simulation, but anything at rAge that was attached to an Xbox One controller drew a sizeable crowd.

DEAD RISING 3

This next-gen zombie survival horror title features on-the-fly weapon crafting, zombies that interact with you through the Kinect and so much gore it was banned in Germany.

RYSE: SON OF ROME

This visually stunning Xbox One launch title from Crytek features a Roman general hungry to avenge the murder of his family. Smooth controls and satisfying combos make combat a blast.



NINTENDO

While the more serious gamers scuttled quickly in the direction of the Xbox One and PS4, the Nintendo booth was a massive hit with children and casual gamers. That being said, once they'd gotten their fill of next-gen the hardcore crowd quickly returned for a look at the new *Pokémon* and *Legend of Zelda* titles.

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY: TROPICAL FREEZE

This Wii U side-scrolling platformer marks the first time we've seen *Donkey Kong* in HD. The game features four playable characters, online multiplayer and cooperative play.

MARIO KART 8

The number one reason to own a Wii U, *Mario Kart 8* is every bit as fun as its predecessors. New to the franchise are anti-gravity sections, allowing Karters to drive up walls and along ceilings.

WII PARTY U

Easily dismissed by hardcore gamers, *Wii Party U* plays out like a board game, with 80 mini-games included on the way. Not just for kids, it's actually an awesome drinking game in disguise.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK BETWEEN WORLDS (3DS)

This 3DS exclusive uses the same overhead view as *A Link to the Past* and retains a lot of the essential gameplay. Nintendo have however included some new features, such as the ability to enter walls and move between worlds.

POKEMON X AND POKEMON Y (3DS)

Easily the hottest 3DS release of the year, and for the first time in 3D, the *Pokémon* phenomenon continues to turn adults into crazed collectors of colourful pixel critters.



PUTTING THE "LEKKER" IN LOCAL

This year's rAge was an extra special one for numerous reasons – the obvious one being the fact that both next-gen consoles were on display and playable for the first time in South Africa. While that certainly drew in the crowds, another equally exciting aspect was the NAG home-coded and Make Games SA booth. Together with the local Learn 3D crew, the booth put 14 of South Africa's indie developers' games on display for rAge attendees to play. We've all used the expression "local is lekker", but the true meaning of that phrase really hits home when you're holding a controller in your hand, and you realise that the game you're loving the hell out of was actually developed right here in sunny South Africa.

There was an eclectic array of home-coded indie goodness this year, with many of the developers on hand to discuss their projects. The list of local indies included: Celestial Games; Deciduous Games; Free Lives; Giant Box Games; Level 3; Made with Monster Love; Manikin Games; QCF Design; Red Dot Lab; RetroEpic Software; retroFuture; Rogue Moon Studios; RuneStorm; and Steven Tu.

Sadly, we don't have space to discuss every indie game at rAge, so the standouts will have to suffice. When it came to generating gamer interest, Giant-Box Games' *Pixel Boy* was definitely a crowd pleaser. The top-down action RPG features some beautiful monster design and boasts a robust power-up customisation mechanic that provides players with more than 6,000 combinations. Free Lives' *Broforce* was responsible for more player fist-bumping and high-fives than anything else on the stand. *Broforce* has garnered a lot of international press attention, which is only a good thing for the local indie scene. One of the toughest games on the stand was retroFuture's *zX – Hyperblast* – a colour-saturated sci-fi game with a massive nod to the shmup genre. You haven't seen gorgeous weapon projectiles until you've seen *zX – Hyperblast* in action. Finally, the indie responsible for creating a definite impact on the stand was Richard Pieterse's cunningly disguised social experiment *Wang Commander*. Think eight fluorescent penises, two teams, one ball, one goal and some wonky physics. Hysteria pretty much guaranteed.



The Telkom Do Gaming Championships at rAge this year hosted 11 competitive games, predominantly on PC. Prizes up for grabs included 24 Alienware Aurora gaming PCs, gaming hardware, peripherals and cash to the value of over R200,000.



EA

Going for quality over quantity, publishing juggernaut EA brought with them three massively anticipated titles: *FIFA 14*, *Battlefield 4* and *Need for Speed: Rivals*. While *FIFA 14* quickly attracted a competitive crowd (who seemed to be hosting some unofficial tournaments), everybody wanted to get their hands on *Battlefield 4*.

FIFA 14

The *FIFA* series is so popular, it's still being released for the PS2. You know exactly what you're getting with this one, and once again EA doesn't disappoint.

BATTLEFIELD 4 BETA

The thorn in *Call of Duty's* side, *Battlefield 4* hopes to sway gamers from the FPS king with beautiful graphics, an improved single-player campaign and a ton of new multiplayer modes.

NEED FOR SPEED: RIVALS

Rivals combines the best of *Hot Pursuit* and *Most Wanted*, with high speed police chases and an open world laden with jumps, speed traps and unlockable cars. There's even a bit of *Underground* flavour with the importance of vehicle customisation.



HARDWARE

ALIENWARE

At the Telkom Do Gaming stand there were new Alienware notebooks: the 14, 17 and 18 units configured differently and targeting different user needs. They are not necessarily configured according to price, scaling with performance but genuine user requirements. For instance the 14 has wireless HD display capabilities and HDMI 1.4. It uses a full HD IPS and Klipsch audio speakers.

Similar in configuration but obviously bigger is the Alienware 17, which is the only notebook in the series to offer 3D Vision. That also means it is the only one with a 120Hz display. This display is not only for gaming but for video playback as well and could possibly be the best screen in the entire range. A neat little feature is the dual-purpose HDMI 1.4 port which can be used as a video input as well. Therefore, you can plug any HDMI supporting device into it from your smartphone to your portable console. Add tactic keys to the keyboard and the option of the GTX 780M with 4GB of GDDR5 memory and you have a proper desktop replacement unit that is just as good as or even better than most gaming desktops.

At the very high end and probably out of reach for most people is the Alienware 18, also featuring a full HD screen but sadly no 3D support. Dual GPU configurations are your only options here, which means tons of graphics processing power all the way up to dual GTX 780M GPUs. It's heaviest as well, catering exclusively for the power user or the mobile workstation user. All units should be available locally by the time you read this.

STEELSERIES RIVAL

SteelSeries had a sneak peak of their newest gaming mouse – the Rival – on the main stage, although there's no date yet set on retail availability or official launch dates. Thus far it is looking like another quality product from the company. Designed for RTS and FPS, the Rival has six programmable buttons, a sleek design for any grip style and one of the most

advanced optical sensors on the market. CPI is adjustable to 6,500 in set intervals of 90 and it can track movement at up to 30Gs. It tracks perfectly with zero path correction and has no acceleration artefacts.

ASUS G-SERIES NOTEBOOKS

ASUS, much like Alienware, are claiming to have the universe's most powerful gaming notebook. Not surprising though that the specs are very similar. At the very high end you'll find the G750 series with 4th generation Intel Core i7 CPUs. Graphics are taken care of by NVIDIA 700 series with some configurations offering the GTX 780M with a full 1,536 cores. With typical ASUS design, you'll get those angular lines and supercar-inspired designs. As one of the first notebook vendors to offer the technology, NVIDIA's 3D Vision returns, which makes sense given the GPU that is included. The rest is as you'd expect with such machines including SSD storage, Windows 8 and SonicMaster supreme audio solutions. Just

as an incentive, ASUS also gives 32GB of Cloud storage with the purchase of these notebooks.

ASUS ROG

This shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone really, but ASUS once again showed off some of their latest ROG components and products. The most recent addition to the family the Rampage IV Extreme Black Edition was joined by others such as our favourite Z87 overclocking motherboard, the Maximus VI Extreme. Not only did ASUS have their motherboards there, but you could also get a glimpse of their DCU II line of graphics cards and the Orion headsets amongst other things. In typical ASUS fashion, the stand was big but rather sparsely furnished. There was no overclocking to speak of; a pity, given all the excitement that was IDF 2013 San Francisco, just a month earlier. Nonetheless, it was still worth checking out, especially if you wanted to get hands on experience with some ASUS component powered desktops in the latest games.



PAINTING BY NUMBERS

Those of you with less digital but still ample geeky tendencies can always find plenty of opportunities to empty their wallets at the Artist's Alley, run by local art community Legion Ink. Each year, artists vie for the chance to squeeze into the space to ply their wares, including traditional art, comic book art, clothing and fashion accessories, sculpts, cosplay paraphernalia and all sorts of hand-made nerdy things.



A GEEK BY ANY OTHER NAME

Card and board games aren't just for creepy old people with a Pokémon fetish! All manner of tabletop games are played at rAge every year, including collectable card games, board games and even a few war games if you can find the space.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY A GAME?

Entelect returned to rAge this year for their second R100K Challenge, which culminated on the main stage at the show. This event sees programmers pit their pre-coded AI tanks against their opponents', and the winner (a chap by the name of Pierre Pretorius) took home the grand prize of R100,000! Everyone who made it through to the rAge finals was also given a Raspberry Pi as a way of saying thanks for their incredible efforts.



WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment is the video game publishing arm of the film studio, handling video games based on Warner Bros. movies. The highlight of the stand was easily Warner's ridiculously awesome *Arkham Origins* booth, which had several gamers sitting alongside each other in badass seats, playing on flatscreen televisions.

LEGO MARVEL SUPER HEROES

Keeping in line with LEGO titles of the past, gameplay alternates between action sequences and puzzle-solving, while the storyline is basically *The Avengers* movie. It's cute, it's fun and it's available on basically every platform.

BATMAN: ARKHAM ORIGINS

The only thing that looked better than the *Arkham Origins* booth at rAge was the game itself. Despite a change in developers, this instalment looks to be every bit as good as its predecessors.

MAD MAX

Based on a film franchise the average gamer today probably hasn't seen (but should), *Mad Max* is a third-person action title set in an open, post-apocalyptic world where people spend most of the day murdering each other with assorted vehicles.

DISNEY INTERACTIVE STUDIOS

A publisher for both Disney and non-Disney branded games, this year DIS was only showcasing one game, *Disney Infinity*. While not so popular with the typical gamer crowd, a lot of dads were seen grinning ear to ear after discovering what turned out to be a full-time babysitter all weekend.



DISNEY INFINITY

This platformer sandbox title cleverly uses real-world collectible figurines that can be synchronised with the game. This one is strictly for your kids, but be warned, this figurine idea was masterminded by an evil genius who wants all your money.

BlizzCon

FULL DISCLOSURE

While we didn't get to attend BlizzCon in person this year, Megarom Entertainment was kind enough to provide the Virtual Ticket, which allowed us to sit at home in our pyjamas and stream the convention live. Almost like being there, but with more hot chocolate.

When BlizzCon began in 2005, only around four thousand people attended. This year the convention held by Blizzard Entertainment had over 20,000 attendees. From all around the world, over 60 countries, fans flocked to the Mecca of all things *Warcraft*, *StarCraft*, *Diablo* and more. Like the ones before it, the seventh BlizzCon was held at the Anaheim Convention Center in California.

While NAG wasn't there in the flesh, we attended in spirit (astral-projecting using advanced techniques known as streaming Internet video). Here are the highlights of this year's various panels and discussions, and you can read our write-up of the opening ceremony @ www.nag.co.za/?p=44989



WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WARLORDS OF DRAENOR

See more @ www.nag.co.za/?p=44995

The next *World of Warcraft* expansion involves Horde leader Garrosh Hellscream having gone back in time with the help of a mysterious benefactor. By fiddling with the past, he's built a new Iron Horde that threatens all of Azeroth. Players will visit the savage lands of Draenor – home of the orcs and draenai – to fight alongside legends from *Warcraft's* past.

The level cap has been raised to 100, and when you purchase the expansion you'll get to level one character to 90 instantly, new or existing. There is a new player housing system much like the player-run farms from *Mists of Pandaria*, but much more involved. You build up a custom multi-building garrison, recruit NPC followers to do missions or harvest materials for you, and you can visit each other's garrisons. Various user

interface improvements have been made: you can craft or enchant using materials straight from the bank, things now stack up to 100, bags can be set to auto-sort their contents, and a guide panel makes suggestions to you on what to do next.

Item stats on weapons and armour are being "crushed" – simplified somewhat. Hit, expertise, dodge and parry are being removed. Lifesteal, avoidance (which reduces damage from area-of-effect spells), sturdiness (lessens durability loss), speed, and cleave (which adds AoE to attacks) are being added. Gear will no longer be class specific either; their stats will change based on the class wearing them. Player models are being graphically overhauled, though not all player races will have these improvements at launch.

2013

WORLD OF WARCRAFT MOVIE

Director Duncan Jones (*Moon*, *Source Code*) was there to answer questions regarding the upcoming *Warcraft* movie. No footage was shown unfortunately, and the movie is still two years away from release. The earliest we might expect a preview is next year. Here's what is known: it'll be about orcs vs. humans, with the focus on the leaders Lothar and Durotan.

Jones is a huge *World of Warcraft* fan, and says that the original script was too focused on the Alliance, so he changed it to balance it out more.

According to him, the movie needs to be accessible to everyone, even non-fans. It will be live action, but with CGI characters. The orcs for instance, use real actors in costumes for motion capture, but they will be full CG in the movie. The exact plot wasn't discussed, but concept art for Draenor, Dalaran, Ironforge and Stormwind was shown. The cast has been worked out, but cannot be revealed yet. The movie will be PG-13, but Jones is quick to say the *Batman* movies were PG-13. "You can get away with a lot in PG-13", says Jones.



HEROES OF THE STORM

See more @ www.nag.co.za/?p=44997

Formerly known as *Blizzard DOTA* and then *Blizzard All-Stars*, Blizzard is reluctant to call *Heroes of the Storm* a MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena). Even though it shares elements with the likes of *League of Legends* and *DotA 2*, Blizzard insists there is enough to set *Heroes of the Storm* apart. They're calling it an "action real-time strategy" instead. The panel at BlizzCon revealed many of the playable heroes from *Diablo*, *StarCraft*

and *Warcraft* that we can expect, like *Diablo*, Abathur, Tassadar, and even Elite Tauren Chieftain. To make *HotS* unique, Blizzard is focusing on having varied maps that rotate in and out of ladder play. These "Battlegrounds" will have elements that dramatically change the flow of battle and provide secondary goals beyond taking neutral creep camps and assaulting the enemy base. Signups for the free-to-play beta have begun on Battle.net.

DIABLO III: REAPER OF SOULS

See more @ www.nag.co.za/?p=44996

Not a whole lot was revealed at BlizzCon about *Reaper of Souls* that we didn't already cover in our November preview, but attendees got to play the PlayStation 4 version for themselves. The main features of the new *Diablo III* expansion include Adventure Mode, which adds in bounties and Nephalem Rifts. Bounties come in a variety of types, like killing a specific boss or completing an event. This awards you with Rift Keys, used to open Nephalem Rifts which are randomly-created dungeons that can contain any monster, tileset, weather or lighting types, which makes each one unique. On the final level of a Rift, a

boss monster (a variant of an existing boss in the game) wanders about, so you have to contend with them and the monsters in the level.

The panel discussion showed a new monster, the Realm Walker, which has a portal on its back that spawns monsters. If you kill the Realm Walker, you can enter the portal to clear out the foes inside. Another new beast is the Westmarch Hound, which urinates on your corpse if it kills you. Blizzard revealed more of the Pandemonium zone, which is a fully randomized exterior location. Other new features include the Mystic artisan which can reroll an item's stats or enchant it with new stats.



HEARTHSTONE: WHAT'S NEXT

Blizzard's entertaining free-to-play collectable card game based on *Warcraft* has very unique mechanics you can only do in a digital card game, like cards that copy one of your opponent's cards. During a panel discussion "what's next for *Hearthstone*", Blizzard revealed that their statistics show there's no real tangible benefit to going first in a match (since someone has to go first), and that 44% of the top players in the current

beta (which has over a million players) have spent no money at all. They revealed some upcoming card changes to address balance issues, and that ranked play is being changed to include *StarCraft II* style ranking brackets. Reconnecting to a match in progress is being worked on, and future content will arrive in the form of "Adventures" that let you slowly unlock new cards as you play through miniature campaigns complete with storylines.

EXTRAS

After successfully getting *Blackthorne* (*Blackhawk* to some) to work on modern PCs – which you can download for free from the Battle.net site – Blizzard hopes to get the original *Warcraft* working flawlessly on modern systems.

Patch 2.1 for *StarCraft II* will allow the free Starter Edition to access all of Arcade, which houses thousands of user-made maps that explore many genres, even MMORPG. Additionally, the single-race restriction is gone – SE players can play Protoss, Zerg or Terran online. No word on *Legacy of the Void* though.

The mysterious *Project Titan* was not mentioned, and Blizzard avoided all eye contact when asked about it.

- Miktar



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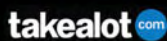
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OUT NOW!



WildStar

I'm not saying it was aliens...

WildStar solves a critical problem nobody knew needed solving in the first place: the inability to play *World of Warcraft* while simultaneously obsessively watching Firefly episodes. Okay, so *WildStar* is (or at least looks to be) nothing like *World of Warcraft*, other than also being a subscription-based MMORPG. The game seems to have much more in common with the action-based *Guild Wars 2*, in that the gameplay is less about knowing which spells to dial when, and more about tactical positioning and quick-thinking dodges.

The main plot of the game involves the mysterious planet Nexus, which once housed the hyper-advanced aliens known only as Eldan. They vanished, and now two factions fight over the technology left behind. Not exactly fresh, but it's a decent setup. On the one side you have the Dominion, an intergalactic empire

made up of several races: killing machines, badass horned demons and tiny insane sociopathic furry inventors. Opposing them are the Exiles, refugees and outlaws driven from their homes by the Dominion,

"Where your class is how you fight, your path is your playstyle."

which include humans, rock-like mercenaries that drink beer, bunny-eared forest dwellers and space zombies.

Each race can be one of six classes: Warrior, Esper, Spellslinger, Stalker and two unannounced classes. Only the Warrior has been shown in detail, looking to be a high-damage (or tanky) heavy armour sword and cannon user. All classes can apparently be direct damage, tank, or healers, depending on how you spec. Aside from choosing your class, you also choose your path: Soldier, Explorer, Settler or Scientist. Where your class is how you fight, your path is your playstyle. Soldiers get missions like assassinations and security duty. Explorers



WildStar will have a monthly subscription, and players will be able to buy playtime to sell to other players for in-game currency.



Carbine Studios was founded by former members of Blizzard Entertainment, many of the lead and senior developers of *World of Warcraft*.



have to chart locations, go on scavenger hunts, or track enemies. Settlers expand towns, create supply caches and upgrade civil defences. Scientists catalogue artefacts, analyse enemies and study things. The idea behind paths is to give players focus based along what they like to do. People who really get into the lore of a game will enjoy Scientists, while Settlers are more about socializing and building.

WildStar has a lot of modern ideas going for it. Movement is fluid, with double-jumps, sprinting and dashing. Enemies telegraph their attacks visibly with big red zones, so there's no ambiguity about where it's dangerous to be. Your own attacks are mostly area-of-effect zones, so you need to line things up. But most interesting is the player housing. Your personal Sky Plot has a fully customizable house and several "sockets" that can take things like crafting benches, a mine, and other utilities.

The bright cartoony art style and action combat, combined with large-scale player-vs-player and cooperative events in the open world, makes this very appealing on paper. Here's hoping we get into the beta. **NAG**

- Miktar

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* Research Strategy Group Inc. - March 2013 - US nationwide in-home placement study



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RELEASE DATE / Q4 2014
 PLATFORM / PC
 GENRE / Role-playing game
 DEVELOPER / Portalarium
 WEBSITE / www.shroudoftheavatar.com
 PUBLISHER / Portalarium

Shroud of the Avatar: Forsaken Virtues

Ridiculously Ambitious: The Game

Richard Garriott, creator of the seemingly abandoned *Ultima* series, has always seemed a little strange. When he's not busy designing elaborate and incredibly ambitious role-playing games, he's up in space. He even left a geocache aboard the International Space Station, which seems unfair to other geocache hunters.

