

NAG



**WIN A
PS4**

PC / PLAYSTATION 3 / XBOX 360 / NINTENDO WII U

EIGHT REVIEWS INCLUDING

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2

Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns

Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare

Thief

wolfenstein

THE NEW ORDER

IT'S CLASSIC! IT'S MODERN!

COULD THIS BE EVERYTHING WE WANT IN AN FPS?

NO ONE CAN STOP DEATH



25/03/2014



© 2014 BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REAPER OF SOULS IS A TRADEMARK, DIABLO AND BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT ARE TRADEMARKS OR REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT, INC. IN THE U.S. AND/OR OTHER COUNTRIES.



DIABLO®

REAPER OF SOULS™

diablo3.com/reaper

DIABLO

REAPER OF SOULS

DIABLO III PC: REAPER OF SOULS

EXPANSION SET **449⁹⁵**

Release date: 25 March

NEW ON PC

Requires base pack



The Elder Scrolls

ONLINE

THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE **649⁹⁵**

Release date: 4 April

NEW ON PC

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD... IT'S



RAZER
DEATHADDER
2013 EDITION
GAMING MOUSE
NOW **999⁹⁵**

SAVE 300



RAZER
SABERTOOTH
XBOX 360 CONTROLLER
NOW **1 299⁹⁵**



RAZER
KRAKEN
PRO GREEN
GAMING HEADSET
WITH MIC
NOW **1 399⁹⁵**



RAZER
OUROBOROS
WIRELESS ADJUSTABLE
GAMING MOUSE
NOW **1 999⁹⁵**

SAVE 300



steelseries
PC/MOBILE
FLUX GAMING
& AUDIO HEADSET
NOW **599⁹⁵**

SAVE 300



steelseries
SIBERIA V2
HEADSET
NOW **899⁹⁵**

XBOX 360, XBOX 360, XBOX 360, XBOX 360, XBOX 360, XBOX 360, XBOX 360, XBOX 360, XBOX 360, XBOX 360



PAYDAY 2
NOW **399⁹⁵**

SAVE 300



SAINTS ROW IV
NOW **399⁹⁵**

SAVE 300



METRO: LAST LIGHT
COMPLETE EDITION
399⁹⁵



THE WALKING DEAD
GAME OF THE YEAR
EDITION
499⁹⁵



GREAT VALUE
INCLUDES 4 GAMES
FAR CRY:
THE WILD EXPEDITION
599⁹⁵



NEW
2014 FIFA WORLD
CUP BRAZIL
699⁹⁵



Pre-order SIMS⁴ on PC in-store

NOW!

SAVE 200



GTA V AVAILABLE ON PS3 OR XBOX360.

NOW 599⁹⁵

OFFER VALID FROM 02 - 16 APRIL

PLAYTIME



steelseries
SIBERIA V2 CROSS
PLATFORM HEADSET
1299⁹⁵



TURTLE BEACH X12
XBOX 360 GAMING
HEADSET
899⁹⁵



TURTLE BEACH XLA
XBOX 360 GAMING
HEADSET
599⁹⁵



TURTLE BEACH P11
PS3 GAMING
HEADSET
899⁹⁵



TURTLE BEACH PLA
PS3 GAMING
HEADSET
599⁹⁵

PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4 PS4



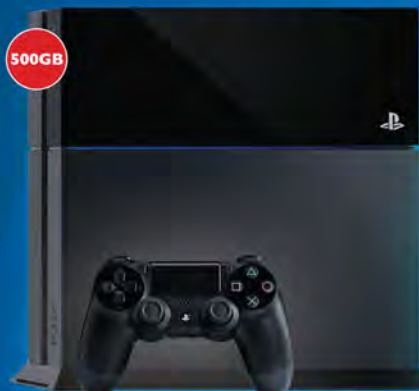
NEW
EXTRA MISSION INCL.
THIEF
849⁹⁵



GREAT VALUE
METAL GEAR SOLID V
GROUND ZEROES
399⁹⁵



NEW
INFAMOUS:
SECOND SON
849⁹⁵



500GB CONSOLE + INFAMOUS: SECOND SON NOW 7 399⁹⁵



SAVE 600
PS4 PREMIUM BUNDLE

Limited Stock



MUSICA
A WORLD AWAITS

PRICES & RELEASE DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. NEED HELP? CONTACT OUR FRIENDLY CALL CENTRE ON 0860 254 257 MONDAYS - FRIDAYS 08:00 - 17:30, SATURDAYS 08:00 - 13:00 ALL PRICES ARE INCLUSIVE OF TAX AND CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS. ERRORS AND OMISSIONS EXCEPTED. OFFER VALID FROM 24 MARCH 2014 - 30 APRIL 2014 OR **WHILE STOCKS LAST**. AVAILABLE AT SELECTED STORES. NO CLUBCARD POINTS EARNED ON GIFT CARD PURCHASES.

PUBLISHER

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

EDITOR

Geoff "GeometriX" Burrows
geoff@nag.co.za

ART DIRECTOR

Chris "SAVAGE" Savides

STAFF WRITERS

Dane "Barkskin" Remendes
Tarryn "Azimuth" van der Byl

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Lauren "Guard3n" Das Neves

TECHNICAL WRITER

Neo "ShockG" Sibeko

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT

Miktar "Miktar" Dracon

CONTRIBUTORS

Rodain "Nandrew" Joubert
Miklós "Mikit0707" Szecei
Pippa "UnexpectedGirl" Tshabalala
Delano "Delano" Cuzzucoli
Matt "Sand_Storm" Fick

PHOTOGRAPHY

Chris "SAVAGE" Savides
Dreamstime.com
Fotolia.com

SALES EXECUTIVE

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

MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS MANAGER

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

OFFICE ASSISTANT

Paul Ndebele

CONTACT DETAILS

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

SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT

subs@nag.co.za

ONLINE

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

PRINTING

Impress Web Printers / 031 263 2755

DISTRIBUTION

On the Dot
Stuart Dickerson / 011 401 5932

COPYRIGHT 2014 NAG

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



▶ CONTENTS

▶ REGULARS

- 8 Ed's Note
- 10 Inbox
- 14 Bytes
- 26 home_coded
- 74 Mosh Pit

▶ OPINION

- 14 Miktar's Meanderings
- 16 I, Gamer
- 18 The Game Stalker
- 56 Hardwired
- 82 Game Over

▶ PREVIEWS

- 32 The Elder Scrolls Online
- 34 WildStar

▶ REVIEWS

- 44 Reviews: Introduction
- 44 Mini review: Fable: Anniversary Edition
- 45 Mini review: Dragon Ball Z: Battle of Z
- 46 Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2
- 48 Thief
- 50 Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare
- 52 Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII
- 53 Atomic Fusion: Particle Collider
- 54 Tales of Symphonia Chronicles

▶ HARDWARE

- 57 Dream Machine
- 58 Versus: GIGABYTE GTX 750 Ti OC vs. MSI GTX 750 Ti GAMING
- 62 GIGABYTE P27K Gaming Notebook
- 64 AMD A10 7700K
- 66 SteelSeries H Wireless Headset
- 68 MSI A88X-G45 GAMING
- 69 ASUS N750J
- 70 ADATA DashDrive Elite SE720 external SSD / GAMDIAS Hephaestus / Sony Action Cam HDR-AS30V
- 72 Lazy Gamer's Guide: Gunnar Optiks



FEATURES

36 WOLFENSTEIN: THE NEW ORDER. MEIN LEBEN!

"There ain't no school like the old school." That's how it goes, right? Or did we just fail hard at being youthful and hippity-hopping? Does it even matter? Either way, *Wolfenstein: The New Order* eagerly partakes of the old school of first-person shooter-ising. And boy, does it look positively scrumptious. Gather 'round children, and let's have a look at it together. Just don't step in that puddle of Nazi juice. That stuff will eat right through your gumboots.

▶ DEMOS

Bridge It Plus / Car Mechanic Simulator 2014 / Castlevania Lords of Shadow 2
Ethan Meteor Hunter / Oniken / Pac-man Museum / Tiny Brains

▶ DRIVERS

None this issue

▶ EXTRAS

Cheatbook Database + updates
Free games: Gridrunner++ / Heroine's Quest
Utilities: Stencyl
46 wallpapers
92 game trailers / 2 Pop Facts / 1 Pop Fiction



PlayStation®Camera

R999⁹⁹



DUALSHOCK®4 Wireless Controller

R999⁹⁹

PS4™
500GB Console
& DUALSHOCK®4
Wireless Controller
R6 799
Limited stock available



Killzone
Shadow Fall
PS4 R799⁹⁹



Knack
PS4 R799⁹⁹



Battlefield 4
PS4 R799⁹⁹



Call Of Duty
Ghosts
PS4 R799⁹⁹



Metal Gear Solid V
Ground Zeroes
PS4 R399⁹⁹



Infamous
Second Son
PS4 R899⁹⁹



Tomb Raider
Definitive Edition
PS4 R849⁹⁹



Thief
PS4 R849⁹⁹



Injustice
Gods Among Us
Ultimate Edition
PS4 R699⁹⁹



Need For Speed
Rivals
PS4 R799⁹⁹



The Lego Movie
Videogame
PS4 R699⁹⁹



Wolfenstein
The New Order
PS4 R899⁹⁹

More PS4™ titles available in store

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

Happy birthday to us!



>Welcome to the new look NAG! Gosh, it's a pretty thing, isn't it? Every year we celebrate our birthday by changing the design

a bit – sometimes more than a bit – and figured it's been a while since we've had a major shake-up. So we shook things up.

Some of the content has only had a visual tweak – like reviews and previews – but in other places we've nipped and tucked and reorganised things to get more content into the same number of pages. It's important to do this; as putting ink on slices of tree becomes more costly (which will continue to happen until forever), we need to make sure that you lovely readers are getting as much quality content for your purchase. We get it – times are tough – so know that we're here for you through thick and thin!

But enough of that mushy stuff. I won't go into detail about everything that's changed in your favourite magazine, but I do want to point out a couple of things. First, you'll notice that the Bytes section has been given quite an overhaul. We shoved things around to make room for a featured column every month – this'll rotate between our columnists. We've also greatly expanded the home_coded section to tell you, in greater detail, about some of the top local game development projects. Rodain Joubert – part of the team behind *Desktop Dungeons* – is the perfect chap for the job so we've given him plenty of room.

We've also mixed up the hardware section. Neo now also has a full page for his column, and we've trimmed off some excess stuff to make space for an expanded Mosh

Pit, which now includes our lifestyle-focused section Everything Else. This means more cool gadgets, comics, action figures, doohickeys and whatsits that go hand-in-hand with what gamers love.

Otherwise, I'll leave you to explore these pages. Feel free to send us an email (letters@nag.co.za) with any feedback you might have.

SPARKLE PARTY

I've been told that not everyone really knows what *Wolfenstein* is all about. That's an odd thing to me, as I was like, *there man*, when *Wolf 3D* first came along, but if you're not fully clued up then be sure to read RedTide's very informative piece in our cover feature. *Wolfenstein* is close to all of our hearts, and I'm sure many of yours, and I'm positive by time you've read all about the upcoming *The New Order*, you'll be as excited about it as we are!

NEW BLOOD

This month we welcome another new writer on-board in the form of Matt "Sand_Storm" Fick. Matt joins us from IGN Africa to write a few reviews this month, and I'm sure you'll be seeing more of him going forward. It's always exciting to have new people writing for the magazine – they bring their own personalities, ideas and eccentricities to our already rather insane pool of talent, which can only be a good thing, right?

Take it easy, people!

-GeometriX

GIGABYTE™
GV-N78TOC-3GD
WINDFORCE 3X 450W
Gaming Graphics Card
NAG Review Rigs Powered by GIGABYTE
ectron

OBSIDIAN SERIES®

250D

MINI-ITX PC CASE



Build a Mini-ITX System without Compromising Expansion, Flexibility, or Performance.

If you want to build a Mini-ITX system without compromising expansion, flexibility, or performance, the Obsidian Series 250D is your answer. Though it's small on the outside, the 250D has room for standard components like a full-size 5.25" optical drive, a full-length GPU, a 240mm radiator, and even a full-size ATX power supply.

The sleek, aluminum front fascia provides the striking yet subtle design that Obsidian Series cases are known for, and a top window gives you a close-up view of your high-performance components. The 250D is a great choice if you want full size performance in a small space.

Designed for Enthusiasts. Engineered for Performance.

- Ideal for building small form factor, high-performance systems
- Great for dorm rooms, desktops, bookcases, or anywhere else space is an issue
- Fits full-size, high-performance components
- Windowed top panel for showing off your work



Learn lots more at corsair.com/250D



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



MEMORY



POWER SUPPLIES



GAMING KEYBOARDS



SOLID-STATE DRIVES



MICE



HEADSETS

Inbox

*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.

letters@nag.co.za

Letter of the Month April 2014

FROM: Jürgen van Zyl
SUBJECT: Outgrowing gaming

I'll start with the formalities, great mag, I love you guys and keep up the good work! Now I recently turned 15, I am about 1,85 meters tall and to everybody at school I'm known as the friendly giant. Okay, I'll stop boring you now with the biography and cut to the chase.