After his space adventures, Garriott decided it was time to do something about this whole *Ultima* thing. He's in the process of trying to get back the rights for the series from Electronic Arts, who aren't using it for anything important, but in the meantime there's *Shroud of the Avatar*. After a successful Kickstarter that asked

for a million dollars and got two (with an additional near-million via the games' website), the spiritual successor to *Ultima/Ultima Online* is in development.

"After his space adventures, Garriott decided it was time to do something about this whole Ultima thing."

The basic setup for *Shroud* should be familiar to *Ultima* fans. It's a third-person role-playing game with a heavy emphasis on giving the world it takes place in a kind of granularity, filling it with the kind of fine details that we don't often get in games anymore. It took *The Witcher* to remind people what RPGs could be, and were once like. So far the game has only had six months of development, but the videos look impressive. While you can play the game entirely offline, you can also play it online (with friends or strangers), turning it into a

Shroud of the Avatar aims to be a spiritual successor to the *Ultima* series and *Ultima Online*.



The story is being designed by fantasy author Tracy Hickman, best known for his work on *Dragonlance*.



quasi-MMORPG. There is a virtue system that changes how NPCs treat you based on your actions, and like *Ultima Online* you don't have a specific class. You improve the skills you use, the ones you don't atrophy somewhat. In combat, skills are assigned to your skill slots randomly based on what you have available, so if you learn too many at once, you might not get the useful ones you need.

When you talk to NPCs in the various explorable locations, like towns, you literally talk to them. The game uses a natural language parser to understand what you type, like the old adventure games. You have to ask people questions, listen to their clues, and figure out where quests are by yourself. There is a highly detailed crafting system that includes mining, hunting, foraging, woodcutting and fishing. Resources you gather can be crafted into items, like furniture for your home or weapons/armour. Players will be able to buy persistent housing, which can be fully decorated. There will be pets, interactive musical instruments, seasonal weather, and even castles that players or guilds can own. Guilds can declare war on each other, leading to massive battles.

Forsaken Virtue is only the first in a five game series of stand-alone games, and if it can live up to half of what Garriott promises, we're in for a treat.

NAG

- Miktar

PREVIEW

RELEASE DATE / Out now
PLATFORM / Wii U
GENRE / Fitness
DEVELOPER / Nintendo EAD Group No. 5 / Ganbarion
WEBSITE / wiifitu.nintendo.com
PUBLISHER / Nintendo

Wii Fit U Wii Fit 3: Fit Harder

It used to be that if you wanted to improve your health while playing games you either had to hook up your console to a pedal bike, or overdose on *Dance Dance Revolution*. After *Wii Fit* (2008), the fitness game genre boomed. Now nearly every publisher has a fitness game franchise with varying degrees of hardware peripheral involvement, but just how much that impacted the ambient health of gamers around the world remains unknown.

The third entry in the series, *Wii Fit U* sports an overhauled interface that really brings the whole thing together. The notice board highlights your goals or high scores set by other profiles, while the new Personal Trainer menu creates a customised workout based on how many calories you want to burn or how much time you want to spend. This routine

can be tweaked, like if you only want yoga exercises – or if you're crazy, only the most intensive workouts. *Wii Fit U* may look all cute and cuddly, but it *will* kill you if you ask it to.

There are many new activities, some using the Wii U GamePad to great effect. All the existing balance games have been updated with an "Extra" mode that introduces new mechanics. A Mirror Mode function uses the camera on the tablet to show you a side-by-side video feed of yourself next to the virtual trainer, useful for improving your form during "Downward Facing Owl My Spine". The virtual trainer now has glowing areas showing which muscles you should be using to sustain a pose, and after an activity it recommends others to try, such as something to pick up the pace or to warm up more with.

NAG
- Miktar



If you own *Wii Fit (Plus)*, all your data and records will transfer to *Wii Fit U*.

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PLATFORM

360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

GENRE

Stealth / action

DEVELOPER

Eidos Montreal

WEBSITE

www.thiefgame.com

PUBLISHER

Square Enix



HONOUR AMONG THIEVES

Reboots are dangerous things. Sometimes it seems like they simply exist to hold up your favourite memories by the ankles and waggle them about until enough small change falls from their pockets, but other times they build on those memories, enhancing them in retrospect and making you giddy at the prospect of creating new moments that you know will live with you forever. As with all reboots, there's much at stake with this return to the world of *Thief*, and a lot of very anxious players out there who have kept a beady eye on the game's development. With a launch on the horizon, we thought now would be an excellent time to take an overview of Garrett's next adventure and chat with the studio that's responsible for delivering it.

Garrett makes use of an old clock tower in the City Hub as his base of operations.



his is not The City that you know, or the Garrett that you've journeyed with before. It seems as though the developers fell in love with the idea of Garrett and much of what he brought to the series, but decided to stay away from the established canon, a decision which allows them to skirt around

those bits of lore that didn't fit in with their own plans for the master thief. The result is a bit of a hodgepodge of narrative bedding, with familiarity in the setting – The City – as well as the return of Garrett and at least one other character (by name at least) in the form of Basso.

Today's Garrett hails from much the same background as the original fellow: born into poverty brought about by an upbringing in an orphanage, he was forced to the streets to survive, and in doing so honed his abilities to acquire items that don't necessarily belong to him. He learnt the streets, alleys and rooftops of The City. He knows where the shadows lie and how to blend in with them. While he originally stole to keep himself alive, he now lives for the thrill of it.

That was one year before the start of the game. Garrett was sent off by Basso on a job he expected to go like any other. But it turned out that Erin, a female thief who trained under Garrett in the past, was already on the case. Garrett considered Erin to be a sloppy thief, too violent and quick to use aggression instead of stealth, and so he stole her favourite killing tool – a custom-made claw – to teach her one final lesson. As it often goes, doing so was a bad idea – Erin's claw doubles as a grappling hook and, when her and Garrett found themselves falling to their certain demise during the job, she didn't have her claw to save her. She plummeted to her death; Garrett took a hard fall and ended up in a year-long coma. When he awoke, he found The City to be a very different beast than what he left behind.

He might be a bit out of touch following his ordeal, but Garrett is far from useless. While we imagine that there'll be some sort of process of reattaching himself to the criminal underworld (we're hoping for an '80s-inspired montage with some Cyndi Lauper blaring in the background), what we've seen of the game shows Garrett doing all the things you'd expect of one who calls himself a master thief: such things as sneaking, lurking, skulking and even a bit of hiding when the occasion warrants it.

Garrett is a stealthy chap, and the player will be able to make use of a wide array of movement abilities to stay out of sight and harm's way while moving through the game's various locations. Running and ducking behind cover are obvious ways to do this, but Garrett will also be able to scale certain walls and vertical grates, mantle onto ledges and leap across fairly wide chasms. Many of the areas have plenty of verticality to them as well, allowing Garrett to take the high road wherever possible with the use of his rope arrows which can be fired into specific spots to take him upwards to otherwise unreachable windows and ledges (or downwards, on the way out).

Arrows are a signature part of the franchise, and are Garrett's main source of tactical freedom in and out of combat. Water arrows make a return, and can be fired at burning sconces to create new shadow paths that are safe to travel within. Garrett can also fire blunt arrows which act as a long-range stone throw that's common in many stealth games: a noise is caused when the blunt arrow hits its target (say, a stone wall), which alerts the guards just enough to get them to move to the source of the sound, allowing Garrett to sneak past. And, if the going gets tough, there are always the damage-dealing broadhead arrows at your disposal: a single headshot kills instantly, but guards who were smart enough to remember their helmets that morning might need a little more persuading.



"WATER ARROWS MAKE A RETURN, AND CAN BE FIRED AT BURNING SCONCES TO CREATE NEW SHADOW PATHS THAT ARE SAFE TO TRAVEL WITHIN."



OUT AND ABOUT

Thief has a single, main story arc that will see Garrett from one mission to another, but when he's not on the job you'll have ample opportunity to get up to mischief in the City Hub, which is entirely free-roaming. And each time you return to it there'll be more to see as you meet new people and find new tools to open up portions of the area. There will also be entirely optional side-jobs for you to take, but it'll be up to the player just how long they want to spend in this area.

While out on the job, the developers are adamant that all areas will feature multiple, distinctly challenging paths through which you can travel, and acknowledge that "this is really key to the *Thief* franchise". Each area will also feature offshoots and side bits to explore, possibly with a financial reward or prized loot at the end.

BIRTHED BY SHADOW

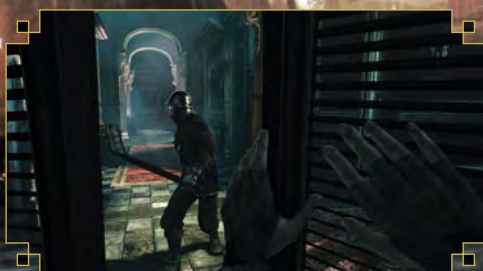
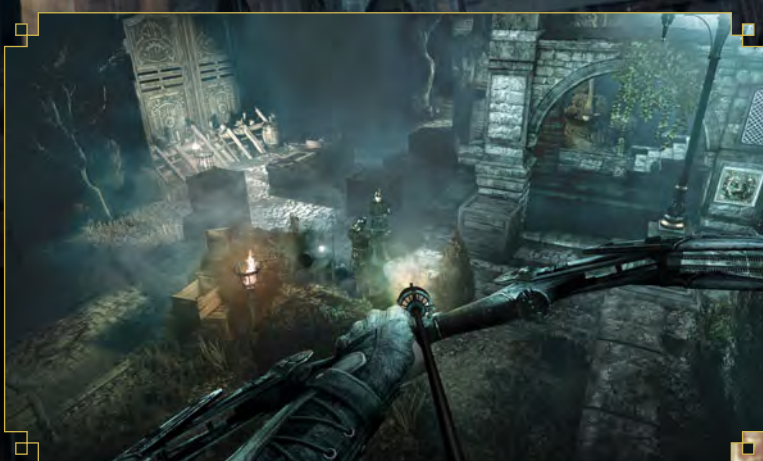
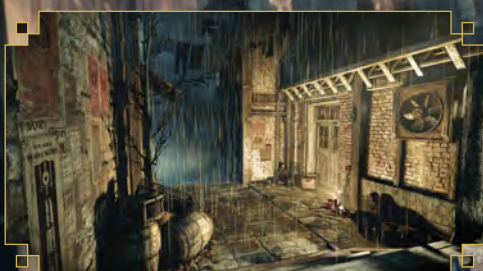
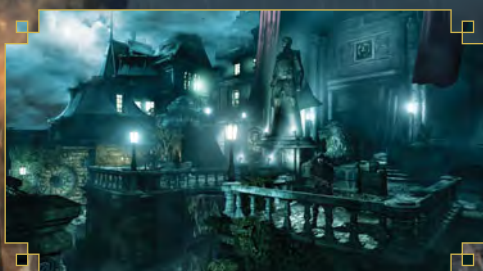
It's tough to pinpoint exactly what made *Thief: The Dark Project* so immediately special. When Looking Glass Studios released it in 1998, there was simply nothing else quite like it at the time – a first-person stealth game set in a medieval steampunk-ish setting, in which you spent the majority of your time purposefully trying to avoid action. In 1998, this was unheard of in first-person games, a perspective which was primarily dominated by action-centric stuff like *Unreal* and *Half-Life*. And while those were intelligent games in their own right, *Thief* quietly slipped through the crowd of vaguely similar games that surrounded it, lightly lifting public attention from their imaginary pockets for one important reason: it was smarter than all of them. Even by today's standards, *Thief* and its sequels are some of the most intelligently executed pieces of game design you will ever experience. Yes, even the much-underappreciated *Deadly Shadows* – and if you disagree, I feel it's important that you know that I don't care. Sound and light were your greatest enemies, perfectly enhancing the game's potentially roguish atmosphere. The environments you blackjacked and rope arrowed and pickpocketed your way through were ultimately linear, but simultaneously filled with opportunity and choice, the game and its levels and the tools at your disposal so purposefully designed as to

be completely open to interpretation and experimentation.

Evading and outwitting the sharply coded AI proved a superbly rewarding challenge, and the narrative surrounding your exploits was nicely absorbing, particularly in its presentation. And where *The Dark Project* was already a masterpiece of player freedom, *Thief II: The Metal Age* refined it to the point of perfection, adding a throng of new stealthy features and addressing a number of grievances players had with the first title. *Thief: Deadly Shadows* shook things up as new developer ION Storm took the series' reins, delivering a version of *Thief* that was more outwardly open between missions, its stealth mechanics proved expectedly divisive, but it was nonetheless a wonderfully entrancing offering – and the Shalebridge Cradle is widely regarded as one of the spookiest, most memorable video game levels ever created.

Thief was destined to become an instant classic, spawning a series that would live on in gamers' hearts and minds long after Looking Glass choked to death on a bit of rampaging marshmallow. This is why this reboot has such massive expectations to satisfy, and why we're so hopeful that Eidos Montreal manages to avoid tripping over its own feet and successfully reignites the spirit of this important franchise.

-Barkskin



"YOU'LL HAVE TO THIN OUT ENEMY NUMBERS, PICKING THEM OFF IN DARK CORRIDORS OR FROM A SAFE DISTANCE, IF YOU INSIST ON GETTING INTO A FIGHT!"





Ideally, you want to spend most of your time moving unseen, picking pockets and locks, pilfering all that glitters, and ultimately snatching whatever grand prize drew you in to begin with, but sometimes people just need to be hit in the head until they stop asking nosey questions, and for that reason, Garrett isn't afraid to get a little blood on his already dirty hands. While the exact details of combat are still a mystery wrapped in an enigma, we've been told that there's a limit to the number of opponents that Garrett can fight at any one time: this is not primarily an action game. You'll have to thin out enemy numbers, picking them off in dark corridors or from a safe distance, if you insist on getting into a fight, and here Garrett's humble blackjack provides a few solutions. It can be used to slug any unsuspecting fool on the noggin if you manage to sneak up on them, but in combat you're better off using it defensively to buy Garrett just enough time to eyeball his escape route and take it. Getting surrounded is a great way to learn what a boot print looks like up-close, and, as lead game designer Alexandre Breault puts it, "a fair fight is not his best option."

And that's about all there is to it. *Thief* is almost certain to raise a few eyebrows when it finally launches (not that it's had any trouble doing so already), but we remain hopeful that the developers are truly aware of the magnitude of the challenge they've taken on. Things are certainly starting to look up from when the initial bout of info on the game was released, on paper at least. All they need to do now is ensure that the actual gameplay experience matches their lofty goals, and we'll be okay. Just as long as they don't plan on any of that mass appeal malarkey.

- GeometriX

IT'S ALL ABOUT WHO YOU KNOW

While Garrett was enjoying a year-long siesta, the city that he once knew so well fell into despair, ruin, and chaos. Generally bad stuff, really. All of this trouble was brought on by the rise to power of Baron Northcrest, who's been running the city into the ground and rules with an iron fist. Northcrest also doesn't take kindly to criticism, so he militarised the local police (called The Watch – apparently actual names are unimportant to these people) and took to killing people whose curiosity outreached their usefulness. In retaliation, a revolutionary force who call themselves The Graven have arisen under the leadership of a charismatic figure known only as Orion – the voice of the people. These two factions are at one another's throat for the course of the game, and this battle serves as a backdrop for Garrett's shenanigans. If we were to take a wild, crazy guess, we'd say it's likely that he'll find himself wrapped up in this revolution sooner and to a greater extent than he'd like.

There will be plenty of opportunity to break into random buildings while you're out on the town. One such example is a lady's residence that contains a hidden safe. Garrett must first read her diary to learn of the location of the safe and then figure out how to get into it.



INTER VIEW

with lead game designer **ALEXANDRE BREAUT**
and narrative director **STEVEN GALLAGHER**

NAG: Will Garrett have a team of fences, informants and crime lords who help him perform his tasks?

Steven Gallagher: Garrett doesn't trust anyone or work with anyone. As the master thief he answers only to himself. With that said, the person in The City closest to who Garrett could call a friend is his fence, Basso, the one man in the city who has regularly seen more than a mere shadow of the master thief. He provides him with lucrative jobs and then helps sell the rare and priceless objects that Garrett brings back. It was Basso who convinced Garrett to take Erin under his wing as his protégé, something the master thief wouldn't normally consider. Some say that Basso probably knows everyone in The City and, true or not, the pipe-smoking fence certainly has an opinion to give, welcome or not.

NAG: How much attention has been paid to the demands and expectations of fans of the series, or how much freedom have you given yourselves to explore new

avenues of gameplay and narrative?

Steven: Early on we decided to go with a brand new approach to the story as the original games were still available and still played as well as they ever did. It didn't feel appropriate or useful to just remake them. Garrett as a character however remained a very compelling part of the franchise identity so we definitely wanted to take his personality into a new game and story and come at it from a new angle. That's why the story in the latest *Thief* is standalone. It's not a prequel or a sequel but there's enough of that *Thief* flavour in the world that older players who remember the original will feel at home.

Alexandre Breault: For the gameplay, we wanted to stay faithful to the core of the franchise: the light and shadow, the multipath, the various tools. It was also important to make it evolve, and we did it by introducing new tools, taking advantage of the city hub, and improving the AI. Our goal is to let the player feel that he is part of the world. Adding body awareness and using Garrett's hand even more helps us give that feeling.

NAG: What steps, if any, have been taken to ensure that veteran supporters of the series are going to be happy with the next *Thief* title?

Steven: We keep a close eye on the community, forums and user comments for sure. They're hugely important to us. We know that some fans of the original games have reservations about a few of the new features we've introduced but we think that when they step into Garrett's shoes once again and immerse themselves in this fresh take on the world they'll be giving themselves an opportunity to fall in love with *Thief* all over again.

NAG: How much customisation will players have in terms of ensuring they have a challenging experience?

Steven: There's a range of available options and a customisable difficulty for players who want to experiment. It's possible to tweak some areas of the game to suit particular tastes so, be it no-HUD immersion or super-alert guards, players new and old alike will find something to keep them happy. **NAG**

Reviews Intro

It's the holidays and time for everyone to go on leave and time for management to desperately seek replacement writers for NAG so when they get back they're fired, LOL.

It's been a long year. So your generous boss at NAG, Michael James, has given everyone almost a month off (December). What are you going to be doing with the time? Not you Tarryn, you and me must still work a bit, me less so.



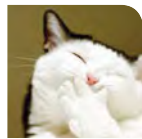
RedTide

It's a terrible cliché for me. I will be at the coast, in the sea, on the beach and near a long island ice tea (Coke Light) for three weeks. I love the ocean – it soothes my soul. Oh, and burgers for lunch followed by guilt for dinner.



Miktar

No idea. Every time I plan something for the December holiday, I end up doing none of what was planned and a whole bunch of stuff I didn't think I would be doing. *C'est la vie*.



Azimuth

Working, apparently. Although that usually does also involve watching a lot of cat videos on YouTube.



Mikit0707

I'm pretty sure we get this question for every December issue, so I'll give the same answer: what is "time off"?



GeometriX

Playing games, prototyping some game design ideas I've had for a while, and working on an epic Decembeard no matter how unimpressed my girlfriend is about the idea.



Barkskin

I'll be donning scuba gear to experience the great big undersea zoo for the first time. Because nothing says "relaxing" quite like dodging hungry sharks. With any luck, I'll stumble upon Rapture and accidentally relive *BioShock*.

Mini reviews

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

DESKTOP DUNGEONS

Roguelikes are one of the nichest of niche genres, and probably mostly because of the time investment involved – ain't nobody got time to bash through ten zillion levels of subterranean goon spawns for a magic dagger only to die on the nine zillionth level and start over from the top. Conveniently enough then, this roguelike-like takes all the slog out of saving the world, distilling the hero experience into just 10 minutes of stat-swapping at a time, with death nothing more catastrophic than a wasted coffee break.

Developed by local indie studio QCF Design, *Desktop Dungeons* mashes up traditional roguelike mechanics into something more like a logic puzzle where "pick your battles" isn't just good life advice, it's a tactical imperative. The idea is to kill monsters, level up, grab spells and gear, and finally take on the dungeon boss for the win (aaaaand repeat). It's not as simple as it sounds, however, and you'll probably find yourself losing a lot at the start. And the middle. And presumably the end too, but we haven't even gotten there yet. We're sure it's full of goats, though.



To make up for the brutal difficulty and/or instantly regrettable mis-clicks, the game also adds a persistent world on top of everything else, so when your gnome

thief is inevitably devoured in the dark, you've still got some place to call home.

“It’s your bed and you must lie at the end of the road of it...”

- Michael James



Ramjet

Looking for a new job because I don't reply to simple e-mail requests – I'm hoping for something in the sanitation field.



SAVAGE

I'll be freezing my ass off in London.



ShockG

I too will be looking for a new job because I cannot reply to simple e-mail requests. I'm aiming for something in the flipping of burgers discipline.

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.

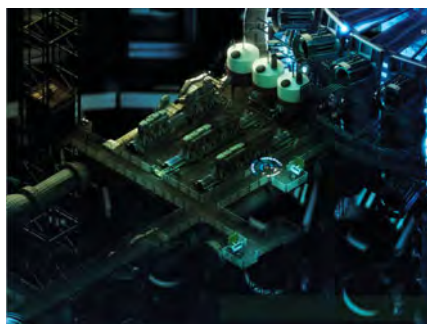
home_coded

Exposure for South African indie developers...

This month we thought it'd be a good idea to return to two local games that we've covered in the past, as both have experienced big things since we last took a look at them.

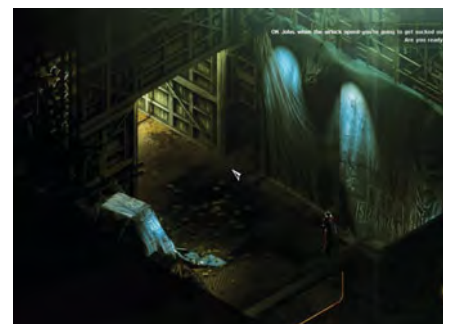
First up is *Desktop Dungeons* from Cape Town-based QCF Design, which has finally, after years of development and a hugely successful alpha-funding campaign, been released. The game hit the Steam store on the 7th of November and reached trending status on Twitter for its first couple of days. It's currently available at a price of \$15 for the standard edition or \$25 for the special edition, which includes the full game soundtrack composed by Danny Baranowsky and Grant Kirkhope, as well as the Goatperson DLC which adds a new playable character class, a new building and new quests.

Our other big news is that sci-fi point-and-click adventure *STASIS*, from JHB-based developer Chris Bischoff (who has since pulled in his brother, Nic, and named



the studio The Brotherhood), has begun its Kickstarter campaign. The campaign should still have a few days left in it by the time you read this, and at the time of writing had reached \$55,000 in pledges out of a required amount of \$100K.

If (we'll be hopeful and say "when") the Kickstarter succeeds, Chris plans to use the money to add a level of polish to the game in the form of a fully composed soundtrack by renowned composer



Mark Morgan (*Fallout* series, *Planescape Torment*, and currently inXile's *Wasteland 2*), more cut-scenes, professional voice work, and all the tweaks it'll need to get up to the standard we know the game deserves.

You can find the demo for *STASIS* on this month's cover disc.

Oh, and we released our very own game, *Roxy's Quest*, which is also on the cover disc. We hope you enjoy it!



PLATFORMS
360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

REVIEWED ON

PC

GENRE

First-person shooter

AGE RESTRICTION

18

MULTIPLAYER

Local

None

Online

64 players

DEVELOPER

EA DICE

WEBSITE

battlefield.com

PUBLISHER

Electronic Arts

DISTRIBUTOR

Apex Interactive

REDTIDE'S OPINION

The *Battlefield* experience is like nothing else really. The game world you're tossed into is fluid and filled with 63 other people all doing their own thing in their own little worlds but all headed in the same direction. You can drive a tank but then attract heat from anti-tank infantry and other tanks. You can fly a chopper but you'd better hope your jet pilots are better than theirs. You can sit on a roof all game long taking pot shots at other snipers across a bay. Anything goes. "Do whatever you like" is the magic hook and the game is designed to accommodate all types of play styles. From a technical point of view all the graphical touches are nice enough and I'm sure the next game will have even better graphical fidelity – yet this is just not important anymore. The destruction of some parts of the map does have an effect on the gameplay in that it dramatically changes the area in which you're battling. Well done to DICE for actually delivering on this. The sound in the game is pure excellence. Choppers thwub overhead while blowing debris everywhere, tank shells zoom past your head and audible gunfire helps you locate the bad guys. It's a living, dynamic battlefield in every sense of the word. Above all, *Battlefield 4* lets you make up your own game as you go along. It's the thousands of smaller experiences unfolding within the greater battle that makes it that much more compelling. This makes the game much better than anything else out there because you're always making it up as you go along.

88

Reviewed

Battlefield 4

Riders on the storm

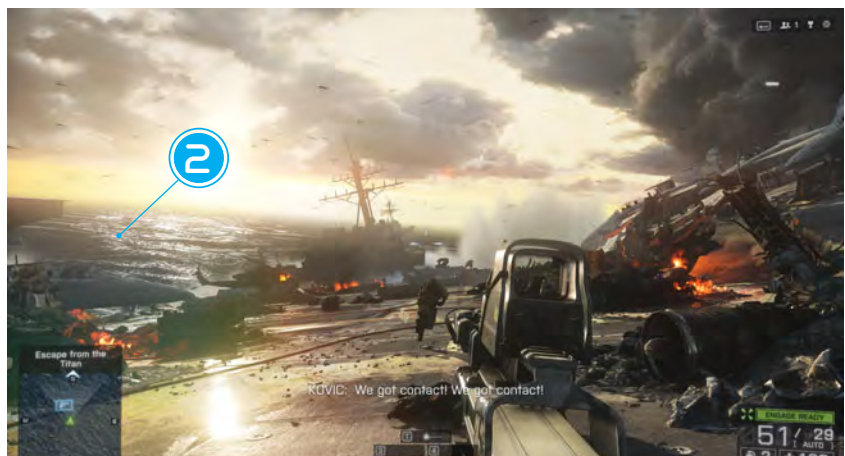
Battlefield 4 is precisely what we wanted. It's also precisely what people who don't like Battlefield don't want, because it's more *Battlefield*. It's comfortably familiar, like accidentally finding your favourite blanket in the back of a cupboard somewhere when you thought you'd given it to a frozen homeless person years ago. It's so familiar that we imagine gamers who were still playing *Battlefield 3* immediately before the launch of its sequel would feel that it's more of an expansion than anything truly new. You can thank the competition for that, I'd say. Regardless of how short the space between its release and that of the series' previous entry, *Battlefield 4* is fantastic.

Actually, *Battlefield 4* is mostly fantastic. There's still the issue of shoehorned single-player campaigns to deal with after all. I started the solo campaign genuinely hoping that it would be something worth playing. And it just isn't. To be fair, it surpasses *Battlefield 3*'s single-player offering, but that's not saying much. It follows the competition's formula as best it can, providing loads of flash with practically no substance. Contained within is a series of tightly linear levels in which a great many enemies go kersplat as a

direct result of being struck in the noggin by one of the many bullets you occasionally pop up from behind cover to fire out of the end of one of your many guns.

There's a story surrounding all of this bullet redistribution, but it's hastily told and completely ineffective as a result. I kept getting the feeling that there'd be something sensible, some worthwhile narrative in there somewhere, if it wasn't obscured by explosions and men awkwardly shouting at women for what comes across as no reason whatsoever. And I'm not making that up. There's really no reason to play it, and no need for it to exist. We often say that there are loads of solo-centric games out there that don't need to tack on multiplayer. Similarly, there are games out there that simply don't need a single-player campaign. This is one of them. Then again, there's always the chance that I've just become immune to these heavily-scripted, modern military-themed shooting galleries after having played so very many of them these last few years, and if you've not played anything like it before you may perhaps find excitement in it.

You're not here for that though, are you? Multiplayer is where *Battlefield*'s sheen



1 As with the previous game, there's a ridiculous amount of weapons, gadgets and assorted useful gear to unlock for each of the game's four classes: assault, engineer, support and recon. Unlocks are similarly gained for the game's many vehicles. As you'd imagine, balancing all this stuff isn't easy, and so it's common to see complaints of overpowered equipment.



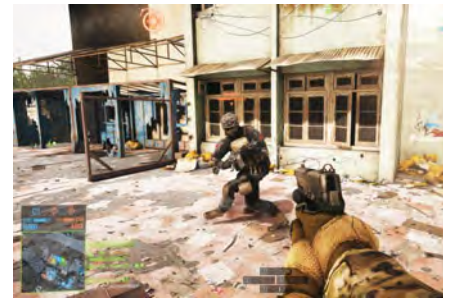
This is what it looks like when you take out a jet with a tank. Try flying low next time sucker.



This is what it looks like when you C4 a helicopter. You can cook a medium to well steak on the fuselage.



1



2 New to *Battlefield 4* is the ability to dive below the surface of water. It's very useful for hiding from enemies. You're also able to pull out your secondary weapon while in water, so you're not a total sitting duck whenever you go for a swim.

lies, and this one doesn't disappoint. The absolute chaos of its multiplayer sandbox returns in full force, this time with the added effects of *Levolution* and virtual battlefields that are noticeably more destructible than they were in the previous iteration. *Battlefield's* natural intensity is buoyed by the evolution of the new maps throughout the progression of each match. Hearing the warning sirens go off as the storm rolls in on *Parcel Storm*. Watching that much-marketed skyscraper come crashing down on *Siege of Shanghai*, and struggling with visibility in the dust of its aftermath. Having the waters rise in *Flood Zone*, enforcing violent water sports. Some changes are more minor, but aesthetically effective, like the sun gently peeking over the horizon in *Dawnbreaker*. They all successfully enhance the feel of the living battlefield that this series so powerfully creates.

Even without their dynamic nature, the maps are plenty varied and variable in size, allowing for sprawling 64-player battlegrounds right alongside smaller, more intimate skirmishes set in more focused zones of any given map. The emphasis on teamwork remains prevalent, with players forming small squads that gain mid-match rewards based on how well they're doing. Obliteration is the standout new game mode because of its concentrated intensity. In it, a single bomb is dropped between two teams who must vie for its possession in order to destroy key

enemy objectives. It's loads of frenzied fun.

By the time you read this it's likely to have already been fixed, but I feel compelled to mention that *Battlefield 4* is a proper mess at launch. Crashing servers, *Battlelog* idiocy, a multitude of glitches and general instability have marred its release. When it works though, it's utterly brilliant. It remains a thrilling, one-of-a-kind experience, a wild combat sandbox that encourages you to play it however you please. **NAG**

- Barkskin

86 Examine it closely and you'll find *Battlefield 3* with a new coat of paint. Cynicism aside, *Battlefield 4* does enough that's new to justify its existence, with a pleasing array of fresh, evolving maps on which to wage war with angry strangers. It still delivers the most successfully intense video game battlefield out there.

PLUS
Captivating multiplayer sandbox / Brilliantly chaotic / *Levolution* is a nice addition

MINUS
Stupidly buggy at launch / Single player is needless, hollow

PLATFORMS
360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / Wii U / XBO

REVIEWED ON
PS3

GENRE
Action adventure
AGE RESTRICTION
18

MULTIPLAYER
Local
None

Online
8 players

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft

WEBSITE
www.assassinscreed.com

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DISTRIBUTOR
Megarom

Reviewed

Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag

... And a bottle of rum!

The *Assassin's Creed* franchise has allowed us to experience the Crusades, Renaissance Italy and the birth of America. These are all extremely interesting times, sure, but *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* takes us to possibly the most exciting and chaotic setting the series has yet visited – the Golden Age of Caribbean Piracy. The game revisits the Kenway family, with the player taking control of Edward Kenway (who is the grandfather of Connor, the hero of *AC III*). This is one of three firsts for the series – it is the first time that a direct familial line has been explored, the first time that the series has gone “backwards” along the historical path it is following, and the first time that Desmond Miles is not a major part of the story. You'll need to finish *AC III* to find out about that last one.

Back to the present. Err, past... whatever. In *AC IV*, the player enters a world of pillage and plunder as Edward, who is driven by a desire to make tons of easy cash by blowing the

bejeezus out of merchant ships and making off with their stuff. He is a refreshing character in this sense, because he really is the first *AC* protagonist not to be driven by some or other loftier purpose. He is a self-serving rogue, for the most part, and his approach to life adds a new flavour to the game. See, while other *AC* titles had something of a sense of urgency to them (particularly the third game, in which Connor – the series' emo kid – seemed so driven to get the player through the story). This time around, the player feels less inclined to rush through to the next revelation, not when there is booty to be found and ships to be upgraded, locations to be discovered and treasure to be dug up. *Assassin's Creed IV* gives the player a ton of things to do, and doesn't ever make the player feel like they might be wasting time in doing them. The self-serving nature of Edward is central to this idea, and the truly massive world that Ubisoft have built for the game makes true freedom (which is something that real pirates



“Black Flag is breathtakingly crisp and clear visually.”



HUGH JACKMAN

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Look & Listen

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

were fighting for) within the game paradigm a reality.

Naturally, *Assassin's Creed IV* has a plot, but this narrative is not really as strong as the tales told in previous titles. It's not bad, but it seems less important to Edward (at least early on). And so the player is given a massive amount of free reign, with no real restrictions imposed by the game. Add to this the fact that virtually everything that there is to do in the title, from hunting to finding treasures, ties into the plot, upgrade or economic system, and there's good reason to spend many an hour goofing off in the Caribbean. As a side note, those that played *Far Cry 3* will notice that the crafting system in this game is almost a carbon copy... that's not a complaint, mind you. The system works well, and will have players going out of their way to hunt and skin the creatures needed to improve the main character.

There is obviously a lot of fighting to be done in *AC IV*. To this end, the game features a tweaked version of the revamped combat



system first introduced in the previous title. It allows for flowing, awesome combat that effortlessly blends melee and ranged weapons in a parry-heavy system. The fights can, as a result, be really spectacular. The game is a lot more vertical than *AC III*, too, with ship battles particularly offering the player lots of opportunities for gravity-defying stunts.

When it comes to quieter pursuits, like sneaking and assassination, *AC IV* presents a few new options. One of them stems from the fact that the location has plenty of tropical undergrowth that the player can move in undetected. This hidden movement is a great addition, and even makes the far-too-numerous eavesdropping missions a little more bearable.

As said before, the world is vast, with tons of locations to visit. These range from coconut islands and Mayan ruins right through to the three main towns of Kingston, Havana and Nassau. Each location has its own charms and flavour. All of them are presented beautifully. The world is lively and full of character, whether on a ship (where the endlessly sung sea-shanties provide a great sound-track) in a jungle (complete with nasty creatures who try and turn Edward into a snack) or in a bustling city. This counts for graphics and sound – there are moments (on the PS4 at least) when *Black Flag* is breathtakingly crisp and clear visually.

One aspect of the game is fleet management. Edward can capture ships and send them to his fleet, where they will ply trade routes and generate even more money for the

pirate. It's a sort of management mini-game, all said, which can be quite satisfying... but the player needs to be connected online to utilise this part of the game, due to the fact that co-operative play can shorten the time needed for ships to complete their trading missions. Speaking of multiplayer, there isn't too much new here. The popular modes from previous titles return for those that want them, but this game is more about the single player campaign than anything else.

This is a great addition to the franchise, easily on par with – perhaps even better than – *Assassin's Creed II*. Fans will, no doubt, be thrilled with the fact that they not only have a new *Assassin's Creed* title, but a great pirate-themed game, too. **NAG**

- Shryke



Not only is it the next *Assassin's Creed* game, but it's a great pirate game, too! Lots to do, lots to plunder and a massive world to do it in.

PLUS

Massive world / Great presentation / Tons to do

MINUS

Online fleet management requirement / Plot isn't awesome

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4th gen
Intel® Core™
i7 processor.



PLATFORMS
360 / PC / PS3 / Wii U

REVIEWED ON
PS3

GENRE
Action

AGE RESTRICTION
16

MULTIPLAYER
Local

None

Online
8 players

DEVELOPER
Warner Bros. Games Montreal / Splash
Damage (Multiplayer)

WEBSITE
www.batmanarkhamorigins.com

PUBLISHER
Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment

DISTRIBUTOR
Ster Kinekor

Reviewed

Batman: Arkham Origins

Entry three in the *Arkham* series; does a new developer cut it?

Let's just get the obvious out of the way first: developer Warner Bros. Games Montreal had big shoes to fill taking over the *Arkham* franchise from creator Rocksteady Studios. The *Arkham* series is arguably the pinnacle of this hardware generation's comic book video games, so a third entry obviously comes with a certain level of expectation from returning fans. While WBG Montreal has made a good attempt with *Arkham Origins*, I couldn't ignore the feeling that something was off; almost like the game's heart and soul was missing for the vast majority of the experience.

Batman: Arkham Origins is a prequel to the first two *Arkham* games. Set several years before the events of *Arkham Asylum*, the blurb for the game would have you believe that you're playing a brash young Batman who is perhaps a little inexperienced. Rather strangely, this third entry in the series sees you starting out with more equipment and abilities unlocked than the previous two

games ever allowed. You are, actually, a very capable Batman and while the "origins" portion of the plotline may not benefit from that, the gameplay certainly does in that you're kicking ass right from the word go. If you want true "origins" vibes then you had better purchase the season pass in order to access an exclusive bit of DLC that allows you to play through Bruce Wayne's initial ninja training in an Asian monastery. Isn't modern gaming a peach?

Perhaps the biggest bullet point in the game's list of features is the fact that *Arkham Origins* sees Batman coming face-to-face with a number of well-known super villains for the first time in his career. As intriguing as that setup sounds for fans of *The Dark Knight*, WBG Montreal hardly ever capitalises on these massively poignant moments in the canon, and as a result a number of these so-called "first encounters" kind of fizzle into anti-climaxes. I kept waiting for impactful narrative, but didn't really find any. In some cases, Batman "meets" certain super villains

PLAY WITH ME!

Arkham Origins introduces multiplayer to the series that sees three Joker gang members taking on three Bane gang members in a turf war. Two additional players take on the roles of Batman and Robin. Bane and Joker are playable when certain conditions are met. It sounds great in concept; too bad there's nobody playing it. I sat in lobbies for ages trying to find other players, but never actually managed to accumulate the required eight players to test the game mode. This is what happens when you try to shoehorn multiplayer into a game that doesn't need it. I can only imagine what the main game might have been like had Warner Bros. decided to channel the multiplayer funding in other directions.



➤ Enigma challenges replace the extensive Riddler challenges from previous *Arkham* games. They offer a ton of collectibles; almost too much.



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XBOX 360



PS3



PC/MAC



MOBILE

➤ Enigma has also taken over the Gotham city radio towers. Unlocking these towers results in fast-travel activation with the Batwing. Each tower is unique and each is a lot of fun to tackle.



MIKTAR'S OPINION

Warner Bros. Montreal has clearly played it safe, not deviating from the refined formula of *Arkham City*. In this particular case, safe does not automatically mean repetition. *Origins* makes a reasonable expansion on the scope of *Arkham City*, but there's no doubt we've been here before: returning to a previous work rather than going somewhere new. However, within the developer's self-imposed constraints, the story of *Origins* is remarkably vivid, delving into a surprising amount of detail as to the origins of what could be called the "Arkham-verse". This does help the game pick up steam as it proceeds, although you will largely be playing for the story, rather than to experience wholly fresh gameplay. Compared to last year's *Arkham City: Armoured Edition*, the Wii U port of *Origins* is focused on quality control rather than shoe-horning in extra gameplay features using the Wii U GamePad, though the real-time map shown on the second screen is still very useful in a game with maze-like rooftops and streets. The Wii U enjoys possibly the best performance of the console versions, with less outright slowdown and chunky stuttering when streaming the open world city, compared to the Xbox 360 and particularly the PS3 version. Unfortunately, no console version of the game runs as well as Rocksteady's original version of *Arkham City*.