I've loved games since I was very, very young although I was never allowed my own gaming console (only PlayStation 1's was released at that time.) so I always loved going to go to my cousin's as we could play Need for Speed, and Tekken (yes, believe it) 3! One December, my cousin came over to my house with a plastic Checkers bag and inside, lay the beauty of a second hand PlayStation (my early Christmas Present.) The happiest day of my life, needless to say. At that time, Spyro was still my favourite game.

At a later stadium of my life I discovered the Modern Warfare franchise (also the doing of my cousin's) and immediately fell in love. I was never allowed to play it (age restriction) and even if I tried, I couldn't because of the very old Laptop we had, and I only had a PlayStation 2 at that time (which I also inherited from my cousin's.)

Time passed and I am now the proud owner of an XBOX 360, and my recent Christmas present was Far Cry 3. Absolutely stunning game, I had great fun playing it, but I quickly became bored with it although I have not yet finished it... This brings me to the actual topic of this letter and that is, have I started to outgrow gaming?

I've found that in this vacation I would much rather go outside, take a jog, or go to the gym instead of enjoying a nice hour or two of gaming. Really concerned, I decided to look further into this. I bored myself out of my mind and then I stood right between my XBOX, and my bicycle. Even though I have three new, unfinished games I still ended up choosing my bicycle over my XBOX. Now before everyone starts yelling and swearing

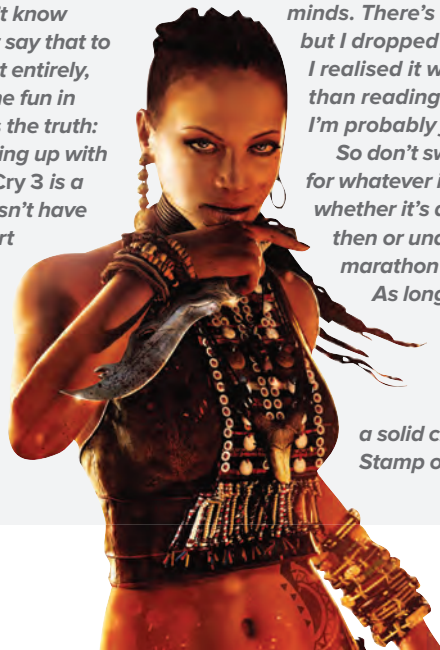
at me, I'm not implying that all gamers are unactive couch potatoes. I am an active gamer myself, but as already stated above, I think I am outgrowing gaming.

I have tried every sort of game there is, many FPS shooter franchises e.g. Call of Duty, Crysis, Battlefield, but still I do not receive the initial pleasure of playing these games as I did a year or so back. I despise RPG games, Indie is absolutely out of the question, and Need for Speed just became more and more boring every year.

This brings me to the conclusion and final question: why are there 25 and 30 year olds married to they're gaming consoles and rigs, while I'm half they're age and I am becoming bored of the whole gaming thing? Am I playing the wrong games, is my console starting to become out-dated? Or am I just, simply, outgrowing gaming? This is very sad for me as I used to spend entire weekends dedicated to one game and now I am struggling to keep on playing for a few minutes at a time. I need to find a new hobby, as I can't go to the gym the whole day, I'd probably rip something apart. It might even be something important! (My lame attempt at humour LOL)

P.S: Hopefully this is posted and if this is the case: Jennifer, will you be my girlfriend?

I'll play the adult card here and say "you young'uns don't know what it's like." I don't say that to condescend (well not entirely, otherwise where's the fun in being older?), but it's the truth: I can't imagine growing up with today's games. Far Cry 3 is a great title, but it doesn't have the sparkle of the sort of games I grew up playing. Then again, my brother is a little younger than you and he's well into his gaming, despite being a bit of an



THIS MONTH'S PRIZE

The "Letter of the month" prize is sponsored by the good folks at Megarom. The winner receives two games for coming up with the most inspired bit of wisdom or cleverness. **NOTE /** You can't change the games or the platform they come on.



outdoorsy sort as well, and he manages to find a balance.

I think my point is: it's okay to not be completely addicted to gaming. Some of us are, because gaming has become infused with our brains through prolonged exposure to what were very simple titles back then that required far more perseverance and imagination – two traits which made those games "register" to a far greater degree in our

minds. There's some psychology there but I dropped out of Psych 101 when I realised it was more about biology than reading peoples' dreams, so I'm probably just making this all up.

So don't sweat it. Enjoy gaming for whatever it is you want it to be, whether it's an hour every now and then or underwear-drenching marathon sessions every day.

As long as you keep buying NAG and attend rAge whenever possible, you're okay with us. Ed. PS: Hi Jenn! Jürgen is a solid chap and gets the NAG Stamp of Approval.

FROM: Christopher Grant Strydom
SUBJECT: Censoring

Well i always said i wouldnt be a kiss-ass like many of my fellow readers, but i have to say how brilliant your mag is! Now the problem i see with the world today is simple, censoring! I found myself scrolling through your online site only to find that South Park:stick of truth, a game i have been wetting myself in anticipation of, has been censored! Why would they do that? You wouldn't censor the Mona Lisa if her dress was raunchy, so why tamper with the beautiful vulgarity that is South Park? I honestly feel that if you don't approve of it, don't buy it. But ruining it for everyone! That sucks donkeykongs!

Some people are too easily offended and don't understand that they should simply not view/read/play anything that they don't like. These people then go around telling other people that they too should be offended by something, and then eventually the whole world is up in arms about something that doesn't really matter to most people.

*In the words of Mark Twain:
"Censorship is telling a man he can't have a steak just because a baby can't chew it." Ed.*

FROM: Dewan Brandt
SUBJECT: The Graphic Race

Olla lé awesome peplo dé NAG (that's French... I think)

Great issue this month, I loved the Titan Fall "epic cover", it was the first time I read a long article and wanted more. Also (although probably late) HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!

One thing that's bothering me, is the graphic's thing. You know the whole "Let's make a game that runs native 1080p at 60fps!", that's all great, but if you're like me (doesn't have good PC and uses on-board graphics) you're probably going to dial down the graphics as low as the settings will allow just to get a playable frame rate. Now that basically means that the whole extra thousand bucks spent on HD graphics (and in some cases 4K) is only going to be used by the people who bought high-end graphics cards, and the 4K isn't even close to being used seeing how you need a small army of graphic card's just to power it (never mind the screen costing R50 000). **[Snip, because geez. Ed]** I suggest that the big game companies stop going for the higher resolution and just stick to HD at

ON THE FORUMS

We're old, cantankerous and full of ourselves, but goshdarnit we can be a lovely bunch when we try. Join the fray at www.nag.co.za/forums

QUESTION / What is the single biggest thing that's kept you gaming all these years?

BUTTONS! I love pressing the buttons!

- ZoRPA

The fact that they keep making new games. When they stop, I'll stop. I'm stubborn like that.

- Nferno

I can safely say that I still play games all these years later because of Guitar Hero/Rock Band. If it weren't for those games bringing me back I may well have drifted on...

- nukehead

Being big and single.

- CrashHelmut

The Sweet Sense of fulfilment I get by Trolling in Multiplayer Games.

- zAnD



40fps, and concentrate on making games "lighter". What I mean by that is, make a game that wil run 1080p at 40fps on a very budget computer (low-end graphics card or even on-board graphics). Now I know that what I am suggesting is borderline insane, and at this time I will ask you to not trace my IP to take me to a mentel institution, but I really think that graphics will someday reach the point where you physically cant see higher resolutions and at that time you will need the graphics equivalent of easily 10 x GTX 780 ti's, but if you can reach that performance with a graphics card from yester-era, allot of budget gamer's will be very happy... Or we can just wait for component prices to fall in which case this entire letter is redundant.

Most developers do try to optimise their games' visuals to give you the best bang for your buck, but the sad truth is that maybe it's just time to move on, get a console, and stop trying to compete with the super high-end rigs. Or (perhaps more usefully) you could stick with some of the older games, dig up a few optimisation guides and maybe even

some low-quality mods that'll boost your frame rate.

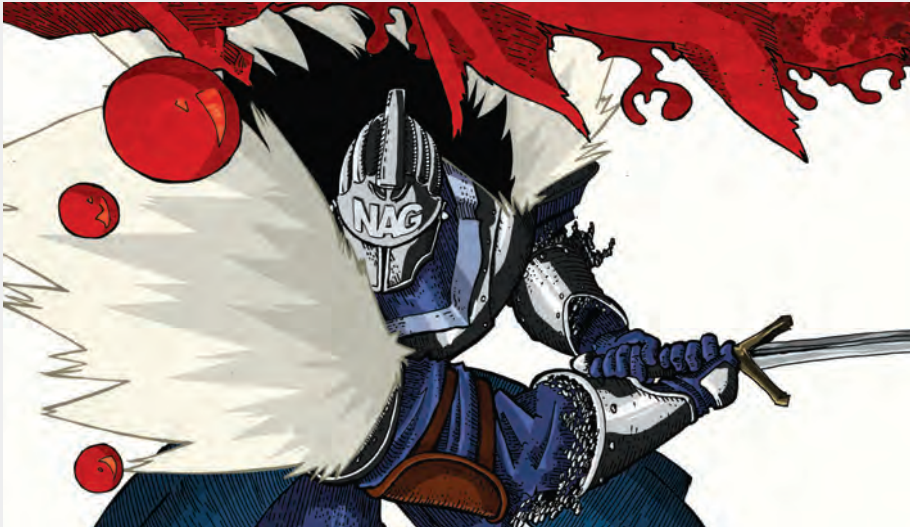
Also please stop playing games at 640x480. Unless you're playing a retro or classic game. That's okay then. Otherwise, every time you play a modern game at that resolution, you make John Carmack cry. Ed.

FROM: Adriaan
SUBJECT: Stats and Levels in Multiplayer Games

I'd like to share an idea with you guys, and would appreciate your feedback.

With multiplayer games, there are always the experienced and skilled players who easily progress to the top ranks in the early days of the game and constantly stay there, while us noobs remain, well.. noobs, not only because other players are more skilled but because they have far better weaponry, giving them an even bigger advantage over the less experienced / new players.

I think online multiplayer games should have seasons of a number of months long, after which everyone's stats will reset. Everyone will start anew, and us noobs will not feel as oppressed. There will be a short time in which we have a fair chance of



Hjalmar Pretorius, "I made some fan art in celebration of the new Dark Souls game coming. I just can't wait to get my grubby little paws on it, if the wife is ok with sleeping alone for best part of March, I don't know if I'll leave the Xbox for a long time this March."

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 month's prize courtesy of Prima Interactive is Zoo Tycoon for Xbox 360, valued at R449



acquiring better weaponry without too much strain.

We got uncapped ADSL this January, and I've been very eager to join the online gaming community ever since. The release of Titanfall creates the perfect opportunity, because everyone will start off at the bottom, as Azimuth said. That's just it. If everyone had to start from scratch every few months, online games (especially FPS games) will be far more friendly towards new players. What do you guys think of this?

Some games do have seasons – StarCraft II, for example – but I agree that there are sometimes imbalances related to the amount of time one has spent grinding in a game, more so than their natural skill. The idea of "Prestiging" also comes into play here as it resets your unlocked doohickeys. It's for this reason that almost all competitive gaming levels the playing field by restricting certain weapons, perks, etc. or outright customises the available loadouts through modifications. Maybe that's something worth looking into?

It does have to be said, though, that very often the players at the top of the score tables are there because they're good at that game, or that map, or mode even. I wouldn't slag them off too much because one day you'll be up there and someone will claim you're only in the top spot because you've been camping or noob-tubing or whatever the cool kids will be complaining about by then. Ed.

From: Daanyaal Matthews
Subject: One Trick Pony or Never Ending Story?

We all know the rise of rumours about Duke Nukem Forever and when it came out it was just another excretion (get it because in The game you can actually excrete) it's hype was big and its fall was epic.

Many developers make games that are highly successful but when they try to create a successor , it becomes a failure and if they are unlucky they might close down because of poor sales.

Then at the other side of the coin you get never ending stories that go on forever just because there is a wide audience that enjoy the game for one reason and the game could of just been put up as DLC (call of duty I am looking at you). However we gamers still play the never ending story's because that one feature we just cannot let go. But we are going to have to face facts someday. They might brag , they might add a few things but if it plays the same and it feels like the only change is the graphics (because obviously they gave to change that.

Do you notice a trend here? In the end we gamers are effected and developers just get the buck.

You're right on the money there (literally). We seem to be stuck in a bit of a rut in the industry at the moment, but I hope that we'll pull through sooner rather than later. Thankfully we still have a few titles that come along every now and then to really shake things up (The Last of Us really stands out for me

THE SHORTS

[extracts of LOL from the NAG audience]

"my parents and I have discussed the fact about people online but I mute them sp I can noy here them swear to me"
– Luke

"I've noticed in one of ure letters the X Box One's name was shortend to "Xbone" lol!! sounds like someone refraining from sex!"
– Avenger Legend

"my internet access is a little crappy so that's why I'm stuck.... My situation is very similar to flappy bird"
– Jodien

personally), but even then these games are far from perfect.