76



over his communication channel, meaning a handful of introductions are relegated to voice-overs and onscreen text. There just seem to be so many opportunities that WBG Montreal simply didn't explore. That being said, there is a moment about half-way through the game that captures the essence of the Batman-Joker relationship very well. There's also a particularly tantalising encounter between Joker and a very naïve young psychologist called Harleen Quinzel that simply bristles with foreshadowing, but it could have been so much more and I was bitterly disappointed that that particular thread of narrative wasn't taken anywhere.

One of the game's biggest stumble points is the fact that the vast majority of in-game assets and locations are all things we've seen before. You'd have a hard time telling the difference between *Arkham City* and *Arkham Origins*. It feels as if the vast majority of the work on display here is actually Rocksteady's, and those hoping for lots of new features will be let down. There are, however, some stellar performances from new voice actors as Kevin Conroy is replaced by Roger Craig Smith as Batman, and Troy Baker (Joel from *The Last of Us* and Booker from *BioShock Infinite*) performs a very convincing Joker now that long-time voice actor Mark Hamill has retired.

Combat, one of the most lauded elements of the *Arkham* series, is just as we'd left it. It's still very engaging and simple, but tricky to master if you're aiming for high combo counts and impeccable encounter ratings. One thing worth noting, however, is the

single alteration to combat which comes in the form of a new piece of equipment: the Shock Gloves. Once you acquire these overpowered items, all tactics required to tackle the varying enemy types fly out of the window. Combat suddenly becomes an exercise in accumulating Shock Glove power as quickly as possible so you can activate them and pummel every enemy type into the ground without a second thought. It's frustrating that WBG Montreal's one addition to the combat system also happens to end up breaking it. **NAG**

- Mikit0707

75

This isn't a bad game in a sense that it's an unplayable mess, it's just disappointing. There are moments of great storytelling, but they are rare. Overall, *Batman: Arkham Origins* is an experience that doesn't live up to the standard that Rocksteady has set with the previous two *Arkham* games.

PLUS

Excellent voice acting / You (still) feel like Batman / Lots of side missions

MINUS

Boss fight camera sucks / Boss fights are glorified QTEs / Inexplicable framerate drops / Some bugs here and there

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PLATFORMS
360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO
REVIEWED ON
PC
GENRE

First-person shooter
AGE RESTRICTION
18

MULTIPLAYER
Local
None

Online
18 players

DEVELOPER
Infinity Ward

WEBSITE
www.callofduty.com

PUBLISHER
Activision

DISTRIBUTOR
Megarom

Reviewed

Call of Duty: Ghosts

Long in the tooth

Oh *Call of Duty*. You're not unlike that friend who keeps borrowing your stuff and never returns it, but every time they come begging at your door you give in, for the last time, and hand over your favourite hammer or dress shoes. It started as a symbiotic relationship: you felt like you were getting something out of it, but nowadays you both acknowledge the bond for what it truly is.

SINGLE PLAYER

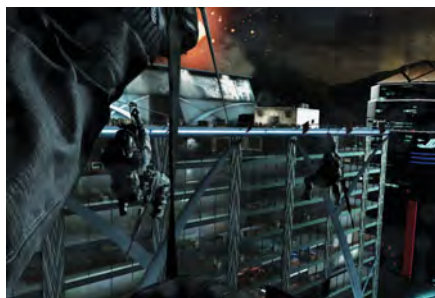
Call of Duty has a reputation for delivering high-action, explosive single player campaigns that are as predictable and uninspired as a teen undead romance saga, and this year you get precisely that. Not a teen undead romance saga – the other thing: explosions and stuff. Most of the campaign will see you take on the role of a soldier named Logan as you experience the story of the Ghosts: an elite squad of soldiers who struggle to defend what's left of the yew-nighted-states of AMERICUH against the onslaught of the evil bad guys and their evil bad guy leader from the evil South American Federation.

It might follow a tired old formula, but in

doing so, the *Ghosts* campaign brings with it a sense of polish, and there are even a few moments that show the developer has paid attention to cries from the public who want a more dynamic experience. Sadly, these moments are fleeting glimmers more than anything else, but for those brief minutes in which you're permitted to do more than mindlessly progress from one shooting gallery to the next, the campaign feels alive. I just wish that every encounter gave the player an opportunity to make a tactical decision to flank the brainless AI while your squad hammers the front line. For every such moment there are a dozen times when control is completely taken out of your hands and you're simply told "go there", "hide here", "wait", "go", "wipe", "now flush" until you've super-soldiered your way to the next checkpoint. There's also a distinct lack of challenge, other than in the form of knowing when to stick your head back down behind cover to regain some health. Everything else is taken care of: you practically can't run out of ammo, and there's always a highly recommended (or required) weapon or piece of equipment set down neatly in front of you to make each encounter that much easier.

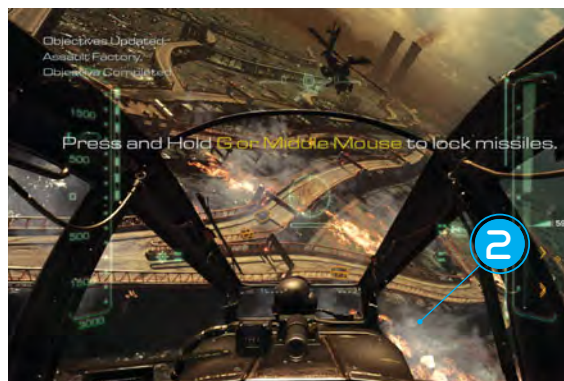
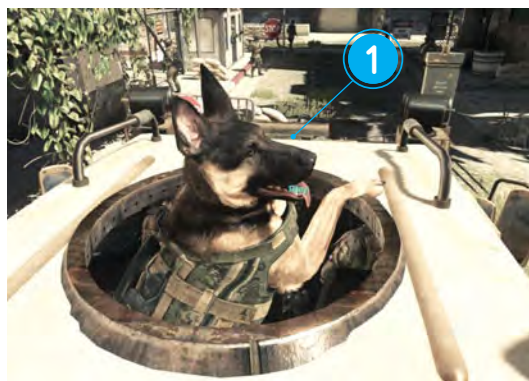
VALUE FOR MONEY

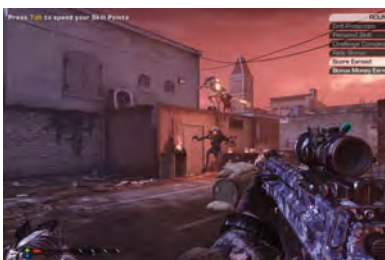
Ghosts is packed with content. On top of the practically limitless multiplayer mode (well, until you run out of patience) and the short main campaign, you get two new game modes: Squad and Extinction. Extinction sets out to be the new Zombies Mode, but plays out more like a campaign in *Left 4 Dead* in that you move through an area, unlocking new locations as you progress. Instead of zombies, you fight aliens that come in a variety of flavours. There's a persistent unlock system as well as an RPG-like progression system within each game, and the result is a great addition to the series that shows plenty of potential. Squad Mode comes with a few sub-modes, but the basic idea in all of them is that you use your multiplayer loadouts as AI squad mates. You have options to challenge your friends' squads or train against bots, and there's even a whole Zombies-like mode called Safeguard in which you defend against endless waves of progressively more challenging and numerous enemy soldiers (they're even called "infected").



1 Almost no excuse is squandered to show the dog, Riley, doing something cute.

2 Hey look, it's one of those missions where you alternate between air support and ground units!





Ugh, look, for all my negativity, the campaign isn't necessarily *bad*, it's just a bit boring. It's difficult to give in to the mindlessness when nearly all gameplay other than point-and-click is arrested from your control, but at least, if you manage to do so, you'll find a fairly entertaining, if shallow, story and a couple of truly fun encounters along the way.

MULTIPLAYER

This is where things get tricky. When you get down to it, *COD* is a multiplayer game. I guess there are people out there on a farm somewhere who only buy these games for their SP campaigns, but shooting other real people in their virtual faces is where it's at.

As with any annualised release, this year's *COD* doesn't change much. The perks and loadout system has been stripped down and rebuilt, as happens every year, but by now we've all figured out that this trick only serves to create the illusion of change as you're forced to learn the rejumbled system, but everything that you're used to by now is still there, although it might be in a slightly different place.

While the weapons feel solid and the act of using them to fill people with holes and anger is just as satisfying as it always is, the map designs and dynamic spawning mean at least half your kills and deaths occur from behind or to the side. Fair fights are not common, and this makes the whole multiplayer experience feel more like gambling than anything else. This feeling is mitigated in the more concentrated game modes, but, since some bright spark once-bloody-again decided to limit the Ghost Moshpit mode

(previously Chaos Moshpit) to pre-orders only, it's almost impossible to find a local game of anything but tedium TDM.

Another thing worth mentioning is how *COD* feels. Not in a hippy way, but a technical one. While the single-player campaign manages to run quite well most of the time, the multiplayer component struggles to maintain a smooth feeling even with all the visual settings cranked down to their lowest, even while maintaining a frame rate of 60+. It's not awful, but it takes a lot of getting used to, and should simply not be an issue to begin with. **NAG**

- GeometriX

75

Another year brings another *COD*, and with that comes the inevitable disappointing question "is that it?" The series continues to show very

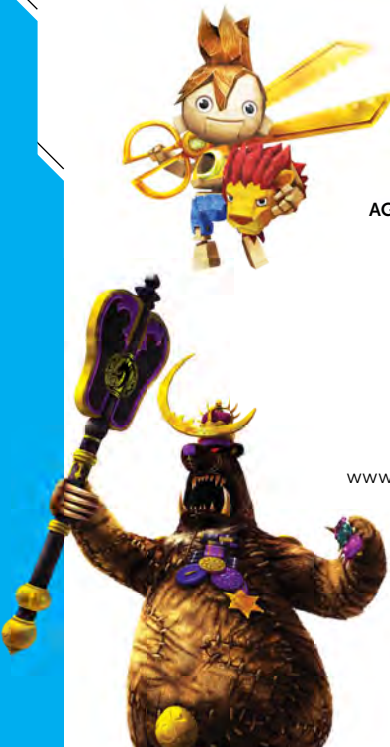
few signs of life but delivers a nonetheless solid experience in most respects. We really do think that it's beyond time to dump the annualised releases, though, or simply convert *COD* into the subscription-based service it practically is.

PLUS

Plenty of content / Some good bits in the campaign / Extinction is fun

MINUS

Ageing engine / Multiplayer is laden with technical and design issues / Very little that's new or exciting



PLATFORMS
PS3 / PSV
REVIEWED ON
PS3
GENRE
Platformer
AGE RESTRICTION
12
MULTIPLAYER
Local
2 Players
Online
None
DEVELOPER
Japan Studio
WEBSITE
www.playstation.com
PUBLISHER
Sony Computer
Entertainment
DISTRIBUTOR
Ster Kinekor
Entertainment

Reviewed

Puppeteer

What's a stronger word for "charming"?

When I was introduced to *Puppeteer*, I thought that it was going to be one of those games that end up being a labour of love for the development team, but also one doomed to be sorely underappreciated. I was right: from the moment the curtains raise on the game's first act, you can tell that a monumental amount of love was poured into *Puppeteer*, and yet the game has hardly caused a ripple in the gaming scene. It's a quirky little title but it's also one of the most unique experiences this console generation has provided us with. That uniqueness can be seen in a variety of places from the way the entire game plays out on a theatre stage, to the seemingly

hand-crafted characters, to the whimsical plotline and oft-times stunning voice acting. While the game delivers in all these places, one could argue that in terms of gameplay, something always feels a little flat.

Puppeteer is a game very clearly aimed at pre-teens, or adults who appreciate offbeat gaming experiences and are perhaps still children at heart. You play the role of Kataro, a young boy whose soul is stolen away and placed into the body of a wooden puppet by the evil Moon Bear King. By stealing the Moon Bear King's magic scissors, Kataro escapes the foreboding Castle Grizzlestein along with the Pikarina – the sun's daughter. Together the two embark on a quest to collect the shards of the broken moon crystal in order to restore the lost Moon Goddess so she can put the Moon Bear King back in his place.

Puppeteer is a platforming game, and a second player can (using the Move controller) take on the role of Pikarina to aid in finding hidden collectibles in each level. Among the collectibles are dozens of puppet heads that Kataro can wear. Each head has a power that can be activated at certain points in levels; doing so either gives you more moon shards or it unlocks access to a bonus stage. It would have been nice if the head-swapping mechanic had been expanded beyond this simplicity; it seems like there's a multi-layered gameplay mechanic that isn't fully utilised by the game, and I think that is primarily the reason why, at times, *Puppeteer* feels less like a game and more like an interactive puppet show. Despite this caveat, *Puppeteer* is a technical and creative marvel, and it's a damn shame that Sony didn't throw their full marketing weight behind it.

The game plays out over seven acts with three scenes per act. The 21 levels each take around 10 to 15 minutes to complete so the game isn't that long. It is, however, a budget title and if you plan on collecting the dozens of puppet heads and freeing each level's captured souls, then you'll get good mileage out of *Puppeteer*. **NAG**

- Mikit0707



82 *Puppeteer* is a lovely game and one that has this ability to rekindle your childlike wander. It's not for everyone, but if you like unique experiences and a bit of quirk, you'll love this.

PLUS

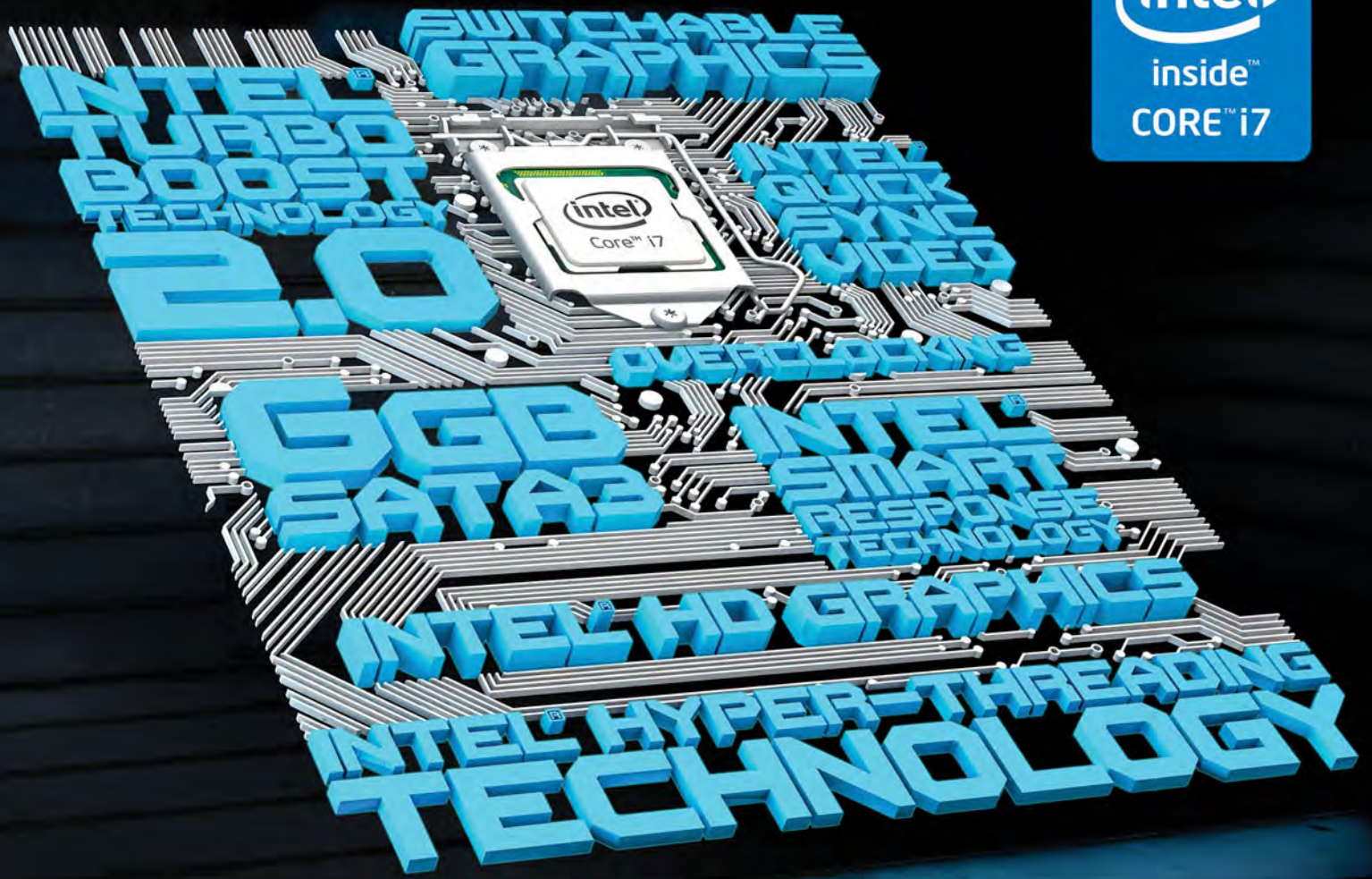
Incredible design / Unique in almost every aspect / Very often rather funny

MINUS

Jumping mechanic can feel iffy / Gameplay mechanics feel half realised

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PLATFORMS
3DS
REVIEWED ON
3DS
GENRE

Role-playing game
AGE RESTRICTION
3

MULTIPLAYER

Local

None

Online

2 players

DEVELOPER

Game Freak

WEBSITE

www.pokemon-gl.com

PUBLISHER

Nintendo / The Pokémon Company

DISTRIBUTOR

Core Gaming Group

Reviewed

Pokémon X/Y

Blasting off again – in 3D!

It's rare for a franchise to enjoy continued success without making major alterations to its core formula, but *Pokémon* has managed exactly that. There is something to be said for consistency, and "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Each new generation of *Pokémon* game, with *X/Y* being the sixth, has introduced new ideas around the edges, usually window dressing. In the case of *X/Y*, the additions modernise the franchise somewhat with much needed improvements. Everything is now fully 3D instead of sprites. You can customize your trainer right down to the skin tone, hair style and accessorized outfit. The new region to explore, Kalos, is based on France and brings some fresh European style to the universe. Online battles even have voice chat.

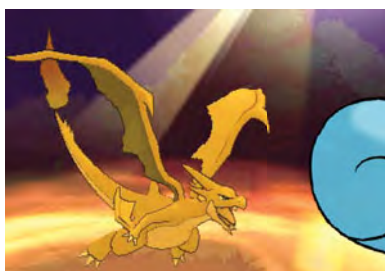
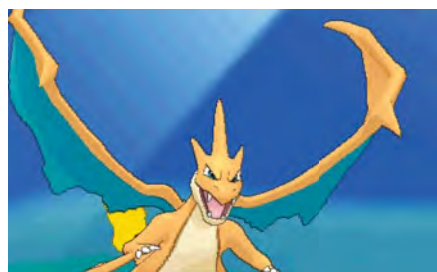
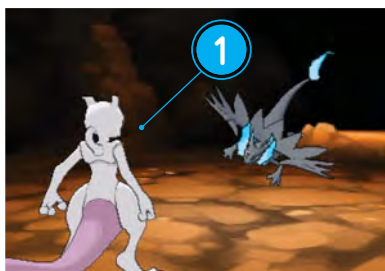
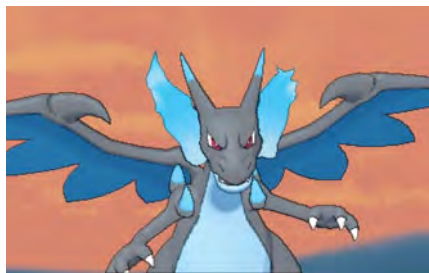
The structure of the main *Pokémon* series has remained mostly unchanged since 1996. As it was in *Pokémon Red* and *Blue*, so it is in

Pokémon X and Y. You play a young teenager in a world inhabited by strange monsters, embarking on a journey to capture such monsters, using them in battle against other "Pokémon Trainers", and for self-defence against wild Pokémon. Your progress through the linear storyline is segmented by Gym Battles, where you fight themed groupings of Pokémon until you defeat the Gym Leader, which earns you a Gym Badge. Along the way, a plot of some sort is revealed, and you get caught up in saving the world while also trying to defeat all eight Gym Leaders.

When you start, you pick a starter Pokémon from a set of three traditional types: grass, fire and water. Surprisingly, a little bit later into the game you get to pick another starter based on the original *Red/Blue* set (Bulbasaur, Squirtle, Charmander). All Pokémon have an elemental type, with weak/strong matchups against other types. Learning how these matchups work, in relation to the moves a Pokémon can learn, is core to the turn-based battle system. *X/Y* introduces a new type – Fairy – as a much-needed counterbalance to the Dragon type. Also new are Mega Evolutions which let certain Pokémon power-up during battle for additional damage, and Sky Battles which only flying Pokémon can participate in. Horde Encounters are great for gaining additional experience, as you fight five or more Pokémon at once. It's much easier to level your entire party of battle pets/friends than before, as Exp Share is no longer an item to be held but a switch you can toggle at any time.

The game even syncs up to its website to provide a Facebook-like experience, noting key moments in your travels and uploading photos you take at predefined points in-game for you to share with friends. **NAG - Miktar**

1 The most noticeable change is that everything, including the Pokémon themselves, are now fully 3D, with great attention to detail in their animations.



89

The sixth generation *Pokémon* game brings overdue modernisation to the franchise, like a complete online feature set for social interaction, trading, and player vs. player battles. The visual refresh stays true to the much-loved aesthetic but is enough of a change to feel new. *X/Y* is a great starting point for the curious, while returning fans won't be disappointed.

PLUS

Fresh visuals / Decent story / Robust online features

MINUS

Occasional frame drops during battles / Only nudges the envelope / Spotty use of autostereoscopic 3D screen

PLATFORMS
360/PC/PS3/PS4/XBO

REVIEWED ON
PS3

GENRE

Sports

AGE RESTRICTION

3

MULTIPLAYER

Local

7 players

Online

10 players

DEVELOPER

Visual Concepts

WEBSITE

www.2ksports.com/games/
nba2k14

PUBLISHER

2K Sports

DISTRIBUTOR

Megarom

Reviewed

NBA 2K14

One for the ballers

Basketball is a sport that many South Africans don't know too much about, but there are many out there who do love this exciting and challenging sport, and for them a game like *NBA 2K14* is perfect. Add to this the fact that the game now includes 14 Euroleague Basketball teams, and you end up with a title that is less centred on the American sphere (although this is the largest portion of the game, and of basketball as a whole) and more on a global picture. Sadly, the Dream Team mode has vanished, and the Euroleague teams don't really make up for this exclusion.

The game features LeBron James very strongly, with an included mode called LeBron: Path to Greatness. It isn't a retrospective like the 2012 version gave Michael Jordan, though... instead this mode is a "what if" look at the future of this new star of basketball. As such, it doesn't live up to Jordan's homage.

Overall, the player will be treated to a game that has just the right amount of improvement added to it. New control ideas make the game flow even more than before, and the player will be able to set up stunning plays with ease.

Great graphics, solid controls and sensible dynamics combine to make *NBA 2K14* the perfect simulation for fans of the sport. **NAG**

- Shryke



85

If you like basketball, there really is no better way to get a gaming dose of it than *NBA 2K14*.

PLUS

Great graphics / Excellent control scheme

MINUS

LeBron mode a little lacklustre / Limited local appeal

Schick
HYDRO
FREE YOUR SKIN™

YOU KNOW HOW TO
GET THE BEST FRAGS.
BUT DO YOU KNOW HOW
TO GET THE BEST SHAVE?

RETHINK YOUR RAZOR. THINK



FREE YOUR SKIN™

DOES YOUR RAZOR HAVE: 5 blades with skin guards protecting your skin and reducing irritation, a hydrating gel reservoir for enhanced lubrication, and a flip trimmer for those hard-to-reach places?

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

MULTIPLAYER
Local
2 players
Online
16 players

DEVELOPER
Codemasters

WEBSITE
www.formula1-game.com

PUBLISHER
Codemasters

DISTRIBUTOR
Megarom

Reviewed

F1 2013

Just another lap

The problem that arises with releasing a version of a game every year – and this is particularly apparent in sports titles that cannot rely on narrative and such to add a difference to the overall experience – is that, in some years, they fall into the category of “tweaked” rather than “evolved”. These titles instead show less sweeping improvements and changes, including smaller tweaks and adjustments. These changes aren’t always readily apparent; many prospective players may avoid them, because they’re “the same as the last game”. That’s what has happened with this year’s instalment of *F1*. *F1 2013* shows some tweaks and changes, but they’re subtle,

under-the-hood kind of things that only the most ardent fans will notice.

The controls, for example, have been adjusted ever so slightly, giving the player a better experience – but that adjustment is small enough to be hard to notice. In short, the experience is so similar to the previous title that one has to wonder whether this is a necessary purchase. Sure, there are those that absolutely have to have the more up to date information that the 2013 edition has to offer, but those that just want to enjoy some challenging F1 action may well consider this to be a gap year – particularly if you take into consideration that the next generation consoles (and inevitable iteration games) are just around the corner.

There is an added extra, though: this year’s game features a “classics” mode that takes a look back at F1 in the 1980s and ‘90s. The ‘80s comes with the standard game, while the ‘90s are included in the special edition, or are available via DLC. It’s a great idea, and controlling cars that are almost three decades behind the technology of modern F1 racers is a very different experience. The cars need to be fought and bullied every step of the way, and true F1 enthusiasts will likely enjoy this unusual look at the history of the sport.

But there are historical inaccuracies in the mode, and Codemasters really didn’t do enough to capitalise on a potentially great game mode. It becomes a little old a tad too quickly.

In terms of graphics, sound effects and the other things that make all the difference, *F1 2013* is a very decent game. It looks and feels great, but really doesn’t do enough to set itself apart from the equally great *F1 2012*. *F1 2013* is something of a wasted opportunity. It may well be the last time we see this franchise on current generation consoles... but instead of going out with a bang, this title feels like it was released because fans were expecting it. Perhaps Codemasters are saving up their creative juice for the next generation versions. **NAG**

- Shryke



79 *F1 2013* is as good as the previous title in the series, but doesn’t show enough progression to be appealing to anyone but the most ardent fans... or folks who didn’t buy the 2012 edition.

PLUS
Great F1 simulator / Classic mode

MINUS
Not enough evolution / Undercapitalised special modes

CORSAIR VENGEANCE 2100

DESIGNED for PERFORMANCE GAMING

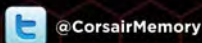
**Wireless freedom
with uncompromised
7.1 audio quality
and comfort**



The new Vengeance 2100 lets you enjoy high-performance Dolby 7.1 multichannel gaming audio without worrying about wires. The 50mm drivers deliver accurate audio reproduction for amazing sound quality and a competitive edge, and you'll be heard loud and clear with the advanced noise cancelling microphone. And, it's built from the ground up for durability, with a tough structure that's designed to stand up to the abuse of long gaming sessions and a real brushed metal finish that makes you look like a pro.

We've created the Vengeance 2100 for one simple reason: gaming audio matters. Whether you choose the 2100, or one of our other professional-grade Vengeance headsets, or one of our Raptor line of gaming essentials, you'll enjoy wide frequency response, accurate sonic imaging, and a comfortable design that will make you want to play for hours.


Wireless



CHECK OUT THESE OTHER CORSAIR GAMING HEADSETS



RAPTOR HS30



RAPTOR HS40



VENGEANCE 1400



VENGEANCE 1500

PLATFORMS

Wii U

REVIEWED ON

Wii U

GENRE

Action role-playing game

AGE RESTRICTION

18

MULTIPLAYER

Local

None

Online

None

DEVELOPER

Eidos Montreal / Straight Right (Wii U)

WEBSITE

www.deusex.com/directorscut

PUBLISHER

Square Enix

DISTRIBUTOR

Megarom

Reviewed

Deus Ex: Human Revolution – Director's Cut

Wii didn't ask for this (but is glad it got it)

Deus Ex: *Human Revolution* was released two years ago on PlayStation 3, and Xbox 360. The third game in the series and prequel to the original *Deus Ex* (2000), this Wii U re-release may seem late to the party but benefits from being the most refined, patched and augmented version.

Set in 2027, *Human Revolution* follows a reluctant gruff-voiced trench coat-wearing drip who becomes caught up in some corporate shenanigans, and ends up a cybernetically augmented badass who still doesn't get invited to any parties. Gameplay provides a multiple-approach system to scenarios: you can stealth it, run-and-gun, or try to talk your way around certain events. It's not much of a shooter, but that's not really the focus.

Most Wii U ports just slap a map on the bottom screen, but *Director's Cut* makes a meal of it. Inventory management is much easier with touch, you can play off-screen with a rejiggered HUD, and hacking feels much more organic when done on the GamePad. MiiVerse integration is well done: you can take screenshots, draw on them, record short audio clips and share them with friends, where they'll appear in their game world.

There's a fascinating commentary track much like how Valve does it, a "making of" documentary, New Game+ and the *Missing Link* DLC is rolled in for free. **NAG**

- Miktar

➤ Even though other gadgets use the GamePad accelerometer, scoped sniping does not.



77

The visuals are showing their age early and the transition from pre-rendered videos to gameplay is still asinine (a result of rushed development), but *Human Revolution* remains enough of a unique experience to merit examination.

PLUS

Includes the *Missing Link* DLC / Improved boss encounters / Commentary track

MINUS

Incredibly stupid AI / Voice acting is hit-or-miss / Frame-rate issues

PLATFORMS

PC

REVIEWED ON

PC

GENRE

Action / typing

AGE RESTRICTION

18

MULTIPLAYER

Local

None

Online

None

DEVELOPER

Modern Dream

WEBSITE

www.sega.com

PUBLISHER

SEGA

DISTRIBUTOR

Digital (Steam)

Reviewed

The Typing of the Dead: Overkill

Where touch-typing saves lives...

Hope you know how to spell and type without looking at your fingers, because otherwise you're dead.

In *The Typing of the Dead: Overkill* – a typing-themed version of on-rails shooter *House of the Dead: Overkill* – the light gun is replaced with a keyboard. Zombies shamble towards you with words or phrases in front of them, which you need to type quickly and accurately before they eat you and your fumbling digits.

This isn't the first time a *House of the Dead* game has been turned into a typing tutor: it's the same premise as the Dreamcast cult classic *Typing of the Dead* (1999). And it's a strange mix that works well; the goofy nature of the story and "grindhouse" aesthetic combined with comedic words at inappropriate times. While *Overkill* by itself was an average light gun game, this typing iteration comes across better. It's got a funky soundtrack, multiple difficulty levels, full Steam integration, and two-player cooperative play arrives later as free DLC. Boss encounters have been especially tweaked to better utilize the new input method.

As a bonus, the game contains the full *Extended Cut* of the PlayStation 3 version of *Overkill*, playable with a mouse or controller. *Extended Cut* was a re-release of the original Wii version, with improved visuals, two new levels and a bunch of tiny tweaks. **NAG**

- Miktar

1 The words you need to type are randomized each play session, which keeps things interesting.



74

While *Overkill* roams far afield from the established franchise look and feel, it makes up for it by being wholly unique in its own way. Turning it into a *Typing of the Dead* game seems to complete it somehow, bringing the silliness full circle.

PLUS

Intentionally "bad" acting and plot / Improves your typing / Contains original PS3 edition

MINUS

No multiplayer (at launch) / Dated visuals

REACH
70MM
OF THE MOST
MULTI-PLAYING
UBERMOBILE
GADGET-HOARDING
BS-RESISTANT
18-34 YEAR OLD
MALES ONLINE



I just got to level 7
where you guys at?



www.youtube.com/ign
watch the new gameplay
video - follow me @ign



I bet I could take
all these guys!



THAT'S **1 IN 4 GUYS** ON THE WEB!



Well, almost everything.

EVERYTHING ELSE

Bits and bobs that can all be filed under gaming lifestyle

STAR WARS: DARTH VADER: CANDY BOWL AND HOLDER

There is some irony that the dark side here is associated with sweets and chocolates. Although we checked online and there isn't a Yoda fruit bowl holder but there is a Yoda candy holder too, so there goes that theory. Some things you must know going into this purchase: Vader is bisected and hollow, so you'll need to mount him up against a wall or people will be able to see inside him. Secondly, the bowl is made from

thin, clear plastic (not enough for a gamer's appetite), so a trip to Plastic Land for a suitable dark and evil looking tougher bowl is a must. It's fun and silly and essential for a geeky man cave. It's also officially licensed if you care about that kind of thing in your candy holders.

Supplier: Cosmic Comics
Website: www.cosmiccomics.co.za
RRP: R599

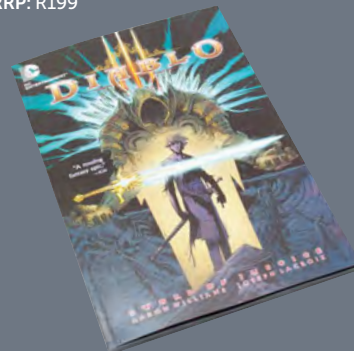


* Candy and banana not included

DIABLO COMIC: COSMIC COMICS

If you enjoy *Diablo* and comic books, there's a very good chance that you'll enjoy this, a *Diablo* comic book. If, on the other hand, you're not partial to either (or both), then you might want to give this a skip. The art style is rough and a little lazy at times, but it does its job in conveying the action well enough. On the writing side, things get a little more enticing, and the story it tells adds plenty of depth to the already well established *Diablo* lore.

Supplier: Cosmic Comics
Website: www.cosmiccomics.co.za
RRP: R199



ASSASSIN'S CREED COMIC: COSMIC COMICS

So often it happens that cross-media works, like this *Assassin's Creed* graphic novel tie-in, turn out to just add unnecessary bloat to an existing game world, but when it comes to *AC*, there's so much depth to be explored throughout the centuries that the story of *The Fall* is actually quite welcome. It follows the tale of modern-day assassin Daniel Cross as he discovers himself and his purpose in the universe and rises through The Order. It's well-written, interesting as all hell and expertly illustrated and coloured.

Supplier: Cosmic Comics
Website: www.cosmiccomics.co.za
RRP: R249

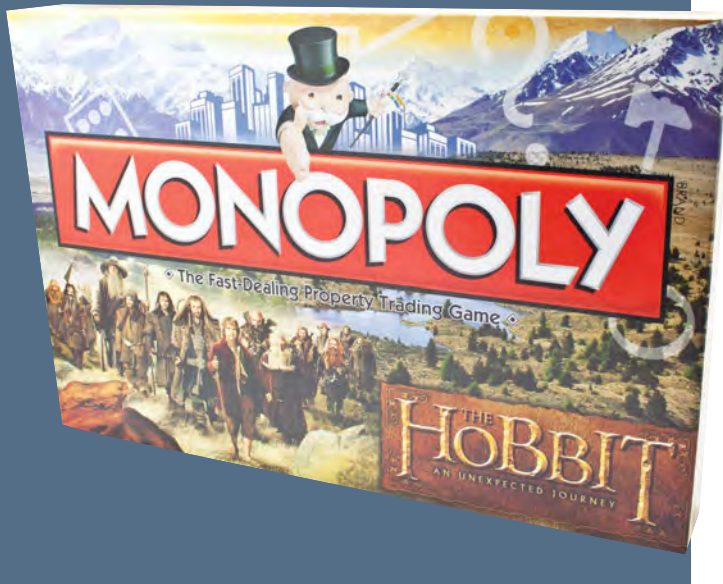


MONOPOLY: THE HOBBIT: AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

It's Monopoly, and if you don't know what that is you're obviously not from around here and by "here" we mean planet Earth. What qualifies this as the Middle-earth version of Monopoly is what we're going to talk about here. It's all Hobbit themed, so the properties where you build houses and hotels are called things like Gollum and Bilbo Baggins, instead of actual places. The community chest and chance areas become Dwarves' Treasure Chest and The Riddle Game. The cards themselves bear suitably inspired penalties and rewards like, "It turns out that an Orc scout was secretly following you. Pay each

player M50." This is all good and amusing but the really inspired bits are the player tokens, tiny versions of Sting, Gandalf's Hat and The One Ring. There are a few missed opportunities in the box, like not having fictional properties (The Shire, anyone?), the jail is the same (one of the many dungeons perhaps?) and the Monopoly money is the same (gold?). Regardless, it's pretty cool and gives an interesting spin on the game your grandparents used to play.

Supplier: Skycastle Games
 Website: www.skycastle.co.za
 RRP: R650



BIOSHOCK INFINITE: THE SIEGE OF COLUMBIA

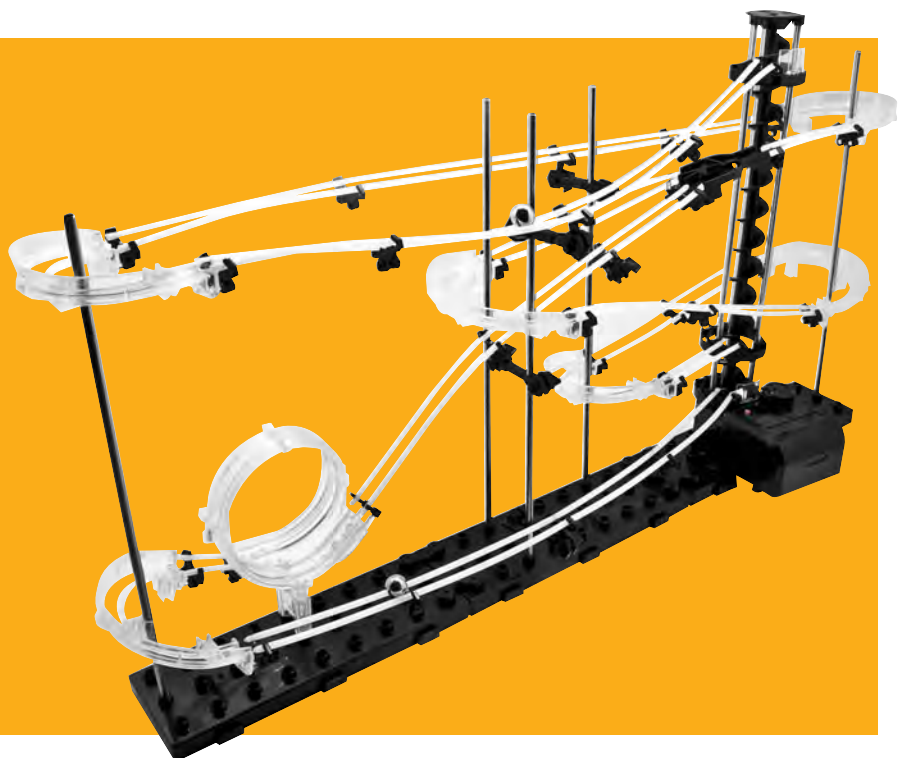
The Siege of Columbia is, as you might expect, a game about fighting for the floating city of Columbia. Players take on the role of the Vox Populi or The Founders, and throw units at one another until a winner is declared. It's like Risk with a bit of Magic: The Gathering and some voting: far more democratic than the actual takeover of Columbia. There's a Songbird plastic figure, an airship, a few Handymen, and all your little soldier dudes, as well as a billion tokens, counters and cards. One for the tacticians among you.

Supplier: Digital Sushi
 Website: www.digitalsushi.co.za
 RRP: R1,150

SPACE COASTER

Just like a bunch of dumb kids after opening presents on Xmas morning we lost one of the four silver balls this coaster comes with. It remained lost for most of the building and testing phases, and had rolled under Geoff's *Diablo III* Soul Stone USB holder thingy – fitting, considering this is a toy/challenge/thing straight out of Satan's play set. But this isn't a negative: building the space coaster was a fun-filled afternoon that tested our engineering prowess, ability with a side-cutter and patience with each other. It's an entertaining way to spend an hour or two of your life and the resultant Space Coaster is truly a thing of wonder – if it holds together the way you left it. Be warned, this is a finicky beast and right after the build phase will need plenty of loving and testing and trial and error to get it working perfectly.