What you should absolutely do is keep an eye on the indie scene. There's some cool stuff happening there if you can wade through the retro/Minecraft/zombie clones, and it seems to be a part of the industry where storytelling is just as important as visuals – or more so. Ed.

ON TWITTER

@nagcoza

Ian
Using my tower of NAG Magazines as a table for my PS3 (been collecting them since 2006 Tomb Raider Legend was my first)

Emile Engels
Finding your soul mate in life is easier than finding Roxy in the NAG #LifeSucks

Justin Conidaris
@nagcoza I sometimes look in a mirror and think... poodles.

Ruwby Rique Ludick
I just love the smell of a new @nagcoza magazine!!!

Johannes
You know the new NAG is out when @nagcoza changes their twitter profile picture.....

Tristan Klein
@nagcoza got my nag merchandise today, looks AWESOME :D thanks guys keep up the great work!



ALL THE GOODIES

THE WAIT IS OVER, THE ADVENTURE BEGINS!

THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE HAS COME TO CNA



Get **R100** off when using the voucher below

The Elder Scrolls ONLINE

Get it on credit!

The Elder Scrolls Online for PC/MAC

Releases 4 April 2014

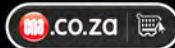
R62⁰⁰ x 12 months | Total payment: R726⁹³ | Cash price: R649⁹⁰



0 400790 157371

You've just earned **R100 off** your purchase of **The Elder Scrolls Online**, now at CNA for **R649⁹⁰**. Simply cut out and use at your nearest CNA store to claim your discount, or get it on credit with your Edgars card. Voucher only valid for The Elder Scrolls Online. Only one voucher redeemable per customer. This voucher is valid from 4 April - 4 July 2014.

CNA - All the Gaming Goodies



promise 8710/E

©2014 ZeniMax Media Inc. The Elder Scrolls® Online developed by ZeniMax Online Studios LLC, a ZeniMax Media company. ZeniMax, The Elder Scrolls, ESO, Bethesda, Bethesda Softworks and related logos are registered trademarks or trademarks of ZeniMax Media Inc. in the US and/or other countries. Mac and the Mac logo are trademarks of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. All other trademarks or trade names are the property of their respective owners. All Rights Reserved

Use your Thank U Account Card with plenty of time to pay!



Gaming offers available at selected stores while stocks last. For more CNA product & store information, call our Customer Care Line on: 0800 203 925. E & OE



MIKTAR'S MEANDERINGS

by Miktar Dracon

In case of eggmergency: stare at Kirby

Miktar is a space rabbit. He travels the galaxy in search of carrots, happiness and something fuzzy to snuggle up against.

Until recently I had no idea what a “burdizzo” was. If asked, I would have said some kind of enemy from *Mario Bros.* or perhaps *Pokémon*. There are so many *Pokémon* by now, odds are good the answer would be correct. But a burdizzo is not a *Pokémon*. If you’re studying animal sciences, you can stop sniggering. I know you already know what it is.

If you’re prone to sympathy pains – where having something described to you makes you kind of feel it – you might want to stop reading now. A burdizzo is a castration tool that looks like a large metal clamp. It has flat ends that clamp down on and break the blood vessels that go to the testicles. Once the blood stops flowing to the happyspheres, they eventually shrink and just... go away. It’s a tool made to be used on farm animals for various reasons, and is considered safer than some alternatives.

I’m given an additional 250 words this month for my column and I’m telling you about castration. You might be wondering what in the name of [REDACTED] this has to do with gaming. The rabbit hole goes deeper. The only reason I even know about this tool which enacts half of an emasculation is because I was asked by someone to use it. Not on myself, goodness no. And not on some poor sheep or cow. A human being, a friend dare I say, confided in me that *they* really wanted to be castrated. I’m not going to elaborate on the reasons why they’d want something like this done. I did not agree to help them with this matter either, for my own various and totally not just because I’m squeamish reasons. One day when they make a movie about my life this part is going to be really awkward situation comedy.

Other than the sheer *WTF* factor, and that I know some really strange people, there’s a lesson in all this somewhere. People can want very different things from life. Many think they know what they think they want. Later, they discover that what they thought they wanted wasn’t anything like how they imagined it’d be. We’ve all been there. So this guy I know wants to have his grenades defused. Okay, that’s fine. That’s their prerogative, as I see

it. Though if someone wants something of that magnitude, they really shouldn’t cheap out and try to use farm tools. There are safer, if more expensive, methods.

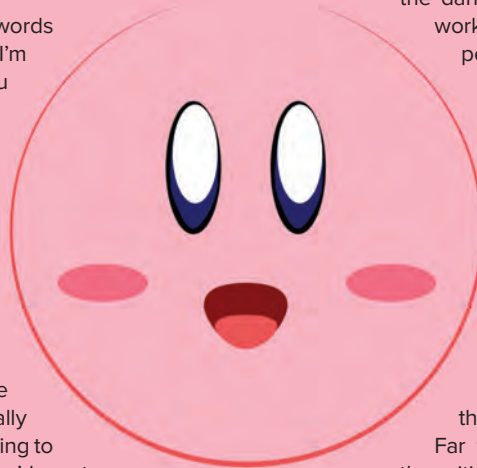
This friend of mine, who somehow got it into their head that I’d be the person to ask about helping with such an awkward and painful (if you look purely at the physics of the matter) procedure, doesn’t play games. I’m not saying the two elements are related. I’m sure many are perfectly happy retaining their pinballs, even if they don’t play. I’m someone who grew up with gaming, didn’t really care much for anything else, and ended up making it my entire livelihood. My friend not playing games – *any* games, not even small time-waster mobile games – is to me far stranger than their desire to stop their rocks. We’re even the same age, and yet we’re worlds apart.

When one is heavily involved or invested in something, like a hobby, it’s easy to lose focus on the bigger picture.

When something is your whole world, there’s the danger of assuming the whole world works the same way. We see this with people heavily invested in sports. If someone is a heavy duty spectator that buys the shirts and attends the matches, such people are quick to assume that everyone is into sports the same way they are. Same goes with popular television shows, music genres, or games.

It’s okay to be a fan of something though. I’d go so far as to say that people who enjoy something are far more important than the people who don’t enjoy it.

Far too much emphasis is placed on the critic these days. The popular trend is to equate negativity with truth. Being negative is “cutting through lies”, and being positive is an excuse or cover up. If someone is mired in that kind of thinking you basically can’t do anything to change it. It’s a nearly perfect self-reinforcing loop, similar to the thinking of a conspiracy theorist. It’s important to enjoy things, and not get overly fixated on the things you don’t like. Otherwise one day, you might find yourself resorting to weird farm implements.



More info on Frictional's SOMA

Now's a good time to stock up on pants



It's impossible to love Frictional Games for their wonderfully atmospheric video game works without simultaneously hating them for traumatising us with the *Penumbra* series and *Amnesia: The Dark Descent*. This is why we simultaneously hate and love the fact that the studio's hard at work on its sci-fi horror expedition *SOMA*, a game we're terribly excited (but at the same time not at all excited) to get our trembling hands on. Frictional's released some tantalising new details on the project, and just in case you weren't sure before, they've reiterated that there will be terror. And lots of it. Here's what they say of the game world:

"When creating *Amnesia* our setting was basically just 'Old castle where supernatural stuff happens'.

This allowed us to get away with just about anything and explain it with 'because, magic'. But in *SOMA* we are building a world that is supposed to be tied into the real world and to make sense."

Frictional plans to place greater emphasis on telling *SOMA*'s story effectively and ensuring that the player becomes engrossed in the narrative, which explores what it means to be a sentient being. Lastly, here's the bit that you're likely most interested in:

"The game should be utterly terrifying. We do not want you to calmly stroll through the various environments; it must be emotionally taxing to progress. We want this blanket of oppression and fear wrapped around the entire experience."

Sacred 3 is still on its way

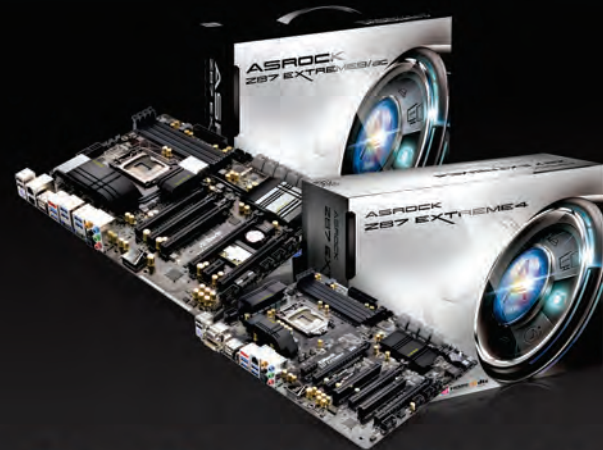
Publisher Deep Silver has been quiet about *Sacred 3* since its initial batch of press screenings way back in 2012, but the recent release of a cinematic trailer means that those launch gears are ticking away. The official shelf date is still unconfirmed, but it's pegged

at some time during Q3 this year. What's particularly interesting is the complete lack of next-gen mentions in the trailer, which means the game is currently only aiming for PC, 360 and PS3 at present. We wouldn't be entirely shocked if that changed closer to release date, however.

ASRock®



Z87 OC FORMULA SERIES



Z87 EXTREME SERIES



HEAD OFFICE - JOHANNESBURG
Unit 11, 8 Trinity Close
Paulshof, Sandton
Tel 011 807 1390

Pretoria-Durban-Cape Town-Bloemfontein-Nelspruit-Port Elizabeth

www.tvr.co.za



Miklós secretly saved the world from a horde of flying ninjas. Don't ask him about it: he'll deny the whole thing.

I, GAMER

by Miklós Szecsei

Giant, high-fiving robots!

I think I finally know what it feels like to be one of those dudebro, *Call of Duty* kinds of people. You know, those butt-clenchingly embarrassing types who count the days until the next version of the same online shooter releases so they can prestige their soldier and, I don't know, perk kill newbs or something – I hear that's a thing.

I kind of hate the online shooter scene; you have to play with other people, and I'm not good at sharing my game worlds. A few months back I confessed to rather enjoying *Battlefield 4*, but it turns out I'm a fickle bastard (I'm as surprised as you are) because I haven't sniffed *BF4* in weeks.

I've wanted to join the throngs of shooter-obsessed masses for a very long time now, because when it comes to gaming I get pretty bad FOMO. *Dark Souls 2* and *Dota 2* are my current FOMO white whales, but that's a whole different story. My online shooter white whale, however, has now been harpooned right in its blowhole. Take THAT, you albino plankton sieve.

I can now don my online manshooter fanatic's cap with pride, and it's all thanks to *Titanfall*. I never bought into the hype for this game because I knew it was a multiplayer shooter. The fact that the ex-Infinity Ward guys were behind it only served to heighten my haughty dismissal. Then, on a whim, I got stuck into the beta, and I've been counting the days until the game's release ever since that beta ended. At the time of writing this column, we're a little more than a week away from *Titanfall* releasing in South Africa. Right now, however, we're all probably waist-deep in pilot guts and Titan scrap metal. That or we're all being VERY ANGRY at Electronic Arts and Microsoft because the *Titanfall* servers are falling over.

*** STOP PRESS ***

Well, would you look at that: I had to recall this column before the magazine went to print. This column's deadline was 07 March, but something else happened a few hours after I submitted it to NAG HQ: *Titanfall* was cancelled for the South African market. The cancellation is all thanks to our lack of Microsoft Azure servers down here on the ass-end of the African continent. By now the whole world knows that Electronic Arts can't be trusted to host reliable servers, and so Respawn and EA turned to Microsoft's über-servers to host the game instead. While the South African market still has access to EU-based Azure servers, Electronic Arts South Africa felt that wasn't good enough and so they pulled the plug on the local *Titanfall* release. According to their "recent online tests for *Titanfall*," EA South Africa found that "performance rates" were not "as high as we need to guarantee a great experience". This despite many local gamers having a jolly good time with the *Titanfall* beta, and despite the fact that EA has unleashed their multiplayer drivel on us in the past, so why the sudden about-face in customer experience policy?

While the Fish is away...

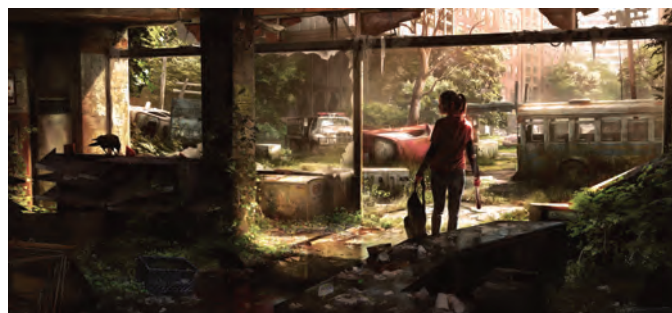


When Phil Fish rage-quit the games industry with his classy "i take the money and i run" blog post, it was largely expected that his studio Polytron Corporation would soon follow, but as it so happens, the remaining team members have done what Fish couldn't (something which agitated him greatly): see the indie platformer *Fez* onto Sony devices. The game is now scheduled for release on PS3, PS4 and PS Vita, and should be available by time you read this.