Supplier: Mantality
 Website: www.mantality.co.za
 RRP: R415



TECHNEWS

KNOW YOUR TECHNOLOGY

FXAA

A fast anti-aliasing algorithm created by NVIDIA that has several advantages over regular MSAA implementations. This method of anti-aliasing works on how pixels appear on screen rather than the 3D models. This allows the smoothing of all pixels on screen, including those inside alpha-blended textures (transparency) and those resulting from pixel shader effects as these are not susceptible to traditional MSAA methods.

MSAA

Multi sampling anti-aliasing is actually a form of super sampling anti-aliasing, but optimized in that it samples depth and stencil values of a pixel almost exclusively. MSAA also takes into account the primitive data such as texture coordinates and evaluation of the fragment/pixel shader program that generated said pixels. These values or points are then sampled using point or area sampling methods to achieve reasonable compromise between quality and performance.

SSAA

Super sampling anti-aliasing is the simplest but most resource heavy form of anti-aliasing. It works through a brute force approach achieved by rendering the image at a much higher resolution than the one being displayed for the purposes of pixel sampling. Then the image is down-sampled to the desired size which as a result has smoother transitions from one line of pixels to another especially along the edges of objects. The number of samples taken determines directly the quality of the output image.

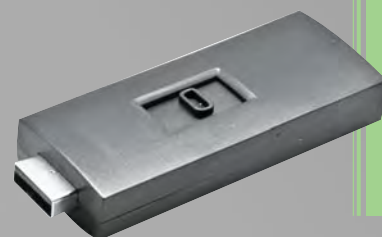
MLAA

Morphological anti-aliasing is a post-process shader based filtering technique that is similar in many ways to SSAA. After a frame is rendered, it is passed through the MLAA shader, which looks for high-contrast edges and patterns consistent with aliasing. The colours of adjacent pixels are blended to approximate a smooth transition along a line instead of aliased steps. This means that the smoothing effect isn't limited to the edges of geometry or alpha textures, and is applied to all of the pixels in the scene as well.

USB PC PRANKSTER

This fun joke device can be plugged into someone's computer and be left to do random weird stuff, such as make your mouse move, turns caps lock on and off, and type out gibberish.

www.mantality.co.za | R299



HP SLATE 21

It's a PC! No, wait, it's a tablet! It's neither, or both, or something: the Slate 21 is an all-in-one PC running Android, powered by the NVIDIA Tegra 4 chipset. That means it's got plenty of power, plenty of customisability, and it won't even cost a fortune. USB ports on the back allow you to hook up a keyboard and mouse, or even a gamepad, which means there's plenty of potential here for a light gaming device.

www.hpshop.co.za | R5,999



The PlayStation 4 console ships with a 500GB hard drive that can be removed and replaced with any 5,400 RPM SATA 2 hard drive that doesn't exceed 9 millimeters of thickness. So if you're looking to expand your hard drive space in your console, you will be able to do it. Initial reports suggest that the 500GB hard drive the console ships with will

DID YOU KNOW?

have 408GB of available space for you to install games, videos and music files. While that may seem more than ample space, keep in mind that many of the next-gen games have fairly large storage footprints. For instance *Killzone: Shadow Fall* has a 45GB install, *Call of Duty Ghosts* is 42GB, and *NBA 2K14* a whopping 50GB.

h.264

BY THE NUMBERS

NVIDIA will be releasing a new GeForce Experience feature called ShadowPlay. Intended to replace third-party apps such as FRAPS or MSI Afterburner, ShadowPlay will let you record or stream your gameplay in high-quality h.264 format, with minimal performance impact.

Mosh Pit

BEATS BY DRE PILL SPEAKER

This portable speaker weighs a mere 1.5kgs, comes with its own protective zip case, is wireless and Bluetooth enabled, and comes in red, black or white.

www.beatsheadphones.co.za | R2,599



SPHERO 2.0

This "robotic gaming system" pairs with your Android/iOS device via Bluetooth and can then be used in conjunction with a selection of free companion apps. The base app lets you remotely control your Sphero, adjusting its speed and direction as it rolls along the ground, but there's also a range of augmented reality games and Sphero-controlled software to enjoy as well. It's a cute gadget, and a brilliantly nerdy Christmas gift.

www.mantality.co.za | R1,499



ASTRUM RAGA ROCKER

Available in a variety of colours, this adjustable headset sports leather ear cups, adjustable fabric headrest and an in-wire mic. The 3.5mm stereo plug is compatible with most devices.

www.astrum.co.za | R139



"Our commitment to create a pure gaming experience led us to G-SYNC. This revolutionary technology eliminates artifacts that have long stood between gamers and the game. Once you play on a G-SYNC monitor, you'll never want to go back."

Jeff Fisher, Senior vice president, GeForce business unit, NVIDIA

NVIDIA's G-SYNC technology enables perfect synchronization between the GPU and the display, synchronizing the monitor's refresh rate to the GPU's render rate, so images display the moment they are rendered. The result is consistently smooth frame rates and ultrafast response not possible with previous display technologies.

DREAMMACHINE

No changes in the Dream Machine this issue, but the EVGA GTX 780 Classified comes down in price to R6,999 making for an even cheaper overall machine. Next month it is likely the motherboard, GPU, storage drive and PSU that will be replaced. For now however, this entire machine is a little cheaper than before.



PSU
Cooler Master Silent Pro M2 1500Watt PSU
R3,499 / www.coolermaster.com



GRAPHICS
EVGA GTX 780 Classified
R9,999 / www.evga.com



OS DRIVE
OCZ Vector 256GB SSD
R3,799 / www.ocz.com



STORAGE DRIVE
Seagate Barracuda 3TB
R1,699 / www.seagate.com



CHASSIS
Corsair Obsidian 900D
R4,299 / www.corsair.com



DISPLAY
ASUS VG248QE
R5,999 / za.asus.com



KEYBOARD
GIGABYTE Aivia Osmium Mechanical Gaming Keyboard
R1,299 / www.rectron.co.za



COOLER
NZXT Kraken X60
R1,950 / www.nzxt.com



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



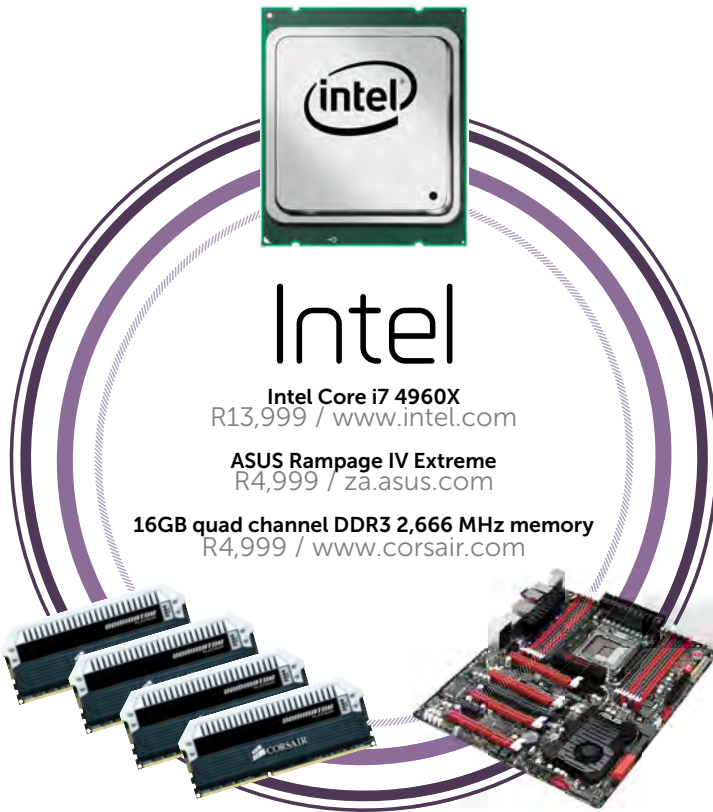
SOUND
Creative Sound Blaster ZxR
R2,799 / www.corex.co.za



HEADPHONES
Plantronics GameCom Commander
R4,569 / www.gamersgear.co.za



MOUSE MAT
Razer Ironclad
R599 / www.corex.co.za



Intel

Intel Core i7 4960X
R13,999 / www.intel.com

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

16GB quad channel DDR3 2,666 MHz memory
R4,999 / www.corsair.com

Intel Dream Machine:
R63,906



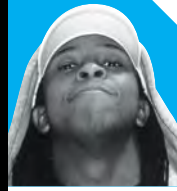
AMD

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

AMD Dream Machine:
R49,406



HARDWIRED

A compute future

There's no real plausible way of predicting the future, or at least future technologies. There are predictions one can make, but most of the time you're taking a blind shot based on what we have presently and what we had before. Making those predictions assumes linear change or progress.

This has some merits to it, but as highlighted by SOCs and mobile devices, nobody could have foreseen how these would transform the world we live in today. The rise of the smartphone literally changed everything from a computing and communication point of view. There was simply no way of knowing how pervasive these devices would be in our daily lives, and how they'd affect every other industry on the planet.

Such dramatic changes don't happen often. While it is true that any society throughout history marvelled at the technological breakthroughs of the time and heralded them as the most significant in human history, there has to be something said about the time we live in today. Especially in the last 100 years. The invention of the transistor, wireless

"The rise of the smartphone literally changed everything from a computing and communication point of view."

communication devices, 3D printers and the observations of the Higgs Boson particle(s) at the LHC, to name but a few.

All of these have one thing in common though and that is they relied heavily on compute power. It is incredible that we had to invent something before we could use it to take us places we couldn't have possibly imagined. The amount of processing power available today on a mid-range GPU would have been impossible to fathom a mere 30 years ago. Take for instance the Cray-2 of 1985. It could process an impressive 1.9GFlops, via a four-processor system that had to be liquid nitrogen cooled. Compare that with a modern mid-range GPU like the GeForce GTX 660 Ti which can process 2.6TFlops. That makes it 4,940 times faster. That order of magnitude in performance differences could not be illustrated by anything we could grasp in the real world. It's beyond comprehension essentially, yet this has taken less than 30 years to achieve.

Even probing information that we gather about the universe has increased dramatically because of compute power. Granted, the information that is out there is essentially infinite, but that which we can observe and perform computations on has progressed at a rapid pace because of the advances in computing power.

Hence there must be a constant drive to go faster, be more efficient and increase the number crunching powers of all silicon. There is no such thing an SOC, GPU or CPU that is fast enough. You can never have too much computing power, because what seems so wasteful now or at least redundant will not be able to get us through the challenges of tomorrow. That we use this available power to play games and such is not to say it isn't important. In fact, consider that GPUs were made exclusively for gaming yet they have found their way into the most powerful super computers of our time. The immediate application of processing power may not be apparent to us, but it is there, and all the major changes technologically in our lifetime are centred on it. Thus it remains important that we never hope for less or wish that progress would stop so "our pockets" and such may catch up. That is short sighted at the least and it is not how we have managed to get this far, which isn't anywhere at all when one considers just how much farther we can still go.

- Neo Sibeko

The Lazy Gamer's Guide Nintendo 2DS

Website R1,499 RRP www.nintendo.co.za

At first glance the 2DS might seem like a strange device. It's almost as though Nintendo built their own cheap knock-off of the 3DS, but really, it's a smart decision when you get down to it. And here's why: if you're looking at the 2DS and thinking "ugh, that looks like crap", it's not designed for you; it's a kid's toy, or one for those on a really tight budget. Got it? Cool.

WHAT'S MISSING

3D is out of the picture, which should be pretty obvious if you look at its name. What that means is simple: you can still play all 3DS games (the cartridge slot is identical), but there's simply no 3D support. Not really a big deal for most players, and, since 3D is not recommended for young children, the decision to cut support makes sense. The audio has been chopped to mono for the external speaker, but the headphone jack still supports stereo output. You won't be able to use any accessories designed for the 3DS, including extended battery packs and the Circle Pad Plus.

WHAT'S STILL THERE

As well as all of the standard controls and buttons, Wi-Fi support, SD card slot (the unit ships with a 4GB card), stylus and volume control are all still present. Since you can't fold the device shut to put it on standby, there's a slider to drop in and out of sleep. The charging cable remains the same, although you won't be able to use the convenient docking station as with the 3DS.

Another returning feature is the dual rear cameras for 3D photos and augmented reality games, as well as the single front-facing camera. While you can't view your photos in 3D, you can transfer them to a 3DS/XL and do so there.

TOUGH LUCK

The 2DS is essentially a standard 3DS that's been laid flat, although it's a little shorter, and almost everything has been given an overhaul to fit the new form-factor and target market. That means the 2DS has a plastic feel to it, but due to its new construction it's pretty tough. We were actually told to drop it from shoulder height, and it survived with everything intact, and then Geoff dropped it again during an interview and it still didn't break. We could continue dropping it until it does break, but we think you get the point.



TECHNICAL

CPU:
Dual-core ARM11 MPCore
Memory:
128MB FCRAM, 6MB VRAM
Display:
3.53" LCD @ 400x240;
3.02" LCD @ 320x240
Storage:
1GB onboard; SDHC card supported (4GB included)

SUMMARY

PROS

- Affordable
- Pretty tough

CONS

- No compatibility with 3DS accessories

ALTERNATIVES

- PSP Street

WIN A **WWE 2K14** HAMPER!

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PRIZE INCLUDES

- Undertaker Phenom edition with limited edition signed postcard
- Messenger Bag
- Baseball Caps
- Sweat Bands
- FlexForce John Cena figurine
- FlexForce Tornado Takedown
- Thirst cookers flavoured powdered drink
- Distressed Hoodie
- Hand Grips
- Long Sleeve T

- SMSes charged at R1.50 < (free SMS bundles don't apply)
- Winners will be notified by SMS <
- Judges decision is final and no <
- correspondence will be entered into
- Competition closes 31 December 2013 <



The Lazy Gamer's Guide

Rikomagic MK602

Website R1,299 RRP www.rikomagic.co.za

There are two kinds of TVs in this world: dumb TVs, and smart TVs. If you currently own a dumb TV, Rikomagic's collection of mini-PCs allow you to give it an education by strapping an Android operating system onto the box which lets you do almost anything you'd want.

I'LL SHOW YOU MINE

The feature-toting MK602 packs in a few tricks not found on its smaller siblings. For starters, it's designed to clip on top of your TV instead of plugging directly into your HDMI slot. Perched as it is, the MK602 includes a web cam and microphone to allow you to make use of apps like Skype and Google Hangout to show your bits to strangers on the Internet or talk to your mum in Holland. Preferably not at the same time.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Since the MK602 is loaded up with Android, you're pretty free in how you use it exactly. Streaming media through dedicated apps or Chrome is the most obvious use, but since there's Bluetooth on board here, you're only a wireless gamepad away from using this device as a gaming machine. The onboard GPU isn't the hottest technology around, but it'll be sufficient for most simple games with controller support.



TECHNICAL

CHIPSET:
Cortex A9 dual-core @ 1.6GHz
RAM: 1GB
STORAGE:
8GB on-board; Micro SD card supported
OUTPUT:
HDMI, A/V

SUMMARY

PROS

- Quick and easy setup
- Decent specs
- Ample software customisation options

CONS

- Remote Wi-Fi compatibility issues

ALTERNATIVES

- Any smart TV / Ouya

CONTROL FREAK

Since Android is generally found in devices with touch screens, and since there's very little chance of your telly being that fancy, you might be wondering just how in the heck you'll control the operating system. If you haven't wondered that, don't worry, there'll be an extra class in the afternoon for the slow kids. Perhaps the best way to run your Rikomagic device is with a wireless keyboard and mouse. There are a number of these available from peripheral



manufacturers like Logitech, and RKM do their own one called the MK702 II. Unfortunately, at the time of testing there's a pretty significant compatibility problem between the 702 and the 602's built-in Wi-Fi, so we'd suggest either finding an equivalent Bluetooth device or holding out for a firmware update. If that doesn't suit you, a simple USB keyboard and mouse combo will get the job done – Android is surprisingly usable with that classic combo.

PLUG IN BABY

The back of the device is surprisingly well equipped with all the ports you'd expect to find on a mini-PC, including two USB ports, HDMI, Ethernet, AV and an SD card slot.

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1ST PRIZE: STEELSERIES HAMPER VALUED AT R5,000 :

- SteelSeries Sensei [RAW] Navi mouse
- SteelSeries Siberia V2 Navi non-USB headset
- SteelSeries QcK Navi mousepad
- SteelSeries Apex keyboard
- SteelSeries merchandise: T-shirt, beach towel and flip flops (not pictured)



5x RUNNER-UP PRIZES VALUED AT R,1000:

- Steelseries Sensei mouse and T-shirt (not pictured)



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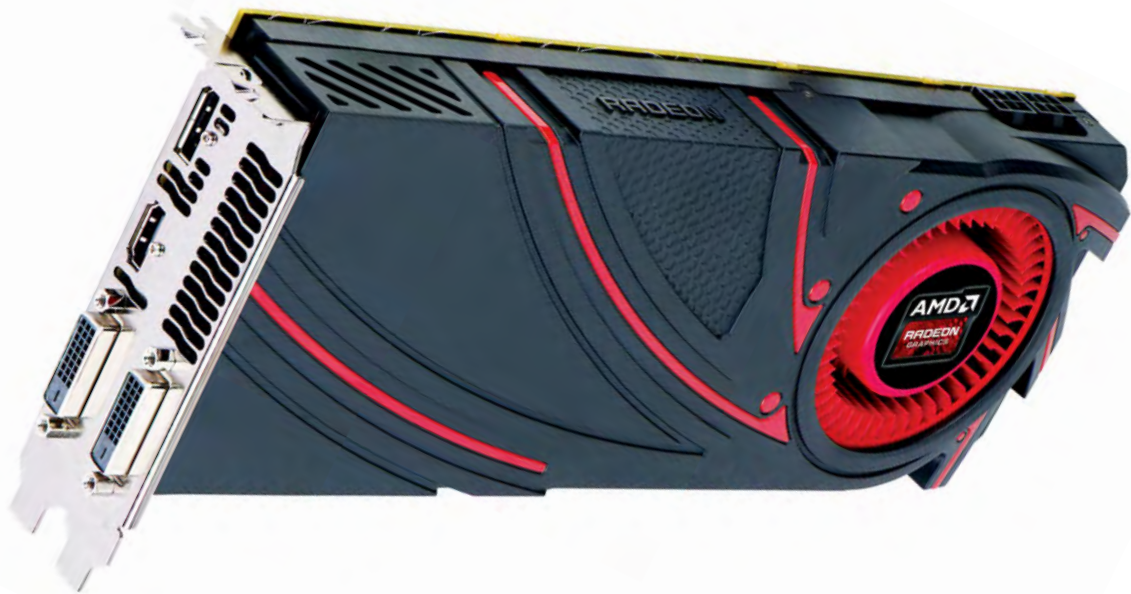
- SMSes charged at R1.50 (free SMS bundles don't apply)
- Winners will be notified by SMS
- Judges decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into
- Competition closes 31 December 2013

 **steelseries**
professional gaming gear

AMD Radeon R9 290X

VS

NVIDIA GTX 780 Ti



AMD RADEON R9 290X

PRICE: Prices vary from R7,999 all the way to R9,499, so some shopping around will be necessary. Since all cards are reference designs (at least at the current time of writing), there's no reason to purchase any of the expensive models. Given AMD's recent history the prices will come down even more and there may be a time in the very near future when such a graphics card can be had for as little as R5,999.

HEAT AND POWER CONSUMPTION: The Radeon 290X regularly hits 95°C which is nothing short of scorching hot. This is in both the regular and Uber modes. The blame here lies squarely with the AMD reference cooler which is hopeless at keeping this graphics card at temperatures anywhere near sensible. The power consumption as well is incredibly high with figures hovering above those of the competition's best offering. For a GPU that is about one billion gates smaller, there's an extraordinary amount of heat and power usage recorded. All this however doesn't mean the graphics card is unusable. It will regulate itself to keep it from

any damage and, despite the high numbers, should operate just fine with no anomalies regardless of the amount of computing load it is under. If it were not for these two concerns the R9 290X would be a whitewash over the competition's offerings.