While there won't be much in the way of new content, Polytron teased that the PS4 version will have "a few surprises", and is "the best-looking and smoothest *Fez* experience you can get on a TV set."

The port wasn't developed in-house; Polytron teamed up with Spanish company BlitWorks to handle the move over to C++ (*Fez* was originally created with XNA/C#). Reprogramming rather than wrapping *Fez* means the gameplay is sure to be buttery smooth, and Polytron claims the game runs at 60 frames-per-second at 720p on the PS3 and 1080p on the PS4.

Sony is turning *The Last of Us* into a feature film



If during your playthrough of *The Last of Us* you said to yourself on more than one occasion "Man, this would make a pretty great movie," then you're not alone. Naughty Dog, Sony and Screen Gems have started work on a film adaptation of 2013's resounding hit. There's very little info other than the fact that the game's directors, Neil Druckman and Bruce Staley, will be involved. The film is being directed by Sam Raimi [*I'm out. Ed*], whose credits include the original *Spider-Man* trilogy and *Drag Me to Hell*. It sounds like the film won't deviate much from the game's plot.

The sky's the limit

Starbound continues to pack in the features



Even though it's still in beta, *Starbound* has not only already made a ridiculous amount of cash for developer Chucklefish, but it's also jam-packed full of delicious content for those early adopters to enjoy. The devs continue to add in new features, and while they previously teased future content like mod support, a dungeon master-style Director Mode and an optional PVP-focused endgame, those features will only be added further down the development line.

Content that you can look forward to sooner includes a revamped progression system. In the final game, instead of different universe sectors, there will be three sectors: the sector in which the majority of the game takes place, a PVP-centric sector and a creative

sector devoid of danger. Instead of progressing by accessing new sectors, your journey will be reliant on technology you've unlocked that will allow you to gain access to planets previously inaccessible due to hazards like toxic air. Eventually, the game will branch off into three main progression paths: farming, adventuring and building.

This all aims to make progression less linear as you learn the skills necessary to unlock more of the game's planets by doing what you enjoy doing most. The three roles will eventually expand in optional ways; farmers can choose to learn animal farming, for example. Chucklefish are also adding outpost planets: small, safe hubs populated by every race, where trading can be done and quests can be found.

PlayStation 4 releases in Japan, global sales surpass 6 million

We're not the only country that has to wait *months* before one of the new consoles becomes available. In the case of Japan the wait for the PlayStation 4 must have been even more irksome considering Sony is a Japanese company. Be that as it may, the console launched on Sony's home turf

on 22 February where it went on to sell 370,000 units in the first week. That pushed the PlayStation 4's global sales figure to just over 6 million. Sony also revealed that 13.7 million PlayStation 4 games have sold worldwide since the November 2013 launch.



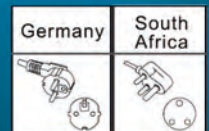
STAY PROTECTED



Surge Protection MultiPlug



- Full 3-lines surge protection, L-N, L/N-E 375Joules
- Maximum spike current: 13500 AMPS
- Double break switch
- Overload protection?
- Power cord: 0.5M
- Complies with SABS
- 5/8/10 outlets



HEAD OFFICE - JOHANNESBURG
Unit 11, 8 Trinity Close
Paulshof, Sandton
Tel 011 807 1390

Pretoria-Durban-Cape Town-Bloemfontein-Nelspruit-Port Elizabeth

www.tvr.co.za



Pippa exists in multiple realities. Every now and then hers crosses over with ours and we snag her to write something for the magazine. Bribery of fine cheeses is sometimes required.

THE GAME STALKER

by Pippa Tshabalala

Critique

The South African gaming industry is in many ways rather small, and I don't mean this in the financial or distribution sense, but rather in terms of the journalistic sphere. Game journalists occupy a very small space in the sense that we all kind of know each other, and while I would like to think that once upon a time the industry was open to an influx of young, enthusiastic game journos, I see it rapidly becoming more competitive and more difficult to break in. I see people coming in bright eyed and bushy tailed, desperate to "play games for a living (LOL!)", and thinking that we're all united in our love for video games (in many respects true, but also naïve) only to come up against resistance when they realise how competitive the industry has become.

They also quickly learn that there is a difference between having an informed opinion on a game rather than writing a description that any reader could find off the back of the game box. To the heart of the matter – I find myself continuously coming back to the idea of review versus critique.

The concept of critiquing a game is in many ways problematic, and I think in part this is because many journalists – the world over, not just locally – see themselves as critics rather than journalists. There is a distinct difference between reviewing a game (supposedly objective, who are we kidding?) as opposed to actively engaging with the themes and deeper meaning of a game in a critique, and this doesn't automatically mean that an excellent game journalist and reviewer is by default a good critic.

I'm certainly not the first one to bring up this argument, but I find it bothering me more lately. Perhaps it's because I've just been supervising a research paper on the value of online forum criticism in animation, or perhaps it's because I'm tired of seeing reviews that don't really tell me anything I didn't already know, nor do they prompt any thoughtfulness in me with regards to the game they're reviewing. With the exception of a couple of writers and publications, I find that I read fewer reviews and more critiques. I prefer to read articles that meditate on the themes within a game rather than the framerate and specs. I've always argued that a review is an opinion – just because I don't like JRPGs doesn't mean they're invalid as a genre, but it does mean that I'm probably not the best person to review Final Fantasy M. A critique of the relationships between characters and the continual disruption of the planet's life force as an overarching theme holds greater interest for me as a reader than hearing about how the combat system has been upgraded when we all know the tweaks are so fine that it's not going to entice someone like me to give it more than a cursory once over.

Yeah maybe you don't care. Or maybe it's time for a revolution.

Titanfall drops off local release lists

In the March issue of NAG we featured *Titanfall* on our cover. We played the beta on both PC and Xbox One, and had a lovely time doing so despite the moderate amount of lag one gets from playing on European servers. It's to be expected, really. But it appears as though the tested network performance wasn't good enough for EA – the game has had its release date pulled indefinitely.

EA South Africa posted this to their Facebook wall, and contacted those who pre-ordered to inform them: "After conducting recent online tests for *Titanfall*, we found that the performance rates in South Africa were not as high as we need to guarantee a great experience, so we have decided not to release *Titanfall* in South Africa at this time."

The root of this issue stems from the fact that *Titanfall* relies on Microsoft's Azure server tech to run everything, but Azure servers are apparently more difficult to establish than any ordinary gaming server and as a result there are none in South Africa. That'd force local players to stick to Euro servers at the very least, causing latency in excess of 250ms which is hardly ideal for fast-paced games like *Titanfall*.

Still, it'd be nice to have the option to play, and suffer the lag if we so choose. If you agree, then be sure to sign the change.org petition at chn.ge/1cO6KoV



King crushed in candy-marking saga

Social game developer King kicked up quite a ruckus in recent months over their attempt to trademark the words "candy" and "saga", spawning endless backlash from the Internet and even a few direct jabs like the indie-powered CandyJam. It seems that all of that negative publicity was just too much for King to handle, and the company has now withdrawn its application for the trademark in the US.

The exact reason behind this withdrawal is unknown, as King spokespeople declined to comment on the matter, but they have confirmed that, even though the company is no longer interested in trademarking "candy" in the US, they will continue to "take all appropriate steps to protect our IP" within Europe.



Up, up and away!



Dean "Rocket" Hall – the man who created the open-world zombie player survival simulator *DayZ* – will be leaving Bohemia Interactive this year. The Czech Republic-based studio has been Hall's home for the last couple of years while he and his team transferred *DayZ* from its original form as a mod for *ARMA 2* to a standalone game under Bohemia's banner.

"I am a grenade," Hall told Eurogamer. "I have a specific use. I'm really good at risk-taking and making other people take risks, I've always been good at that in my life. Like you say, maybe I've got the gift of the gab,

so I can talk, I can explain something. I can talk people up to the ledge and get them to jump off it."

But Hall claims that's all he's good for, and that kind of person is no longer required for *DayZ* as we see the game's development move into a phase more focused on maintenance than innovation.

Hall won't disappear just yet, however. He'll stay on as a consultant for the rest of this year at least, but it appears as though he's eager to return to his home country New Zealand where he plans to assemble a small team and get back to his goal of creating "the perfect multiplayer experience".

Disney Interactive lays off 26% of workforce



Disney Interactive has let go of 26% of their global workforce, or just over 700 employees. The company is in the process of restructuring their gaming business, and as a result they've combined mobile game teams with social game teams. In addition to this, in-house development will decrease

as the company begins to focus on licensed development projects, such as the recent Electronic Arts *Star Wars* IP deal. This is all part of a move to see Disney Interactive return to profitability, but in the process the company is anticipating a 50% reduction in releases.

astrum
experience the difference

**POWER UP
ON THE GO!**



Recharge Your Mobile Gadgets Wherever

PB-26M1A
2600mAh Power Bank

- Small Pocket sized
- With IC protector
- Micro USB Cable

2600 mAh Power 1 amp Capacity USB Port Metallic

PB-52M2A
5200mAh Power Bank

- Led Torch + Battery Indicator
- With IC protector
- Micro USB Cable

5200 mAh Power 2 amp Capacity USB Port Led Torch

PB-78M2A
7800mAh Power Bank

- Led Torch + Battery Indicator
- With IC protector
- Micro USB Cable

7800 mAh Power 1/2 amp Capacity 2 USB Ports Led Torch

PB-104M2A
10400mAh Power Bank

- Led Torch + Battery Indicator
- With IC protector
- Micro USB Cable

10400 mAh Power 1/2 amp Capacity 2 USB Ports Led Torch



astrum
ASTRUM PERIPHERALS PTY LTD

Midrand
Tel: (011) 314 0400
Fax: (086) 224 6496
email: jhb@astrum.co.za

Durban
Tel: (031) 563 3797
Fax: (086) 510 5986
email: dbn@astrum.co.za

f astrumworld



With the bathwater

Irrational founder leaves studio, shuts it down behind him



Ken Levine, co-founder of Irrational Games and the vision behind the *BioShock* series, has announced that the studio will be shut down entirely. 15 members of the team will join Levine as he moves to a new venture within 2K to create “highly replayable” narrative-driven games for core gamers. Every other developer, artist and engineer has been given the boot (albeit padded with some financial support), although Levine explained that they’ve had ample opportunities to assemble their portfolios, and 2K has even invited other studios to Irrational to chat with (and hopefully employ) the remaining team members.

This move might come as a surprise to anyone who enjoyed *BioShock*’s latest foray among the clouds, but it appears as though this move is driven more by creative differences than financial troubles.

“While I’m deeply proud of what we’ve accomplished together, my passion has turned to making a different kind of game than we’ve done before,” Levine writes. “To meet the challenge ahead, I need to refocus my energy on a smaller team with a flatter structure and a more direct relationship with gamers. In many ways, it will be a return to how we started: a small team making games for the core gaming audience.”

Levine originally intended to take his new concepts elsewhere though venture capital funding (or possibly crowd-funding), but when he discussed his intentions with 2K they gave him the opportunity to stay, and keep a relatively small portion of the team.

The final piece of DLC for *BioShock* Infinite – *Burial at Sea* – should be available by the time you read this, and will be the last bit of content created by Irrational.

Gearbox’s *Homeworld* Remastered not just an HD remake



As we all know by now, Gearbox is hard at work putting together an updated version of the classic RTS series *Homeworld*. They recently launched a new website for the game – you should check it out:

www.homeworldremastered.com.

In addition to a shiny new website, the updated edition has been given a final name: *Homeworld Remastered Collection*. It sounds like Gearbox is going the whole hog with this one as the collection will give both *Homeworld 1* and *Homeworld 2* high-res textures and models, recreated cinematic scenes (the team that worked on the original *Homeworld* cinematics is remastering them for Gearbox), remastered audio, and support for up to 4K resolutions.

Gearbox is also surveying gamers as to what kind of collector’s edition they want. There are two options at present that differ based on the size and style of a *Homeworld* Mothership replica: the one replica is a 6” metal model, and the other is a 12” resin replica with LED lights powered via a USB/AC cable. Both options will include the usual content: artbooks, lithographs, a game manual (!), key rings and more. If you want to vote, head over to the website.

Nova-111 turns turn-based real-time

Created by Funktronic Labs (a studio formed by ex-members of the *PixelJunk* team), *Nova-111* is set in a world wherein time is turn-based. When a team of intrepid scientists attempts to access the power of real-time, everything goes expectedly awry and the two universes of turn-based and real-time collide. What this means for us playing the game is that the world gradually shifts between the two forms of time, setting a unique time-manipulative stage for both combat and puzzles as you traverse the game in your research vessel. Your vessel will slowly be upgraded as you progress, and the whole product is wrapped up in an adorably eye-catching art style.



Setting sale

Valve changes sales policy, lets families share Steam spoils

We're pretty sure that Steam's frequent mega-sale bonanzas have become events that garner enough widespread attention to rival major game releases. But even beyond those massive sales, Steam's constantly running weekly sales, daily sales and other smaller-scale sales at all times, meaning that there's always a deal waiting to be snatched up if you frequently browse the digital distribution giant's storefront. Up until now, Valve has had a firm grip on the reins of all sales that occur on Steam, but that's all about to change as they hand control over to game developers.

It's been announced that anyone selling games on Steam will now be able to fashion their own sales, deciding on the duration and pricing of discounted items. Developers can either set up custom sales, or they can opt-in to regularly scheduled events to get their games featured within

them. The idea is to further bridge the divide between developers and their customers. It'll allow developers to do things like time sales to coincide with major game updates and the like.

Another bit of Steam-related news is the addition of Steam Family Sharing, which as the name suggests will allow one Steam library to be shared amongst family and other Steam users. You can share your library with up to five other users, and they'll be able to play your games while earning their own achievements and storing their own Steam Cloud saves. However, players must be online to access your library, and if you start playing the same game as them, they'll be booted shortly thereafter, which means that you won't be able to play multiplayer games together in this fashion. Regardless of the restrictions, it's a really awesome new feature for the service.

Crawl debuts uncooperative dungeon crawling



At first glance, you may mistake *Crawl* as being just another roguelike dungeon-crawler, the likes of which we're seeing a lot of these days. Peer beneath its attractive pixel art veneer, however, and you'll find a "competitive multiplayer dungeon crawler where your friends control the monsters".

In *Crawl*, one player controls a hero moving through randomly generated dungeons, gaining XP and improving their abilities while finding

powerful gear. Meanwhile, three other players control the monsters and traps of the dungeon, evolving their critters over the course of the game to become more powerful. If one of those players kills the hero, they assume the role of the hero. The goal is to be the first to gain enough power to challenge the dungeon boss – which is cooperatively controlled by the monster players. Games are quick and frantic, and we love the sound of it.

computers**only.co.za**

SALE!

CUSTOM BUILT PC's

We can build it for you!



OFFICE PC's from **R2999.00**



BUDGET Gaming PC's from **R4599.00**



PRO Gaming PC's from **R9999.00**

PRE-BUILT UPGRADE KIT's

Free in-store fitment



Entry Level Upgrade Kit from **R1899.00**



Mid Range Upgrade Kit from **R4399.00**



High End Upgrade Kit from **R6999.00**

TOUCH SCREEN Laptops

Free Data Transfer



Ultrabooks from **R6999.00**



Tablets from **R6999.00**



Gaming or Highend from **R13999.00**

7 SERIES nVidia VGA

Latest 7 Series chipset



nVidia 750Ti FROM **R2499.00**



nVidia GTX 760 FROM **R3599.00**



nVidia GTX 780Ti FROM **R9999.00**

computers**only.co.za**

Cbi House, corner leroux & van heerden street, vorna valley



call us or visit us

011-312-3230

Midrand Store

E&OE, pricing may change without prior notice

Shake it baby

3D Realms stands its ground with the help of some hired muscle

You might've heard in recent months that 3D Realms decided that it would be totally fine to just go ahead and make another *Duke Nukem* game. You know, because it's not like selling all *Duke* IP to Gearbox means they're not allowed to do that. Following 3D Realms' announcement, Gearbox leapt into legal mode and has been attempting to shut down the project since, and then, almost out of the blue, 3D Realms announced that they've been bought by Interceptor Entertainment – the studio behind the recent *Rise of the Triad* remake (which itself was published by Apogee – the publishing wing of 3D Realms).

As it so happens, Interceptor is owned by a large investment firm called SDN Invest, which believes it has the legal muscle to fight Gearbox on the matter of the new *Duke* game, which is entitled *Duke Nukem*



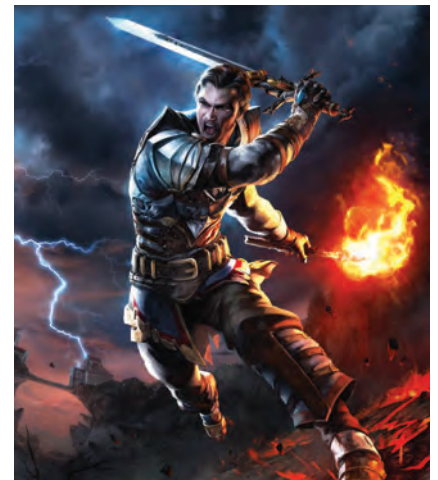
Mass Destruction. Mike Nielsen of SDN will move into the position of CEO of 3D Realms, but Scott Miller will stay on in a creative consultant role.

As to how exactly this new high-powered team thinks it can win against Gearbox's law suit is anyone's guess, but it appears as though there's far more to this story than what is public knowledge.

Nielson told Eurogamer that the team hasn't technically officially announced the game, and that they've "left some hints online. There have been a few leaks," which sounds like a load of nonsensical legal side-stepping that, this early in development, can only spell trouble for the game – as we've seen so often in the past.

Whatever plans they have, Neilson leaves *Duke*'s fans with the message, "we're not all out of gum yet." This is going to get interesting.

A third Risen arises



The *Risen* series (spiritual successor to the cult hit *Gothic* series) has always been mighty attractive on the surface thanks to its far-reaching role-playing ambitions, but thus far it's fallen short in delivering on that ambition due to technical shortcomings and a general sense that developer Piranha Bytes repeatedly bites off more than it can chew. That's not stopped them from announcing the third title in the franchise, however.

It's called *Risen 3: Titan Lords*, and it'll transport players to a new setting that's been "abandoned by all gods and suffers from the Titan Wars when a new threat rises from the soil". You, a young warrior, are attacked and have your soul stolen from you, and must embark on a quest to reclaim what you've lost. Multiple factions will star in the game, with Piranha Bytes promising a world that's "diverse, authentic and full of life" and will offer an "authentic, classic RPG experience". The game's due out this August.

Ouya prepares for world domination

Ouya may not be the perfect gaming console, but the brand has grown steadily since its launch, with over 30,000 registered developers having published a total of 675 games on the platform (about a fifth of which are exclusive) to date. That growth is just the beginning, claims Ouya's CEO Julie Uhrman, as the company prepares for its next stage of evolution.

"One thing you'll start to see is Ouya on other people's devices," Uhrman said in an interview with *[a]list daily*. "For us, we'll always have a minimum set of standards so the games will work well on our device as well as others. It's the hardware plus an ecosystem."

While it makes sense to expand Ouya to be a service rather than simply a platform, we can't help but recall Sony's

meagre attempt at the same thing a couple of years ago. Sure, it helped push mobile gaming just that little bit further, but today you don't hear anyone talking about PlayStation Mobile (previously PlayStation Suite). If anything, this move from Ouya is likely a reaction to the rumours that both Apple and Amazon are preparing to enter the tiny home console market – a move which Uhrman welcomes as a challenge and validation of this market segment's potential.



Team17 tends its flock

When *Worms* creators Team17 announced that they'd make a return to the world of third-party publishing, many assumed that might mark the end of their developer days. Thankfully that has now been confirmed as untrue: Team17 MD Debbie Bestwick recently announced that the studio is working on a new game.

That game is called *Flockers*, but unfortunately not much else is known about it at this stage. Bestwick describes *Flockers* as "the most important game we've worked on in over a decade".

Toby's Island borrows some old-school Nintendo charm



Looking a bit like *Pokémon* crossed with *Harvest Moon*, *Toby's Island* is a charming 2D adventure/RPG in which you play as titular Toby. After your abusive father encourages you to run away from home, Toby gets lost at sea and eventually finds himself on an island. On this island, he finds creatures that can be collected and used to fight other creatures in turn-based combat. There's crafting too, and mini-games such as fishing to enjoy, and there's also a town that acts as your home base, which can be upgraded as you progress to add new buildings and features.

Certain elements in the game will be randomised to ensure that each person who plays it has a different experience. Your creatures can be possessed by a range of spirits you'll meet, and your party of critters will evolve as you use them depending on what spirits they're possessed by. Toby will also have to farm for food, because you have to eat in the game to ensure your continued existence. As you grow in power and as your settlement expands, you'll gradually be able to venture out further to explore more of the island.

Dishonored II info supposedly leaked, may be real by the time you read this

If a leaked Bethesda factsheet is to be believed, then *Dishonored II* is set for a reveal at this year's E3. An off-screen image was snapped from an internal presentation and uploaded to notoriously leaky website AllGamesBeta. The fact sheet makes mention of a new main character with new powers. The game won't be set in Dunwall but rather in a northern area called Tyvia. *Dishonored II* is powered by id's Tech 5 engine and it'll be heading to PC, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One in 2016. Take it with a pinch of salt for now.

The Dark Knight just can't get enough

Warner Bros. unveils Batman: Arkham Knight

I'm Batman. You're Batman. We're ALL Batman! Again! Hooray! Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment has lifted the lid on *Batman: Arkham Knight*, the next game in the *Arkham* series that developer Rocksteady started five years ago with *Arkham Asylum*. There really is nothing but good news with this reveal, starting with the fact that Rocksteady is back at the development helm after a one game hiatus when development duties were handed over to Warner Bros. Montreal. That resulted in the rather disappointing *Arkham Origins*, which acted as a prequel of sorts. *Arkham Knight*, however, kicks off a year after the events of *Arkham City*.

Arkham Knight will feature a "fully detailed and realized Gotham City" that's about five times the size of *Arkham City*. While it won't be the largest game world, Rocksteady is aiming for it to be the most detailed. For the first time in the series, the Batmobile will be available whenever you

want it, and it'll race to Bats' side at the touch of a button. The Batmobile will form an integral part of the game and you'll be flitting from car seat to on-foot navigation throughout the campaign.

A number of familiar faces will be making a return, including Harley-Quinn, Penguin, Two-Face, Riddler, and Scarecrow, who is the game's main villain. Each of these characters will be getting their same voice-actors from previous games, with Kevin Conroy returning to voice Batman.

As for the subtitle, *Arkham Knight*, that actually refers to a new character who will become an arch-rival for Batman during the course of the game. This character is being created specifically for the game by DC's Geoff Johnson, who has previously worked on *Green Lantern* and *Justice League*.

Finally, the game won't feature multiplayer and it will only be available on PC, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One, making it a "true next-gen experience".

ACE Team announces its next

ACE Team – the Chilean developer responsible for such wacky interactive fare as brawler *Zeno Clash* (along with its sequel) and boulder smasher *Rock of Ages* – have unveiled their next project. *Abyss Odyssey* is a side-scrolling beat-'em-up set in a randomised world, and the developers are placing huge emphasis on the beat-'em-up part.

They want their new game's combat system to rival the complexity of dedicated fighting games like *Street Fighter*. To that end, each of the three playable characters has a unique move

set to master, containing such scary fighter jargon as "cancel into supers" and "dodge cancels". The catch is that the AI-controlled enemies have move sets that are just as complex, so you'll have to truly master your character to best succeed at this game.

In a typically peculiar ACE Team twist, you'll also be able to capture the souls of enemies, allowing you to assume their form and adopt their moves as your own. So you'll be able to transform into such bizarre things as a psychedelic bull with barnacles (or something) growing on its back.

Get fit!

Nintendo announces new company division with renewed focus on fitness products



Nintendo president Satoru Iwata has announced that the company has a 10 year plan to improve people's quality of life. Speaking to shareholders and investors via the official Nintendo website, Iwata outlined the company's plans to expand their hardware business in a new direction that will complement their already existing entertainment offerings. This additional offering was born out of Nintendo's redefining of what they believe "entertainment" to be; for Nintendo, "entertainment" now needs to improve people's quality of life, or "QOL" as the company is referring to it.

This new outlook does not mean that Nintendo is abandoning the gaming scene, and Iwata was quick to point out that "dedicated video game platforms will remain our core focus." However, the company will be establishing a new business area aside from

video games. This business area, from the sounds of things, will follow similar patterns to Nintendo's tried and tested model of releasing hardware with compatible software. What that means is we could see a new suite of Nintendo hardware with a focus outside of video games. According to Iwata, that focus will be on fitness and wellbeing, and on establishing "an environment in which more people are conscious about their health".

The company has earmarked the next 10 years to try and establish and grow this new business area. In the meantime, it'll be business as usual for platforms like the Nintendo 3DS and Wii U. Iwata's announcement didn't make any indication as to what type of hardware we can expect to see, but perhaps that Wii heart rate that was rumoured some years back will get to see the light of day?

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 **MXGP for PS3** from Apex Interactive. Send your captions to letters@nag.co.za with the subject line "April caption".



NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT AT HUMOUR

"I used to like 3D movies, then I took an arrow to the eye"



LAST MONTH'S WINNER

"I told the doctor I broke my leg in two places. He said that's what you get for sleeping with my daughter."

- Jason Batzofin

bt
GAMES

Now 52 stores
Nationwide

0861-4-GAMES or visit us:
www.btgames.co.za



SUPPORT LINES

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

PUBLISHERS / Activision / Blizzard
2K Games Rockstar / Ubisoft /

Codemasters / NC-Soft / Namco-Bandai / Disney
e-mail / support@xtremems.co.za
Telephone / 0861 987 363

PUBLISHERS / Microsoft Xbox
Telephone / 0800 991 550

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

Roxy hunt

Send your sighting to letters@nag.co.za with the subject line "April Roxy", and of course your contact details, and you could win a prize. Feeling lucky punk?