PERFORMANCE: The 290X is the second fastest GPU available on the market, but that is very academic because the performance difference between this GPU and the competition's best offering is ever so slight. In "Uber" mode the 290X more than holds its own, but because of the unbearable amount of noise it generates, the GPU is practically unusable in this mode. Therefore you're most likely to stick with quiet mode which limits the performance somewhat.

APIs: AMD may have scored a big win here with the Mantle API. Not only does the R9 290X support the most advanced version of DirectX 11.2 via hardware, the custom Mantle API promises significant performance gains over DirectX in games that are able to take advantage of it. It is a proprietary API so

support in games will not be universal at first, but depending on what it brings to the table and market conditions, this API may prove very popular amongst game developers. Along these two API's the Radeon 290X supports OpenCL and OpenGL4.4

VALUE: In line with the Never Settle bundles that AMD has been offering for months on end, the latest graphics card from AMD (not counting the R290) includes a copy of *Battlefield 4*. That is a R600 game which you'll find with every card. This isn't as comprehensive a bundle as AMD has had before, but perhaps the inclusion of a highly anticipated triple-A title is worth more than several other high profile games. The inclusion of this game may be worthless if you already have it, but if you haven't then this could be a very compelling argument for the R9 290X, especially if you're not concerned with the other aspects of the graphics card. As the first game to support AMD's Mantle API it makes sense that this was the game chosen to show off what the new API can achieve on GCN based GPUs.

With the recent GPU price wars, many people who buy in the high-end segment may find themselves torn between which graphics card to buy. What we have detailed here isn't a definitive answer to the question, but rather we present various aspects of the graphics cards which should help you make the best decision for yourself. Keep in mind that at the time this was written there were no custom models of these GPUs, thus this is comparing the reference cards of each vendor. Custom implementations may change several if not all the things mentioned herein.

NVIDIA GEFORCE GTX 780 Ti

PRICE: Much like the GTX TITAN, prices are high, but not to those levels witnessed before. A basic reference model should cost around R7,999 all the way to R9,999 depending on where you decide to buy. Given that NVIDIA GPU prices don't change much over the course of a SKU's lifetime, these prices will remain so for the near future. When third-party cards are made available, they should also be within this price range, thus it may not be worth it to buy a reference card, but instead wait for the Super Overclock, DCUII, Lightning, or any of the other custom-built cards.

HEAT AND POWER CONSUMPTION: NVIDIA's investment into the blower type fan for the 700 series has paid off well. It may not be able to match any of the aftermarket coolers or those provided by third-parties with their offerings of the 780 Ti, but it does allow the graphics card to stay cool and relatively quiet even at full load. The

throttling temperature is low at the 80 to 85°C mark which means load temperatures are likely to stay in the late 70s. Where power consumption is concerned, depending on the model you buy, the TDP is set to 250W which makes it a lot more power friendly what AMD is offering at present.

PERFORMANCE: As a full implementation of the GK110 core, the 780 Ti packs a lot of graphics processing power, with 2,880 CUDA cores all backed up by 336GB/s of memory bandwidth. This in theory allows it to eclipse the competition's best offering in some regards, thus allowing the 780 Ti a performance advantage overall. It is slight at best but it is still there. The 3GB of memory may seem to be a problem on paper, but in reality even with 4xMSAA and a true 4K resolution, the frame buffer requirements are somewhere in the region of 2.7GB. 6GB variants are available, but they offer no benefit as such unless you're spanning

the displays across multiple monitors in a surround configuration.

APIs: For some inexplicable reason we find that the GTX 780 Ti is now certified for DirectX11.2, something which the 700 series graphics cards were not previously. This is perhaps through a driver update. Whatever the reason is, the 780 Ti supports PhysX, OpenGL 4.4, DirectX 11.2 and of course OpenCL.

VALUE: With an MSRP of \$150 over the Radeon R9 290X, the performance benefit offered by the GTX 780 Ti may not justify the increase in pricing. However, it is worth saying that this time around NVIDIA does provide a better gaming bundle overall than what AMD is offering. With the 780 Ti you'll gain access to *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*, *Splinter Cell: Blacklist* and *Batman: Arkham Origins*. Those are three titles worth at least \$150, which coincidentally is how much the graphics card sells for above the R9 290X. **NAG**



MSI MOA 2013



NAG was once again invited to attend MSI's Master Overclocking Arena 2013 for the sixth year since the competition started. This annual showdown between the world's top overclockers was held in Taipei Taiwan again, but unlike any other year, 2013 was a smaller event. This was simply a result of there being no competitor teams, but individuals. Moreover, for the first time ever the competition was not open to the public. Thus it was an exclusive invite-only event.

Amongst the ranks of the competitors were South Africa's own Goddy "Vivi" McRoodt who possibly put in the best performance to date out of any South African participating on a world stage. The competition was stiff as usual with competitors from all over the world, many of which have held class records in at least one benchmark. Those familiar with the overclocking scene will remember contestants such as JJJC, Sniper Oz, Giorgio Primo, T0lsty, Smoke, Xtreme Addict, RBUass, oc_windforce and Lucky_n00b to name a few. Each of the 16 competitors had to go through elimination rounds on the Internet to end up within this lot.

MSI has always allowed each of the 16 competitors to get familiar with the hardware by sending it out to them in advance so they could hit the ground running on the day of the competition. As usual for MOA, the hardware highlights were the MSI GTX 780 Lightning, the MSI MPower MAX (as per our review, all the competitors praised this board over and above any other MSI motherboard), DDR3 memory from Corsair, an M5 Pro Xtreme SSD from Plextor and a PSU from Cooler Master to power it all. There were three benchmarks and scores were rewarded

as percentage points over and above the reference score.

The first benchmark was Super Pi 32M, a true 2D overclocker's benchmark as the sheer amount of tweaks here could be a study on its own. Lucky_n00b secured the only score under five minutes with a CPU frequency of 6,387MHz followed closely by Xtreme Addict and third was ViVi at five minutes and 17 seconds.

The second benchmark was Cinebench R11.5 which we use for measuring CPU performance here at NAG as well. This benchmark would quickly sort through the CPUs in quality as there's no disabling of threads or cores here. Competitors needed all threads operating at the highest frequency to ensure the highest score possible. Once again Lucky_n00b led the pack followed by Xtreme Addict and finally Smoke. In this benchmark ViVi did not manage to score any points because of some issues, but that still left the final benchmark, 3DMark Fire Strike, which would count for a whopping 40% of the total score.

MSI, along with the judges which comprised of Pieter-Jan of HWBOT and Roman, another fiercely competitive and well-respected overclocker, decided to leave the best for last and this was where the competition intensified. Because of the score weighting, the competition was still open to anyone who could produce a high enough score to secure themselves a great position. This is exactly what T0lsty did by being the first to submit a score above 14,000 points. After this, he just kept improving the result



with every submission. Lucky_n00b, who had been doing well, spent too much time with his first sample of the GTX 780 Lightning which used ELPIDA memory and as such was not able to reach the high DRAM speeds of the other cards which use the Samsung GDDR5. When he eventually changed to his second sample, time was not on his side and only at the very last minute did he manage to submit a score. Suffice to say, T0lsty was near impossible to catch at the end. That he had stayed in the top six for the previous benchmarks helped him immensely as he only needed this 3DMark Fire Strike result to secure first place for the competition. Edging out Lucky_n00b and Xtreme Addict in the process who placed second and third respectively. Vivi eventually placed sixth in the competition, let down by an issue where the CPU would not be stable at speeds above 4.5GHz despite having a GPU that was overclocking very well.

The following day was the Freestyle competition and to make up for the unfortunate events of the main competition. Vivi managed to break the Cinebench 11.5 4-core record, along with Rbuass who broke the HWBOT Unigine Heaven record. oc_windforce rounded it up by shattering the XTU record. Incidentally, within a week, Vivi managed to break three more world records in 3DMark 03, 05 and 06 using the MSI GTX 780 Lightning which has time and time again proved itself to be the graphics card of choice for competitive overclockers.

As usual with the MSI events, after all the record breaking is done, MSI spends

time with the competitors recording their input in regards to motherboards, graphics cards and overclocking software. With this kind of direct input from the world's elite overclockers, MSI has been improving steadily since MOA began in 2008. When we got our opportunity to sit in with MSI's vice president Mr. Charles Chiang, he stated very clearly that MSI find MOA very valuable and they are sure to host a competition again next year. In addition to that, he further stated that not only does MSI appreciate the input that overclockers give, but it allows the company to produce products that stand out from the rest because of this direct interaction with the community. We asked about the future of overclocking and if perhaps one day there may be an MOA that is focused on integrated graphics as found on AMD's APUs or INTEL's CPUs. Surprisingly, despite that this may lend itself to a cheaper and more widespread competition, he did state that the enthusiasts and people they care most about were not really driven by cost but pushing the performance envelope. Said users were unlikely to spend vast amounts of time or resources overclocking integrated components as that's just not where the performance is. However, with discreet graphics cards such as those produced by NVIDIA, they could continue to push the performance boundaries in desktop computing through overclocking and such events.

A great event once again and we would like to thank MSI and everybody involved in making this opportunity possible for us and we look forward to covering MOA again in future.

– Neo Sibeko



SPECS

CORE
GK110 (28nm)
1,006MHz

PROCESSORS
2,304

RENDER OUTPUTS
48

MEMORY
3,072MB GDDR5
6.0GHz
(288.4GB/sec)

API
DirectX 11
OpenGL 4.3
OpenCL 1.x
PhysX



GALAXY GTX 780 Hall Of Fame

Supplier **Galaxy** Website www.galaxy-tech.com RRP **R6,999**

By the time you read this review, the NVIDIA GTX 780 Ti would have debuted, along with the AMD Radeon 290X and 290 graphics cards. Since we are in a special position of having first-hand experience with all the abovementioned graphics cards, our opinion on the GALAXY GTX 780 changed dramatically throughout the course of this review.

When we initially received this graphics card, it would have cost you around R9,000 to purchase. A hefty sum, but given that one would have to essentially import it from overseas, along with the weak and very volatile rand, the price was somewhat justified. That was then, but right now the graphics card has had its price slashed by as much as R2,000 at the very least. As such we now have a graphics card that has much more appeal. Especially given that it's the highest clocked and thus best performing GTX 780 out the box. In no way does this imply one cannot buy graphics cards that overclock better; it simply means that GALAXY is the only vendor to ship a GTX 780 with a 1GHz base clock. Subsequently that means its boost clock is a little higher as well. For instance we recorded a true clock of 1,163MHz during heavy gaming sessions.

This is only 13MHz higher than the 1,149.7MHz we documented with the GV-N780OC-3GD but it does make it the 780 with the highest performance out the box. As such it deserves some consideration against the more popular brands.

As with the other vendors, GALAXY has kept nothing from the reference GTX 780 and configured the HOF card with all the bells and whistles that make it ready for extreme overclocking. These days and at this price we expect a solid VRM and that's exactly what we get with this card. An 8+2 phase PWM from IR, paired with an I2C SMBUS supporting CHiL CHL8318 controller and IR3550 buck gate drivers (control, sync and diode). At 60A each, the PCB can provide up to 480 amps directly to the GPU which is more than enough for any amount of overclocking regardless of cooling. KEMET POSCAPS, Coiltronics inductors and a 10 layer PCB round it all on the fantastic looking white PCB.

With the electronics taken care of it's simply a matter of finding the right GPU sample for the extreme overclocker. This is where it can be a hit or miss affair. With our particular card the most we were able to achieve was 1,306MHz on the GPU core, regardless of voltage applied. Lower than what we could on the EVGA GTX 780 Classified which had seen the other side of 1,400MHz. That aside, it is the use of the ELPIDA GDDR5 chips on this card that prevents it from being a true alternative to the DCUII from ASUS or the Classified. Both of which can and do ship with Hynix or Samsung GDDR5. This makes a huge difference at the higher resolutions where memory bandwidth is necessary for achieving playable frame rates. To illustrate this, one needs only look at the highest

overclock we could achieve with this card at around 1,600MHz for the memory (SDR). That takes you to a healthy 307GB/s but consider then that all Hynix GDDR5, let alone SAMSUNG ICs, reach 1,750MHz for 336GB/s. You can understand how unfortunate it was for such a brilliantly put together graphics card to be stuck with such memory. Either way, if you're not going to be doing any overclocking like that, you'll be more than happy with the HOF. It looks great, it's certainly the fastest 780 out the box and GALAXY has done a good job with making sure that it's well cooled. This is despite using a relatively silent fan profile for the first BIOS.

At the new price, this is a worthy alternative to the other 780s on the market; it certainly looks and plays the part. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: EVGA GTX TITAN

3DMARK - Fire-Strike	9,800 9,116
CATZILLA - Tiger	13,080 13,483
HITMAN - Absolution	4xAA: 66.95 fps (DX11 ultra detail) 4xAA: 68.97 fps

8 Fantastic looking graphics card from GALAXY that goes like the clappers. The Hall Of Fame 780 is one of the best on the market.

PLUS
Looks incredible / Highest clocked 780 out the box

MINUS
ELPIDA memory limits the fun

Which list will you be on
this Christmas?

Nice

Mario & Luigi

Link & Zelda

Herobrine

Imaginet

Naughty

Bowser

Ganondorf

Glados

Arthas Menethil

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BENCHMARKS

3DMark
Fire Strike

3,788
3,788

SPECS

CPU
Intel Core i7
4700MQ
MEMORY
16GB DDR3
1,600MHz
STORAGE
256GB SSD + 1TB
HDD
OPTICAL DRIVE
Blu-Ray writer
GPU
NVIDIA GTX 770M
3GB

GIGABYTE P25W Gaming Notebook

Supplier Rectron Website www.gigabyte.com RRP TBA

GIGABYTE is at the forefront of many computer components and devices, but perhaps less so when it comes to notebooks. As a brand, it's never really made the changes required to reinvent itself in line with the modern day offerings. This is especially true when talking about the high-end gaming notebooks where, prior to this effort of the P25W, GIGABYTE was essentially making regular notebooks with great specs.

A high-end component list is a great start but there's something extra that needs to go into it that makes one consider paying so much money. It has everything to do with the package, presentation and build quality. That which specs on paper cannot account for.

In light of this, our experience with the P25W was one that left us feeling positive about the strides GIGABYTE is making in the notebook department, despite the P25W having missed several opportunities to distinguish itself from the rest. This is not in the specs but in how they are all brought together into a package that makes it that much easier to spend your money on.

For instance, the keyboard is backlit which is great. It's a full layout and easy to type on, but unfortunately towards the right side, close to the number pad, the keyboard mounting seemed to give in a little when pressed. Something that could be isolated to our particular sample, but none the less it was something that can be annoying if you end up with such a unit. The keys also happen to have a very plastic feel to them, a crucial part

of a gaming notebook which should never be overlooked. In contrast to that, the touch pad felt fantastic, sensitive and precise. Given that this is a gaming notebook, one is likely to plug a mouse into one of the USB ports and this is where an opportunity was missed for G-STYLE (the formal name for GIGABYTE's notebook unit) to include one of the several great mice that GIGABYTE makes, such as the Krypton.

Another aspect of this notebook, and possibly the most inadequate, is the audio quality. For a notebook that's supposed to have a subwoofer and four speakers, the audio was anything but impressive. Headphones were much better and we can't say the speakers are usable for anything other than a quick viewing of streaming video. You'll want headphones for this notebook; perhaps consider the GIGABYTE FLY headset. (Yet another missed opportunity).

Other than that however, the rest of the notebook is great. In fact it's better than one would have imagined it to be. Not only is the performance superb, but the 15.6" matte finish LCD is wonderful to work on. Powered by NVIDIA Optimus technology, switching between the Haswell grade GPU and the GTX 770M results in good battery life without sacrificing graphics performance. Worth noting as well is that small things like the ability to charge devices while the notebook is hibernating or on standby via the USB ports are much appreciated.

Aesthetically, it's not going to challenge

any of the more established gaming notebook brands, but the yellow does look great and the finish is of the highest quality. The notebook may not look much like a gaming machine, but this does allow it to be used inside a boardroom without it looking juvenile. Thus, we'll take no points off for aesthetics even though it could do with a few more angular lines perhaps. Other than that, being a Windows 8 notebook, paired with a RAID configuration of SSDs, the start-up time is phenomenal, booting to the Metro UI within seconds of pressing the power button. Overall, the P25W is a good notebook, certainly better than GIGABYTE's previous attempts. It's not firing on all cylinders yet, but the P25W is definitely a notebook worth purchasing if you're in the market. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



GIGABYTE's most recent attempt at a gaming notebook is certainly heading in the right direction, a worthy alternative to other brands.

PLUS

NVIDIA GTX 770M GPU / 128GB SSD in RAID 0 / Great display

MINUS

Keyboard build quality / Audio is underwhelming / No mouse included

Plantronics RIG

Supplier Headset Solutions
Website www.headsetsolutions.com
RRP R1,499



Cables. Lots of cables. More cables than I know what to do with. This is why I'll forever remember Plantronics' RIG. The seemingly excessive cabling is to be expected, however, given that the RIG is a bit more than just a standard mid-range gaming headset.

The RIG will work with your PC, Xbox, PS3 and even your portable devices. It boasts a nifty in-line mixer / control box thingy that lets you switch between game audio, music (streamed from your mobile device) and phone calls at the tap of a button. On this circular control box you'll find an outer dial for controlling the RIG's overall volume, as well as two smaller inner dials that let you separately adjust the volume of game audio and phone calls / music.

On the mixer you'll also find a button for switching between three equalizer presets which let you adjust the sonic balance more to your liking. A nice touch is that you've got

two microphone options: a discreet in-line mic / hands-free kit or a traditional boom mic. Given that the RIG can be used both for gaming and as mobile headphones, the added versatility is welcome.

The RIG's audible performance is excellent, save for a few minor niggles. For gaming and movies they're punchy and deliver clear, powerful audio. For music, however, the tones produced falter slightly in the higher ranges, but this is expected from a mid-range set of gaming 'phones and shouldn't be a deal-breaker.

They're plenty comfortable as well and nicely lightweight, in case you're wondering. If you're looking for a gaming headset with some cool extra features that complement their attractive performance, I'd happily recommend the RIG. Just be prepared to deal with that mountain of cables.

NAG
 - Dane Remendes



SPECS

- DRIVER UNITS** 40mm
- SURROUND SOUND** No
- MICROPHONE** Boom / in-line mic
- PHONE CONTROLS** Yes

8 The RIG is a great gaming headset, especially if you like the sound of its more unique features.

PLUS
 Well-rounded audio production / Very comfortable / Varied functionality

MINUS
 Music performance isn't the best

astrum
 experience the difference

SHOW NO MERCY

RUGGED GAMING KEYBOARDS

ELETE MEDIA MULTIMEDIA GAMING KEYBOARD



• Hot Media Keys • LED Lights

ELETE ILLUMINATOR BACKLIT GAMING KEYBOARD



• Blue + Red Backlit LED Lights • Gaming Profile

ELETE COMBE GM GAMING KEYBOARD + MOUSE KIT



• Gaming UV Printed Keys • 5D High Optical Mouse



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GIGABYTE R927XOC-2GD

Supplier Rectron
Website www.gigabyte.com
RRP R3,099



GIGABYTE's latest iteration of the Windforce cooler is probably the best GPU cooler there is on the market today save for third-party offerings. When the Windforce range of graphics cards was initially released some years ago, the coolers were plastic and offered slightly better than average performance. However a few years later they have turned into something that people consider immensely when shopping for a graphics card. It may seem strange to start a GPU review with its cooler, but in the context of the R9 270X GPU it makes a difference.

As you may know this is a re-brand from AMD of the 7870. The only difference is the price which has been reduced and thus you're getting slightly better performance at a much lower price. Add better drivers to that and you have a graphics card deserving of a value award. You can find even cheaper R9 270X graphics cards on the local market like the PowerColor version. However, that does not have a cooler remotely close to what is offered here and that which you save you'll end up spending on fans, and if not you may not reach the performance levels that this card can do when overclocked. To illustrate this, we were easily able to run this card at 1.22GHz with no adjustments to the VDDC voltage. Not unheard of when dealing with the Pitcairn GPU, but still worth taking note of. If that GPU clock doesn't impress you, memory speeds above 6.3GHz are possible and in combination will give you performance that is somewhere between the HD 7950 Bosst Edition and the R9 280X. Now consider the price and it quickly turns into a great purchase.