March winner

Danielle Nel, page 40

This month's prize

BioShock Infinite HeroClix Starter pack valued at R350. Sponsored by Skycastle.



SKYCASTLE

BT GAMES RELEASE LIST

Dates subject to change without notice

APRIL WEEK 1

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Cut the Rope: Triple Threat | 3DS |
| Don Bradman Cricket 14 | 360 / PS3 |
| The Elder Scrolls Online | PC |

APRIL WEEK 2

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Metro: Last Light Complete Edition | 360 / PC / PS3 |
| LEGO Friends | DS |
| LEGO The Hobbit | 360 / 3DS / PC / PS3 / PS4 / PSV / Wii U |

APRIL WEEK 3

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn | PS4 |
| 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil | 360 / PS3 |
| Trials Fusion | PS4 |

APRIL WEEK 4

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Dark Souls II | PC |
| The Sly Trilogy | PSV |
| PS4 Wireless Stereo Headset | PS4 |

APRIL UNCONFIRMED

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| LEGO Mega Pack | PSV |
|----------------|-----|

"It's better to make a game that a smaller number of people love than a large number of people think is kind of alright. And if you can make that work in a business model it's a much nicer place to be as a developer. And I think it's a much nicer place to be as a customer as well, you feel like actually there's enough diversity."

– Dan Pinchbeck, creative director at Dear Esther / Amnesia: A Machine for Pigs developer The Chinese Room, speaking with GamesIndustry.biz

PRE-ORDER NOW

RECEIVE A FREE AUTO-UPGRADE TO THE SPECIAL EDITION!

GET THE WATCH_DOGS BREAKTHROUGH PACK, CYBERPUNK PACK AND THE VISUAL INCARNATION OF DEDSEC AND CHICAGO SOUTH CLUB FACTIONS.

BT Games T's & C's apply. Stocks are limited.

WATCH_DOGS

everything is connected

27.05.14

Wii U Releases later.

home_coded

EXPOSURE FOR SOUTH AFRICAN INDIE DEVELOPERS by Rodain Joubert

GAME OVERVIEW

Described as a hybrid between puzzle game and sound toy, *Cadence* has players constructing zenlike and flexible audio structures in 3D space using connections that are hooked between nodes. When a signal is sent through the connective web, each node has its own musical note and set of rules for advancing or destroying the signal. The possibility of multiple solutions (inside a gamespace that's reminiscent of *Osmos*, *Splice* and *Spacechem*) allows players to provide unique solutions to the game's problems and procedurally generate melodies which are particular to them. The game's ultimate design goal is to have players compose pleasing, looped music without realising that they're doing it, coming from solid and rewarding gameplay mechanics.

An online demo of the game is currently available at madewithmonsterlove.com/demo/cadence (uses the Unity web player)

The Symphony of Cadence

“First there was an X-factor sense that it was bigger than the sum of its parts. A feeling that I'd stumbled on this very rich and fertile thing which was somehow more than the code I'd put into my computer. Second was the sense that this was actually an achievable game for me to build as a lone developer.”

These are the words of Peter Cardwell-Gardner, an aspiring developer entering the market with his first professional venture – an aural love letter he calls *Cadence*. Announced in March, he plans to bring it to PC, Mac and iPad later this year, gaining attention and momentum on services such as Greenlight.



An intersection of puzzle game and sound toy, *Cadence* has gone through several major design revisions since its creation for the Ludum Dare 26 game jam. Described by the author as taking a “zenlike” approach, the emphasis on marrying aesthetics with mechanics has been a challenging, albeit rewarding process for him to go through.

Cardwell-Gardner's games have always had a heavy emphasis on evoking emotion and projecting feelings. Before *Cadence* came attempts like *Towards The Light*, a claustrophobic cave explorer that lasts a few minutes and creates a convincing pressure situation for players. “In a broader sense I'm hugely inspired by the spiritual awakening that's happening in indie gaming right now,” he says. Projects he holds up as examples of the area he wants to work with include *Journey* (Thatgamecompany) and *Gone Home* (The Fullbright Company).

Made With Monster Love, the one-man company he's established, is working hard at promoting *Cadence* on a variety of avenues and marketing has been taken very seriously.

“As an indie, good marketing is the difference between do or die.”

Beyond a lot of the common advice which people receive about marketing, Cardwell-Gardner suggests that marketing needs a story attached to it – that being made aware of a game's existence should be a relatable experience in itself. Promoting something that's worth mentioning and discussing from the beginning is powerful. It's the “tell your friends” approach, refined and distilled.

Alienware recommends Windows.

ALIENWARE
GAME VICTORIOUS™



OVERCOME ANY OBSTACLE.

The new Alienware X51. Designed to fit into tight spaces. And to get you out of them.



NEW ALIENWARE X51

R18,999.90 Each
Incl. VAT

- 4th Gen Intel® Core™ i7-4770 Processor (8MB Cache, up to 3.9GHz with Turbo Boost Technology)
- Windows 8 Pro (64BIT)
- 8GB (1600MHz) Dual Channel Memory
- 1TB (64MB Cache) 7200RPM SATA 6GB/s
- 1.5GB GDDR5 NVIDIA GeForce GTX 660 Graphics
- Internal High-Definition 7.1 Performance Audio
- Display Not Included
- US Euro (QWERTY) Alienware Multimedia Keyboard
- Alienware Optical Mouse
- 3 Year Hardware Support

NEW ALIENWARE 14

R27,999.90 Each
Incl. VAT

- 4th Gen Intel® Core™ i7-4700MQ Processor (6MB Cache, up to 3.4GHz with Turbo Boost Technology)
- Windows 8 Pro (64BIT)
- 14.0" (355.6 mm) WLED FHD (1920 x 1080) Anti-Glare Display
- 16GB (1600MHz) Dual Channel DDR3L Memory
- 750GB (7,200RPM) SATA 3Gb/s + 64GB mSATA SSD Caching
- 2GB GDDR5 NVIDIA GeForce GTX 765M Graphics
- Dual Layer Blu-ray Reader
- 3 Year Hardware Support

NEW ALIENWARE 17

R37,999.90 Each
Incl. VAT

- 4th Gen Intel® Core™ i7-4800MQ Processor (6MB Cache, up to 3.7GHz with Turbo Boost Technology)
- Windows 8 Pro (64BIT)
- 17.3" (439.42 mm) 120 Hz WLED FHD (1920 x 1080) TrueLife Display with 3D Bundle
- 16GB (1600MHz) Dual Channel DDR3L Memory
- 1.5TB RAID 0 (7,200RPM) + 64GB mSATA SSD Caching
- 3GB GDDR5 NVIDIA GeForce GTX 770M Graphics
- Dual Layer Blu-ray Reader
- 3 Year Hardware Support



AVAILABLE AT SELECT INCREDIBLE CONNECTION STORES.
VISIT: WWW.ALIENWARE.CO.ZA

SPROUSE/FRANKS/ING

While stocks last, prices and specifications are correct at date of publication and may change without notice. Dell, the Dell logo, and Alienware are trademarks of Dell Inc. Intel, the Intel logo, Intel Inside, Intel Core, and Core Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. Dell disclaims proprietary interest in the trademarks or trade names of other entities used to refer to them or their products. Copyright 2010 Dell Inc. All rights reserved. Dell Computers (PTY) Ltd. P.O. Box 71170, Bryanston, 2021, South Africa. E&OE

4th gen
Intel® Core™
i7 processor.



A MARKETING MUST

Made With Monster Love uses the press kit template created by the fine minds at Vlambeer (dopresskit.com). Having a good press kit is an oft-underestimated – but extremely useful – component of anyone’s marketing plan.

Putting aside the time and effort to have your media bases covered is a godsend for any journalist wanting to cover you – even seemingly redundant and minor efforts like putting all of your contact URLs in one place makes life easier for anyone who wants to spread news about you. Good journalists can put more effort into portraying you with interesting and thought-out pieces. Bad journalists will be propped up by your initiative. And otherwise uninterested journos may be swayed to report about you when they see what a convenient and painless source of news you can be.

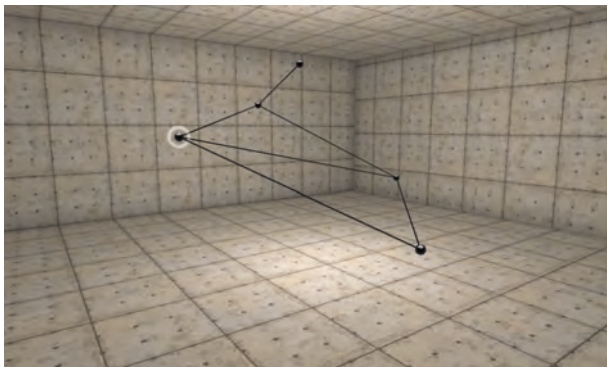
Even volunteering descriptions of your game helps the way that it’s portrayed in reports. Angling and focusing market attention

on a few key areas helps people build a better internal idea of your game – shaping it and giving the “marketing story” described by *Cadence*’s developer. Focusing that lens a little bit allows you to earn a personality for your project – for example, you can present your game from the word go as unapologetically difficult, or tout it as a zenlike experience, or be a radical demonstration of “Insert Your Trait Here”!

Bear in mind that the more media you provide for people to cover your game with, the more control you’ll have over this eventual narrative and personality projection and help people adjust their expectations accordingly (“ah, so it’s *meant* to be difficult,” and so on). But be sure to understand that you can get burned as well – so don’t advertise the game as something it’s not! This creates dissonance for everyone who tries your product and a savvy journo isn’t going to be impressed by false descriptions.



“As an indie, good marketing is the difference between do or die.”



Cadence as it appeared in Ludum Dare 26. It was originally called *Synesthesia*.

Games as experiences have also informed his activities with the local dev community over the past few years. He often has a hand in organising local events, the most recent one being an experimental gaming party called Super Friendship Arcade. Teaming up with fellow developer Richard Pieterse (creator of *Wang Commander*), the Arcade brought an overwhelming crowd of Cape Town dwellers to a small skate park, merging alternative party culture with crowd-appropriate games like *Johann Sebastian Joust* and the locally-developed *Broforce*.

He hopes to see more games moving in the “spiritual” playspace he’s exploring. Concerning games as art, he still feels that the industry is too reliant on self-proclaiming its cultural merits.

“I like the notion that rich people don’t need to proclaim their wealth, for they simply are rich. I think in a similar sense I wish the games industry wouldn’t go round proclaiming that it’s artistic or needing to be more gender neutral. It would simply be those things and make games that reflect that. This might take a while (particularly the second one).”

He hopes to expand his company in the future, and that *Cadence* will pave the way for more ambitious projects requiring other talents. Check on the state of *Cadence* and learn more about Made With Monster Love at www.madewithmonsterlove.com **NAG**



**ENTER
THE
UNHEARD**



STEELSERIES SIBERIA ELITE

The SteelSeries Siberia Elite gaming headset merges iconic design and advanced audio engineering to deliver an immersive experience of both sight and sound.

STEELSERIES.COM/SIBERIAELITE

megarom
interactive

www.megarom.co.za/steelseries/
+27 11 361 4800 | alan@megarom.co.za

steelseries

- SMSes charged at R1.50 (free SMS bundles don't apply)
- Winners will be notified by SMS
- Judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into
- Competition closes 30 April 2014

SONY

To enter the
competition SMS
the keyword **PS4**
to **33110**



PS4



WIN A PS4™ HAMPER



HAMPER INCLUDES

- 1x 500GB PS4™ console
- 1x PS4™ camera
- 5x PS4™ games (Call of Duty: Ghosts, Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag, LEGO Marvel Super Heroes, Killzone Shadow Fall, Knack)
- 1x PS bag
- 1x PS4™ umbrella
- 1x PS4™ T-shirt
- 1x PS4™ lanyard
- 1x PS4™ snap bracelet USB
- 1x PS4™ wristband



"PlayStation" is a registered trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "PS4" is a trademark of the same company.

The Elder Scrolls Online



The multiplayer Elder Scrolls we always wanted, at a price

Who hasn't played *Skyrim* and wished they could explore its vast and open-ended but ultimately single-player world with friends? While *Elder Scrolls Online* does finally bring multiplayer into the picture, it isn't *really* like *Skyrim* or *Oblivion*, it just tries very hard to make you think it is. And as long as you don't look too closely between the cracks, the impression holds together very well.

ESO takes place a thousand years before the events in *Skyrim*; the Daedric Prince Molag Bal is up to no good and it's up to you to stop his plans to pull all of Tamriel into his realm. We got some hands-on time with the current beta, limited somewhat by only being able to log in at certain predetermined times. For many players, *ESO* will be their first

game in the genre, so they'll be fresh to all the various tropes and mechanics the genre traditionally employs. Those who have played many MMORPGS may find *ESO* overly familiar, in spite of the expertly-crafted thematic window dressing.

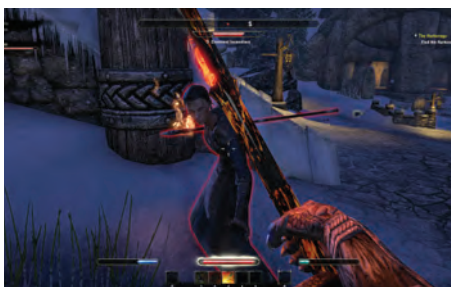
TROUBLE IN TAMRIEL

I rolled an Argonian. The lizard-folk look a bit like a guy in a lizard suit, likely because they needed the non-human characters to still conform to a certain shape to cut down on how many different types of armour models to create. Character creation has all the trimmings: race, class, body adjustments, facial adjustments, and so on. For class, I picked Sorcerer at first, but a few hours later deleted the character and tried Dragonknight. Magic wasn't doing it for me, the combat felt very unsatisfying due to a lack of feedback. Melee combat is marginally better in this regard.

Regardless of race or faction, you start in a cell in the Wailing Prison. You're dead, or at least you were, and stripped of your soul. How you got there is unknown and irrelevant. From the get-go, *ESO* employs every trick it can to look and feel like *Skyrim*. The interface uses the same graphics and iconography, the game is played first-person (but you can go third-person at any time). But you can't pick up everything you see. When you kill something, you don't get to take its weapons or armour. No collecting every cheese wheel you come across, unfortunately. It's not a big deal, but it does make things feel very static.

Combat is straightforward: left mouse attacks, right mouse blocks (using stamina). If you double-tap a direction, you dodge. Not that dodging ended up being important in the few hours I played. I forgot it even existed after a while. Perhaps it becomes more necessary at higher levels or during more difficult dungeons. A visage known only as The Prophet shows up, we talk – all dialogue (except your own) is fully voiced. An interesting design choice is that of having no identifying markers identifying other players. Other than their erratic movement, the only way to know if a character is a player is to walk up to them and press the interact key.

"From the get-go, *Elder Scrolls Online* employs every trick it can to look and feel like *Skyrim*."



▶ The *Elder Scrolls Online* has been in development since 2007.

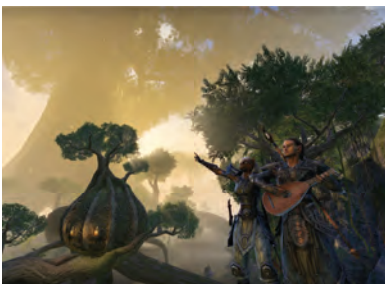


THE CLASSES

There are only four classes in *Elder Scrolls Online*, but each fills multiple roles depending on how you develop it. **THE TEMPLAR** is a diverse class, capable of tanking (being the primary damage soak), crowd control, and healing. You usually won't see many in a group, and they use the sword and shield or staff. **THE DRAGONKNIGHT** is all about the power of fire, dealing huge damage during close quarter combat, can act as a tank, and can wield any weapon. **SORCERER** is a long-range damage dealer, using powerful spells, able to summon daemon assistance, but remains a back line caster with a staff as they have little in the way of defence. Lastly, **THE NIGHTBLADE** is your only pure dedicated damage role, using stealth to sneak in and drain stamina, health and magicka from targets. Depending on your class you can wear one (or more) of the different armour types. Light armour assists in magic regeneration and provides a bonus to spell-casting. Medium armour boosts stamina regeneration, while heavy armour boosts defence and adds a bonus to being healed.



It will cost \$60 (R642) to purchase the game client, and an additional \$15 (R160) a month to play. Prices subject to change.



RELEASE DATE / Q2 2014

PLATFORM / PC / PS4 / XBO

GENRE / Massively multiplayer online role-playing game

DEVELOPER / ZeniMax Online Studios

PUBLISHER / www.elderscrollsonline.com

WEBSITE / Bethesda Softworks

There is stealth, allowing you to sneak up behind enemies as long as “HIDDEN” is shown on screen. You have two weapon sets, with swapping between them unlocked at level 15. You can equip the same weapons twice but slot different skills for each set. There are five skill slots, and one what I can only assume was an Elite slot. After the tutorial section, I’m dropped at Bleakrock and given three quests to choose from. Go here, kill something. That’s fine, there are only so many ways to engage a player in an MMO. Combat will always be the primary mechanic. There is harvesting and crafting, but if you’re running up to a mining node and someone gets there before you, tough luck. Once they harvest it, it removes it for a while, so you either have to wait or go look elsewhere.

ESO has a great deal of nice touches. When a player is looking at their inventory, their character model shows them rummaging inside a bag. If they’re looking at their map, they’re holding up a map scroll. But it also has a lot of strange design choices. Players “phase” when they’re doing quests. For example, I had already done one quest involving going somewhere and killing a

bunch of things. A friend of mine logged in and asked I help them with that quest. I walked over, but because I had already done the quest I was invisible to my friend while in the area where the quest takes place. And they, along with the things he needed to kill, were invisible to me. ESO tries to be a single-player game and an MMO at the same time, and the two paradigms seem to be at odds through this design.

While ESO will have respectable numbers at launch, after the free month you get from buying the game disappears it might struggle to maintain a healthy population. There’s the risk that series fans will feel the game is a half-baked *Elder Scrolls* experience with shoehorned MMO trappings. While on the other side of the coin, MMO players might find it a very generic game in weak *Elder Scrolls* drag. The problem is the monthly subscription. If ESO was a buy once deal, supported by cosmetic or quality-of-life microtransactions, it might stand a better chance. But if *Final Fantasy XIV* can make it on a subscription-only model, then perhaps this can too. **NAG**

-Miktar

WildStar



Finally, a BraveStar* game

There was a time when the MMORPG genre felt small. Now, it seems almost every publisher has one or more attempts at it, trying to win over the hearts (and wallets) of the faithful willing to pay every month. The unparalleled success of *World of Warcraft* has created many imitators. Some are (or were) very straightforward and almost literal clones, like *Vanguard: Saga of Heroes* (shutting down in a few months). Others rely on the brand power behind popular fiction like *The Lord of the Rings Online* (free-to-play a few years after launch). A few MMORPGs opted to buck the monthly subscription model and genre conventions entirely, like the *Guild Wars* series, with varying degrees of success.

For some reason, NCSOFT decided it wanted another MMORPG to add to its already

impressive stable. While *Aion* didn't have the wings many thought it did (having gone free-to-play already), *Blade & Soul*, *Guild Wars 2* and *Lineage II* are making the publisher money hand over fist. The real question though: is there even room for another subscription-based MMORPG in this market (a question *The Elder Scrolls Online* also faces)? We spent some time with the current closed beta of *WildStar* to see what it has on offer.

THE MILD WEST

I made a Draken (horned space demon) Spellslinger (ranged damage). I chose the Explorer path, because I'm a platform game player at heart. This ended up being a poor choice: the physics engine behind *WildStar* is ill-suited for precise (or even imprecise) platforming. Being Draken meant being part of the Dominion faction, so I started aboard a spaceship on route to the planet Nexus. The ship is filled with tutorial quests which involved finding

people with markers above their heads and then reading huge blocks of text that boil down to "go here and kill this or find a certain amount of things". When almost every other modern MMO has started to employ fully voiced quests with cut-scenes, *WildStar* is an odd throwback.

There is no auto-attack in *WildStar* - you have to press the skill buttons you want to use every time, even the basic attack skill.

HOUSING

Every player gets their own instanced "sky plot" which they can customise. Logging out in your home gives you rested XP (a bonus to experience gained later). Higher quality furnishings give more rested XP. You can upgrade your home to include resource gathering nodes, crafting stations, and even give friends the ability to access your home when you're not online. When they gather from your resource nodes, you get a cut.

RELEASE DATE / Q2 2014

PLATFORM / PC

GENRE / Massively multiplayer online role-playing game

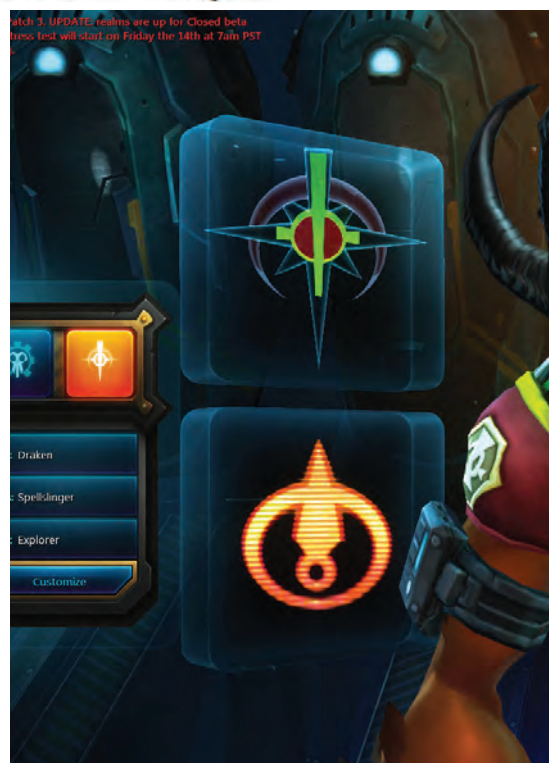
DEVELOPER / Carbine Studios

PUBLISHER / NCSOFT

WEBSITE / www.wildstar-online.com



Watch 3. UPDATE: realms are up for Closed beta. Press test will start on Friday the 14th at 7am PST





1 Players will be able to buy time cards from other players using in-game earned money, but at a variable exchange rate.



2 The WildStar client will cost \$60 (R642) and has a subscription fee of \$15 (R160) a month to play. Prices subject to change.



ADVENTURES

These are a bit like dungeons, but with a bigger emphasis on self-contained stories, open environments, and choices to make at key points that alter the path you take through the story. They take place inside a virtual environment (so they can take place anywhere), and once you've completed all the Adventures you can attempt them again on Veteran Mode for better rewards.



Tutorials over (which lasted far too long in my opinion), I'm dropped down on a planet called Olyssia for some more rudimentary questing. There is no auto-attack in *WildStar* – you have to press the skill buttons you want to use every time, even the basic attack skill. This can get tiresome. You can dodge by double-tapping a direction, which uses stamina. When you press the loot button, all loot in the immediate area around you is hoovered up into your inventory, which is a nice quality-of-life feature to have from the get-go. If you're unsure where to go, clicking on the quest name on your HUD brings up a huge arrow showing the direction of your objective.

Being an Explorer, once I got near a specific cave, a quest popped up asking me to go inside and find something. Inside, rocks fell from the ceiling randomly, easily avoided



thanks to the game's overabundance of area of effect markers. Once complete, most quests can be handed in immediately via communicator, so you don't need to trek back to the quest giver NPC. Most of the quests, as is standard in an MMO, involve going somewhere and killing a bunch of things. Another Explorer quest popped up at one point, asking me to jump up a mountainside (the physics fought me all the way) and call in a sniper overwatch. Two Chua – little psychopathic furry creatures – appeared and assisted the players fighting down below, sniping enemies for them.

WildStar looks very interesting, visually. It takes the cartoon visuals all the way. Enemies explode into literal steaks that fly everywhere. Everything seems designed to be as friendly and as appealing as possible. When an enemy attacks, they telegraph the exact shape and timing of their attack via area of effect markers that fill up as their attack charges. It's almost impossible to be hit by anything damaging, at least initially. When you get stunned, you can mash a button to break free faster. I can't comment on the user interface, because the entire UI is going to be scrapped and replaced in a few weeks. There are a lot of good ideas in *WildStar*, like their implementation of housing, the concept behind Adventures, and an attempt to cater content towards user-specified playstyles (the Paths). And yet, there's very little to be excited about. It's all been done before in other MMOs, some of it done better. **NAG**

-Miktar



RELEASE DATE / May 2014
PLATFORMS / 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO
GENRE / First-person shooter
DEVELOPER / MachineGames
PUBLISHER / Bethesda Softworks
WEBSITE / www.wolfenstein.com

THE NEW ORDER

"The New Order". It says much: a new regime of Nazis, a new government, new enemies. It also says "hey, I'm a new game – I play by my own rules," and this *Wolfenstein* sure does.

The New Order is one of those games that attempts to stagger along the line between oldschool core gaming ideals (before we even knew they existed) and modern convenience while giving the arresting officer its best sober face. But like the drunken driver I seem to have stumbled across for the purpose of an unnecessarily elaborate metaphor, *Wolfenstein* does everything it can to stay razor-sharp, witty, deep – possibly poignant – even though it's just been pulled over for doing 200 in an 80 zone while cackling like a madman.