Even if you decide not to overclock, the factory overclock of 1.1GHz does give the card a slight edge over the competition and if you factor in the cooler, you'll not be able to achieve this kind of performance at lower temperatures or noise levels. The GIGABYTE GV-R9 27XOC is a fantastic card indeed. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



SPECS

CORE Pitcairn (28nm) 1100MHz
PROCESSORS 1,280
RENDER OUTPUTS 32
MEMORY 2048MB GDDR5 5.6GHz (176GB/sec)
API DirectX 11.2 / OpenGL 4.4 / OpenCL / Mantle



PLUS
 Faster than the 7870 GHz Edition / Great overclocking headroom / Windforce Cooler is brilliant

MINUS
 Nothing

HP SlateBook x2

Supplier HP Store
Website www.hpshop.co.za
RRP R6,999



When it comes to convertible tablets, ASUS has dominated the space that they first carved out with their Transformer series. But, running the latest NVIDIA Tegra 4 chipset, the HP SlateBook x2 is a strong contender on paper. We knew going in that this machine would be nippy, and it scores a dominating 31,713 points in AnTuTu Benchmark to prove this, which makes for an overall experience to rival any entry-level notebook.

It's that notebook comparison that HP wants you to pay attention to: shipping standard with a 91% size keyboard dock, the SlateBook is ready and willing to serve as your mobile workhorse should the need arise. Between the touchpad, keyboard and additional connectivity you get on the dock, you can absolutely use this machine as a light notebook replacement for short or even moderate periods of time, but we wouldn't recommend setting out to write your memoirs unless you've got a full-size keyboard and monitor at the ready.

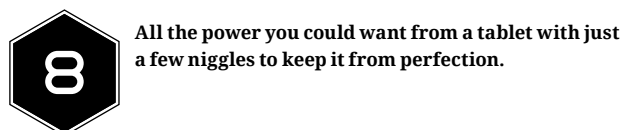
While it serves its primary functions almost perfectly, there are a couple of small but noticeable issues. The first is its screen. Although the high resolution provides very clear text, there is a lack of brightness that is especially noticeable while watching video. Then, we can't help but feel that the device is a little too heavy when docked, weighing in at a not insignificant 1.4kg – almost 400g heavier than the ASUS competitor. For that weight you'd expect to get incredible battery life from the dock's secondary power supply, but in fact you'll be lucky to get more than a few hours extra in this form. At least the tablet on its own is very light, and its own battery should be adequate for most users looking to get a solid day's work done.

- Geoff Burrows



SPECS

CHIPSET
 NVIDIA Tegra
 4 quad-core @1.8GHz
RAM
 2GB
DISPLAY
 10" IPS @ 1920x1080 (240ppi)
OPERATING SYSTEM
 Android 4.2.2
STORAGE
 32GB on-board, microSD and SD support



All the power you could want from a tablet with just a few niggles to keep it from perfection.

PLUS
 Great performance / Fair price / Tablet is lightweight

MINUS
 Heavy when docked / Not the best battery life / Lack of screen brightness

Crucial M500 960GB SSD

Supplier Syntech
Website www.syntech.co.za
RRP R7,805



Since the advent of SSDs, those in the pursuit of speed have been forced to trade precious storage capacity for fast application/game load and boot-up times, and, while there have been options to simply throw money at the problem, the results have always shown a dwindling result in performance as additional storage was squeezed into the confines of a 2.5" drive. Crucial, it seems, is done playing that game.

Let's get the tech-head stuff out of the way first: to cram in a whopping 960GB of storage, Crucial teamed up with Micron to produce high-density NAND that runs through a custom Marvell 88SS9187 controller – an updated version of that used in their previous outing with the M4 range. It's also paired with 1GB of DDR3 memory which allows for high-speed caching for an already blazing fast drive. And when we say fast, we mean it: in testing we managed to

see sequential read/write speeds of 377/361Mbps respectively. While this proved to be far shy of Crucial's projected top speeds of 500/400, it's difficult to feel justified in complaining about these sorts of numbers when in the real world, they're still massively impressive. Access time clocked in at just 0.049ms read and 0.058ms write.

The numbers speak for themselves, but just how much this power is worth to you comes down to the size of your wallet compared to your desire for performance. Yet, while its RRP is nothing to sneeze at, you can't help but think that this is a significant step in the right direction: SSDs are reaching that point where a terabyte isn't prohibitively expensive, and, considering most modern games are booking 20GB+ install folders on your PC, we think Crucial has picked a great time to push the envelope. **NAG**

- Geoff Burrows



SPECS

CAPACITY 1,024GB (960GB effective)
INTERFACE SATA 6Gb/s
ON-BOARD CACHE 1GB DDR3
CONTROLLER Marvell 88SS9187



A very fast, remarkably well-stocked SSD. It won't win you any awards for its performance, but it'll come damn close, and still manage to hold most of your game library while it's doing so.

PLUS

Excellent performance / All that storage space / Not hideously expensive

MINUS

Falls short of expected read performance / Still pretty costly



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MSI AG2712A All-In-One PC

Supplier MSI
Website www.msi.com
RRP TBA

All-In-One PCs have been with us for a long time. MSI in particular has been pushing these out at an incredible pace, each successive model better than the previous one. As it is today, the AG2712A represents something close to the best MSI has to offer. What will strike you the most about this model when using it is that the touch interface is much smoother than it was on previous models. It's far more sensitive and you can tell this by simply drawing on the screen or by using many of the gestures that Windows 8 supports. Whatever improvements MSI has made to the screen sensitivity, they are well worth it as it makes the entire experience more pleasurable.

However that is not to say touch input is ready for prime time on the PC, as it is not. That has a lot to do with Windows 8 though rather than the actual hardware which MSI chose to go with. When dealing with a PC you're still going to need a keyboard and a mouse and it is unfortunate that for such a high price these are not included in the package. Even basic models would work fine as they would allow the touch input to complement the tried and tested keyboard and mouse, enriching the entire experience instead of limiting it to very basic programs.

Still, as far as gaming AIOs are concerned, they won't get much better than this one. It is very heavy, but then again it does pack a whole lot of computing power, including the AMD 8970M GPU which is essentially a down-clocked Radeon HD 7970 graphics card. With that much GPU power paired with 16GB of memory and a Core i7 3630QM, the AG2712A plays all the latest games at maximum fidelity at the native 1080p resolution of the screen. When looking for a gaming AIO system, the AG2712A stands out as one of the best money can buy. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



CPU
Intel Core i7
3630QM
MEMORY
16GB DDR3
1,333MHz
GPU
AMD Radeon HD
8970M 2GB
STORAGE
128GB SSD
LCD
27" LED backlit
1080p display

SPECS

7 The AG2712A is essentially the best of what AIO systems can provide right now. If this form factor appeals to you and you have the money, consider this model.

PLUS
Large 27" LED backlit panel / Respectable system components
Looks great

MINUS
Far too heavy / No included keyboard or mouse
Touch isn't ready to be a primary means of input for a PC

MSI R9 270 GAMING

Supplier Corex
Website www.msi.com
RRP TBA



AMD has managed to release two incredible performers in the R9 series, namely the 290 and 290X graphics cards. However the rest of the line-up is rebrands of old GPUs of which some are going into their third-year. Call it lasting technology or missed opportunities, we aren't sure what to make of this, but one thing is certain and that is that pricing has come down. The recent price war between AMD and NVIDIA has given the GPU market some much-needed excitement and an illustration of this is the R9 270.

This GPU is identical to that which is on the 270X, yet AMD sells this for a lower price. There are many reasons that could suffice to say it means that end users can get fantastic performance at very low prices. A case in point is this R9 270 GAMING card. It's supposed to be the lesser version of the R9 270X simply because of the GPU clock speed. However, in our testing we were able to match R9 270X speeds and exceed them in some instances. For instance we could reach GPU clock speeds as high as 1.2GHz with the memory at a comfortable 6GHz for a respectable 192GB/s of memory bandwidth. This is a huge overclock given that the card is sold at 975MHz (Boost clock) at its peak performance. With this kind of overclocking performance we were able to go through our game benchmarks as if we were using the more expensive R9 270X graphics card.

The MSI sample in particular comes with their trusted Twin-Frozr cooler which keeps temps low and is partially responsible for these impressive overclocks. Given just how well this graphics card performs and its potential price once revealed, there is absolutely no reason to buy the more expensive SKU. Simply load up Afterburner, crank the clocks up to 1.1GHz and game. This is a great little card from MSI, certainly the best R9 270 we've seen yet. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



CORE Pitcairn (28nm) 975MHz
PROCESSORS 1,280
RENDER OUTPUTS 32
MEMORY 2,048MB GDDR5 5.6GHz (176GB/sec)
API DirectX 11.2 / OpenGL 4.3 / OpenCL / Mantle

SPECS

9 The MSI R9 270 GAMING is exactly like the 270X, only cheaper and thus secures itself as the go to card for the R9 270 series. This is an excellent card indeed.

PLUS
Identical to the 270X specs / Can overclock to 270X levels and on paper should be cheaper / Good performance

MINUS
Nothing

MSI R9 280X GAMING 3G

Supplier Corex **Website** www.msi.com **RRP** R3,999

As we found with the reference R9 280X review from last month, AMD hasn't done much to improve the Tahiti XT GPU. At the time of writing we had seen an updated revision of this GPU but were unable to confirm if it consumed less power, allowed higher frequencies or was just a re-spin by AMD that addressed other issues. Regardless of what it is, it's safe to assume that it's not too different from what we have here with the MSI R9 280X GAMING.

By now you're more than familiar with the Twin Frozr cooler and its abilities. When it comes to the Tahiti X, this GPU is more than capable of keeping the temperatures in check while allowing for a little bit of overclocking. Our particular model didn't overclock that well, but that is something that has been found with virtually all 280X cards. The decrease in clock speeds stems from the use of lower quality silicon than what may have been with the HD 7970 GE cards. Suffice to say, that shouldn't prevent you from experiencing your games at the highest quality possible. After all, not only is this card clocked to 1,050MHz out the box, it is still featuring a full Tahiti XT core and to date there are only five graphics cards that can claim to be faster, of which four are from a newer generation.

Because of AMD's initial investment into



SPECS

CORE Tahiti XT (28nm) 1050MHz
PROCESSORS 2,048
RENDER OUTPUTS 32 / 128
MEMORY 3,072MB GDDR5 6GHz (288GB/sec)
API DirectX 11.2 / OpenGL 4.4 / OpenCL / Mantle

this silicon, the Tahiti XT, though with us since 2011, actually supports DirectX 11.2 under Windows 8.x. That means you'll be as future-proof as possible when it comes to API support. Add AMD's Mantle to it and you have a GPU that can, in some titles potentially deliver better performance than a GTX 780. There's not much to say about MSI's particular version other than that it runs cooler and quieter than the reference card, quieter and looks better. The R9 280X GAMING 3G is well worth its asking price. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



The MSI R9 280X Gaming is probably the best of what the 280X GPUs can offer. The performance may not be the best anymore but it can more than handle all games today.

PLUS

Same great performance of the HD 7970 GHz Edition

MINUS

Silicon quality seems lower than that of the average HD 7970 / Nothing new

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Astrum X-723U 2.1 speaker set

Supplier Astrum South Africa

Website www.astrum.co.za

RRP R1,099

Have you heard of Astrum? Apparently they make speakers and other stuff. And if these X-723U 2.1 speakers are anything to go by, Astrum's not at all bad at making speakers and stuff.

They could stand to learn a thing or two in terms of physical design, however. While the subwoofer and satellites themselves are solidly constructed, it's irritating that the cable connecting each satellite to the subwoofer is as painfully short as it is. It means that putting the subwoofer on the floor under or beside your desk (or TV stand or wherever it is you're putting it) requires some careful positioning so that each speaker cable can adequately reach its destination.

It's also odd that they've chosen to put all the speaker controls on the side of the subwoofer. I get that they've magnetically shielded the thing so that it doesn't interfere with your other hardware, which I'm guessing means Astrum expects you to put the sub on your desk within easy reach – but that's such an unusual necessity.

Thankfully, the audio they produce makes up for it. Partially. The satellites and subwoofer are massive relative to other speakers, and they put out volume to match their bulky stature. While the subwoofer does a good job with the low end, the clarity of the satellites is disappointing, emitting muddled sound that won't sit well with people who are more interested in crystal clear audio rather than excessive volume. The overall performance they deliver is good enough, but at such a high price, we'd expect their clarity to match their impressive volume.

Volume versus clarity is really all it comes down to with this set. You'll have to decide which you'd like more of when considering the X-723U. **NAG**

- Dane Remendes



SPECS

TOTAL RMS 80W
SUBWOOFER 6.5-inch, 50W RMS
SATELLITES 2 x 4-inch, 15W RMS each
FREQUENCY RESPONSE 30Hz ~ 18kHz



Some strange design choices mar this speaker set's appeal, but the quality of their sound compensates for it.

PLUS

Respectable overall audio quality / Sturdy build

MINUS

Stupidly short satellite cables / Controls on the subwoofer / Expensive

Corsair K70 Gaming Keyboard



Supplier Rectron

Website www.corsair.com

RRP R1,699

Several months ago we looked at the Corsair K95 gaming keyboard and found it to be a welcome improvement on the K90 it replaced. This time we look at the K70 which replaces the K60 in the same way.

The most obvious thing about this keyboard is that it looks very much like the K90 minus the macro keys. It has all the design language and aesthetics of the K90 and that obviously means it's one of the better-looking keyboards on the market. It's classy and certainly looks as well built as it is. For R1,699 however, one would not expect any less. The price is rather high given that the K90 would set you back about R200 more at most.

The K70 could be a better keyboard. That which would make it so isn't anything technical as such because it is near identical to the K90. For instance, it features individually lit keys, all of which use mechanical switches. The model we had featured the red switches which had a red backlight. If you're not a fan of the colour or switches, keep in mind that the K70 does come with the option of brown and blue switches, each with corresponding backlighting. What the K70 has over the K95 is a selection of WASD and number keys. These are textured and domed, in addition to being a different colour to the other keys. These feel great and as such, even without the backlight, you always know where your fingers are just by the texture.

It's a small advantage over the K95 but it does make the high price a little easier to justify. The K70 has more in common with the K95 than the K60. In fact if you had to add macro keys to it, it would be the K95, perhaps even better because of the special keys. Corsair's K70 is just as good as the K95 and is definitely one we would buy if we had no need for macro keys. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



SPECS

KEYS Cherry MX-Red
ANTI-GHOSTING N-key rollover
INPUTS 1x USB
MACRO KEYS 18, programmable on the fly



The K70 is supposed to be the lesser version of the K95, but if you've no need for macro keys, you'll find it just as good as the K95 and perhaps in some ways better.

PLUS

Great K95 build quality / Looks good / Light configuration options and textured keys

MINUS

No audio pass-through / Only one USB 2.0 port / Perhaps a tad pricey

Kingston Hyper-X Genesis 2400MHz 16GB

Supplier Kingston
Website www.kingston.com
RRP R2,599



Kingston can rightfully claim to be the oldest memory vendor in existence today, or at least a vendor of enthusiast grade memory. The Hyper-X brand has seen better days but things are looking up. Despite the troubles that the DRAM industry finds itself in, Kingston has continued to cater to the enthusiasts and power users in various capacities.

With Ivy Bridge-E CPUs proving to have memory controllers as good as, if not better than, some Haswell CPUs, the time has never been better than now to invest in a quad channel high-speed memory kit. This isn't to say that this set will not work on your Z87 or AMD dual-channel platform. However, to get the maximum benefit of having four sticks of memory outside of capacity, you'll need a platform that supports four channels of memory and that is X79.

Setting up this memory is as easy as you'd expect, as it's a matter of just loading the X.M.P profile. That however is not where the fun is, that comes from operating this memory at higher

frequencies. Given that unlike some of Kingston's other modules, the Genesis kit does not feature an elaborate cooler. Thus you'll want to avoid using voltages that are too much above the stipulated 1.65V unless you have some active cooling on the memory. To that end, we were able to loosen the timings to 12-14-14-35 while keeping to the 1.65V. Granted that the relaxed timings will increase latency, but the bandwidth improved, thus offering better performance overall. It may seem as if every memory kit is capable of doing this, but this isn't the case. What usually happens is that you need to increase the operating voltage and stay close to the reference timings or else the system may fail to the DRAM training. With this kit, it was a simple matter of adjusting primary timing and that was it. It's not often we'd say a set retailing for this much is offering great value, but given just how well the Genesis performed it's deserving of its award.

NAG

- Neo Sibeko



SPECS

FREQUENCY 2,400MHz
TIMINGS 11-13-13-35



The Kingston Hyper-X 10th Anniversary edition modules are exactly what we expected: a 2,400MHz set that will run at 2,666MHz.

PLUS

Will run 2,666MHz at CL12 / Comparatively affordable

MINUS

Can get a tad hot under load

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THIS IS THE END OF EVERYTHING



Well, it's technically just the end of 2013, but "everything" makes it sound so much more dramatic, doesn't it? Exactly. By the time you read this, you won't be able to step in any direction without instantly tripping over tinsel, bits of busted Styrofoam reindeer, existential dread, and other traditional harbingers of the holiday season. It's that time of the year when you reflect on all those things you totally meant to do but didn't because this, that, and the other reason you just made up, and how you're totally going to get that stuff done next year, pinky swear.

Aaaand here's why you won't, according to my very scientific prognostication algorithms¹.

THE NEXT GENERATION

It's bigger, it's better, it's got 348.92% more ultra-buffered sub-pixel post-occluded virtual surreality, and it's landed, triumphant and gloating, upon the still bleeding corpse of the previous-next-generation. The future is now, boys and girls, or at least until the next-next-generation, but we'll probably have been replaced by robots by then anyway.

Expect improved graphics and... mostly just improved graphics, actually, but I'm still wishing upon the

entire Virgo Supercluster for a new *Unreal Tournament*².

Bonus prediction! A new *Unreal Tournament* will be announced. I'm putting this one down, like I always do, just in case it actually happens so I can look really clever and important. I haven't looked really clever and important yet, but it has to happen eventually.

Bonus-bonus prediction! A new *Call of Duty* is announced. See also: Previous bonus prediction. One way or another, people, and I'm not above cheap tactics.

THE NEXT GENERATION WAR

Because when you're not playing the latest iteration of *Generic First-Person Shooter* on PS4 or Xbox One, you'll be arguing on the Internet about which platform's version is the best, and why everybody else doesn't even know what they're talking about because they're such deluded fanboys, jeez.

Predictable prediction! PC gamers will insist that playing games with a mouse and keyboard is, like, so superior, and the whole debate is precluded by irrelevance. Eyes will roll on both sides. Meanwhile, there'll be that one guy who doesn't stop talking about his grey import GameStationTron 5000, and how it's the next big thing because it's open

1 Okay, technically it's a Magic 8 Ball but the outcome display rotation is determined by the complex operations of fluid dynamics, a subset of quantum mechanics, so it definitely counts as scientific.

2 Same as the old *Unreal Tournament* games, but with improved graphics.

source / completely biodegradable / powered by Martian forerunner tech, and plays the original *DOOM*. Oh hey, remember the Ouya? Me neither.

THE NEXT GENERATION OF BAD GUYS

It's not that I'm bored of zombies, but I do think it's time for dinosaurs to step back into my reticule. Or maybe cybernetic megasharks. Or aliens, but not aliens that look more or less exactly the same as humans except with melted wax and/or crab chitin glued to their faces, but massive blobs of neon goo and bums and hooves that drop in from interstellar warp and enslave the planet to harvest our natural fizzy drink and fast food resources. I mean, this is basically a potential plot for the next *Mass Effect*.

Realistic prediction! More zombies, but with, you know, improved graphics. **NAG**
- Tarryn van der Byl

"Expect improved graphics and... mostly just improved graphics, actually, but I'm still wishing upon the entire Virgo Supercluster for a new *Unreal Tournament*."

Extra Life

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