2014's *Wolfenstein* is an eccentric mix of gameplay, plot and characters that well suits the series' scrappy legacy. You'll jump back into the size 13 boots of William Joseph "BJ" Blazkowicz – *Wolfenstein's*

originally gormless hero – and once again bust up the Nazi regime one Stormtrooper at a time until there's nobody left standing but an American flag-bearer and a hotdog vendor. Things kick off in 1946: The Nazis have all-but won World War II with their surprisingly advanced weaponry that discards the occult ramblings from the series in place of steampunk-like technology that puts ze Germans decades ahead of anything the Allies can muster. Now I see that look of confusion on your face: you're thinking "but Geoff, as I gaze upon these beautifully laid-out pages I see lasers, cybernetic implants and other technology that far surpasses that which is conventionally described as 'steampunk'". Oh boy, you're a sharp one. That's because *The New Order*, and BJ's hatred-fuelled journey through it, spans 14



2009's *Wolfenstein* made use of the id Tech 4 engine to run things, and MachineGames has decided to go with the massively underused id Tech 5 engine for *The New Order*. Hopefully it won't suffer from the same technical issues that plagued the last game that used this engine – id's own *Rage*.



Pre-orders for *Wolfenstein* will include access to the beta/demo for *Doom 4*, which is currently in development by id Software and also uses the id Tech 5 engine. It appears that Bethesda has high hopes for this engine, as the upcoming *The Evil Within* from Shinji Mikami also uses id Tech 5.

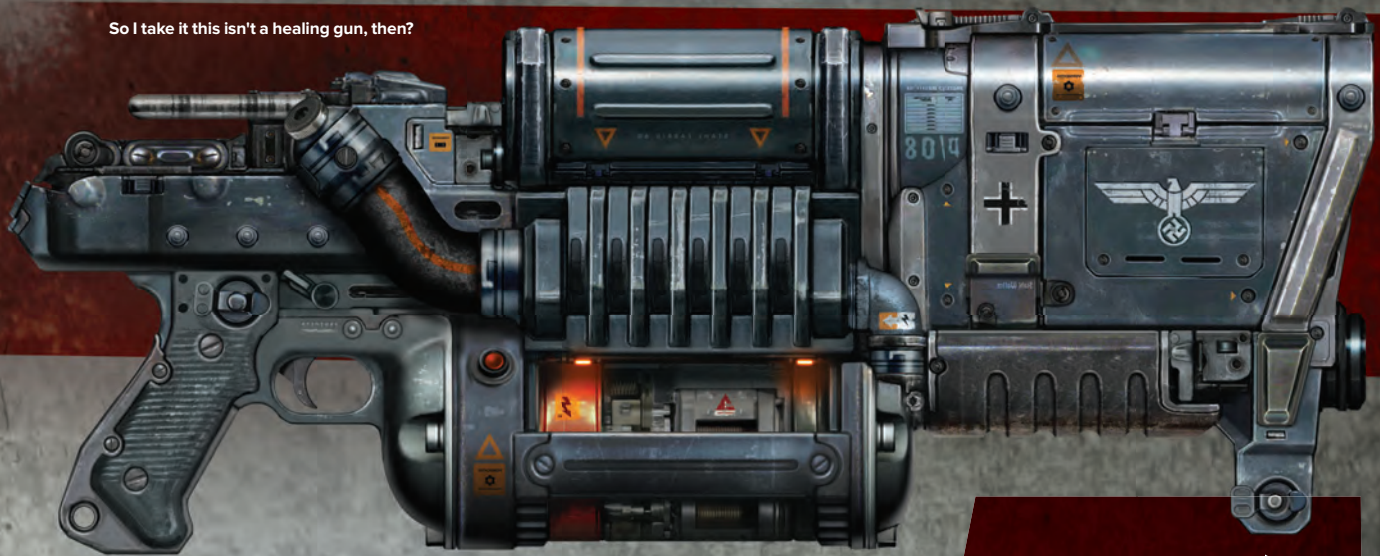
years – from 1946 to the start of the not-so-swinging '60s.

The beginning quarter or so of *The New Order* takes place in 1946 – kind of continuing from where 2009's *Wolfenstein* left off. Blazkowicz and the small tactical unit to which he belongs are tasked to infiltrate various Nazi locations but, after things eventually go more pear-shaped than even he can deal with, BJ finds himself knocked unconscious and trapped within his own body that's been shoved into a mental hospital for the remainder of his life. Days pass. They turn into weeks which become months. Eventually, after 14 years, BJ's brain snaps back into activity and he frees himself. But so much has changed in the world outside. He completely expected the Allies to win the war (an amusing poke at real history), but it turns out that the Nazi forces, powered by Deathshead's insane inventions and lust for the mayhem they cause, eventually annihilated their opponents. They now rule the world and have stamped key locations around the globe with their signature architecture,

tearing down national monuments, homes and entire suburbs to build in their places monolithic structures that oppress any aesthetic that once was. Even the last hopes of rebellion have been crushed underfoot – until BJ comes along to shake things up, that is.

These locations, as depressing as they may be, make for a rich game world filled with a ton of gameplay variety. At its core, *Wolfenstein* is a shooter, of course: every opportunity has been taken to ensure that the player can shoot Nazis wherever possible, and with a weapons list long enough to challenge any game of the past you can be sure you'll never be short of ways to do so. But as I mentioned before, there's plenty here to appeal to gamers who are used to current-day shooters and the now staple cinematic action sequences. There also appear to be a lot of turret sequences for those of you who like to mow down their enemies without stopping to wonder who has to pick up all the spent shells at the end of the day (I see potential for *Viscera Cleanup Detail*

So I take it this isn't a healing gun, then?



KICK 'EM WHEN THEY'RE DOWN



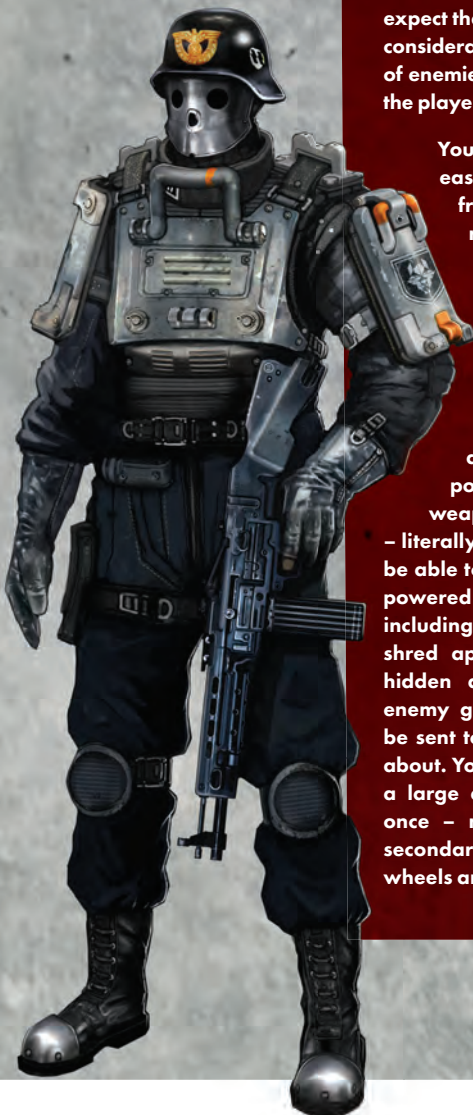
Since *The New Order* spans 14 years, you can expect the enemy's technology to have advanced considerably, which makes for a hell of a roster of enemies and weapons available to them and the player.

Your typical Nazi guy with a gun is easy enough to dispatch with anything from a pistol to dual-wielded assault rifles, but Deathshead's genetic and cybernetic tinkering mean that there's seldom such a thing as simple combat. Robot attack dogs, mechs, heavily-armoured SS Stormtroopers and many more enemy types are likely to get in your way, but thankfully a couple of them have weak points. Sometimes conventional weaponry just won't cut it, though – literally – and for that reason BJ will be able to liberate a number of high-powered retro sci-fi Nazi weapons including a handy laser that lets him shred apart enemy cover, unlock hidden areas and dispatch any enemy grunts unlucky enough to be sent to see what all the fuss is about. You'll also be able to carry a large amount of weapons at once – none of this primary/secondary nonsense – weapon wheels are the future, baby.

HANDLE WITH CARE



Much of the technology in the game comes from the twisted mind of Nazi scientist Wilhelm "Deathshead" Strauss, who serves to summarise and concentrate the real-world Nazi scientific efforts into a single, utterly evil and infinitely hateable character. *Wolfenstein* might seem tongue-in-cheek at times with its excessive everything, but MachineGames maintains that it's approached *The New Order* with tact and care for history – embellishing the details just enough to create a narrative that somehow manages to feel like something you'd want to play with. These are murky waters to wade in, but the result is a game that appears alive, vivid and unafraid. "Punchy" would be an understatement.





HOW WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE:

A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT THE WOLFENSTEIN SERIES

The castle everyone is going beyond, returning to, escaping from or shooting in is derived from a few ideas, places and concepts. Same goes for the name of the game, it really means nothing, but if you must know in German, wolf is wolf and stein is stone leaving you with stone wolf which sounds rather badass. Back to the castle, the most recognised link between real life and the game is Wewelsburg Castle in Germany. This location was actually used for nefarious SS purposes and rumoured occult rituals under Heinrich Himmler during World War II. If you add all these individual elements together you somehow end up at Castle Wolfenstein and a good lesson why you should write things down when you make things up.

The video game series began with two games from Muse Software back in 1981 designed to run on 8-bit computers like the Commodore 64, Apple II and Atari 400/800 (and a DOS version too). The games were *Castle Wolfenstein* (1981) and *Beyond Castle Wolfenstein* (1984). *Castle Wolfenstein* saw players sneak around a castle occupied by Nazis, acquire secret plans and escape with their lives. The game is credited for being the first to employ tactical stealth mechanics as enemy guards were alerted by any noise and ammunition was limited. Players could also wear guard uniforms to fool enemies. The sequel saw the player infiltrating Nazi headquarters in an attempt to assassinate Hitler by explosive means; the same stealth tactics applied.

In 1992 the world of gaming changed forever with id Software's *Wolfenstein 3D*. It has been called the grandfather of shooters and ultimately paved the way for *DOOM* and, as they say, the rest is history. *Wolfenstein 3D* used animated scaling hand-drawn sprites in a fake 3D environment created using a technique called ray casting. For the world of gaming it meant depth and action and something nobody had seen before. In case you're wondering, Muse Software allowed their trademark to lapse, which id Software took full advantage of. The original *Wolfenstein 3D* game concept featured many of the original stealthy elements introduced by Muse, but were ultimately dropped in favour of simplicity and speeding up the pace of the game, taking it from a stealth game to the world's first real FPS. This game also introduced us to William "BJ" Blazkowitz, the iconic hero of the franchise who has featured in all the single-player games since. Incidentally the game is illegal to produce, export, sell or use in public in Germany "for using characteristics of unconstitutional organizations" (read: swastika), you can own it however. Using the same game engine and also released in 1992 was the prequel to *Wolfenstein 3D*, *Spear of Destiny*. It is rumoured that the whole title was completed in two months by id Software who also went on to release mission disks for the game until 1994.

Zoom to 2001 and we have *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* made by Gray Matter Interactive, Nerve Software (multiplayer and Xbox) and Splash Damage (using a modified version of the *Quake III: Team Arena* engine), id Software just oversaw the development. This version was technically a modern reboot of *Wolfenstein 3D* and saw

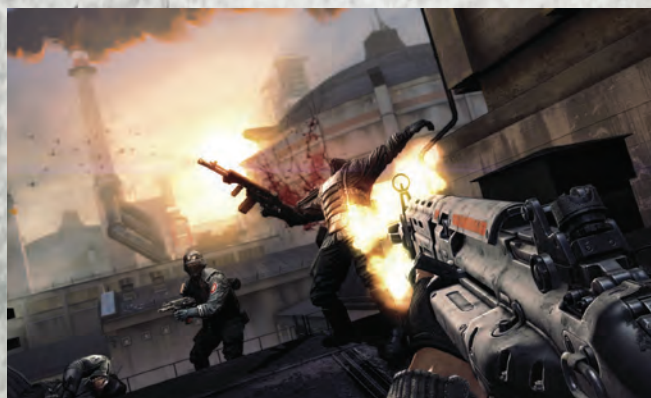
BJ escaping the castle, paranormal stuff, X-labs, weird creatures, returning to the castle (again), killing Nazis and Übersoldaten and generally having a blasting good time. Interestingly the multiplayer component (splitting of teams into Axis and Allies with objective based fighting) is what most remember about the game and this was all thanks to Splash Damage who then went on to release *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* in 2003 as an open source, free-to-play multiplayer only shooter. The game was originally going to be released as an expansion to *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* but thanks to undisclosed reasons this plan was abandoned and id Software put it up for free. It has since spawned numerous mods and continues to be played today. After this success the guys at Splash Damage developed *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*, it was based in the *Quake* universe, used a new id Software engine and featured larger maps and vehicles.

More recently, 2009 in fact, we have *Wolfenstein*. Put together by the distinguished Raven Software and id Software, it was another shooter featuring stalwart hero pants BJ Blazkowitz. This one was actually rather good, featuring some crafty secrets, occult dealings and trips through sewers, mining facilities and various small town settings including a spirited fighting on a zeppelin. The game threw caution to the wind and gave players access to a medallion that allowed them to have some fun using magical and mystical powers. The game did have a multiplayer component but the less said about this the better, odd considering the *Enemy Territory* success story. We gave it 85 back in October 2009 and this was the bottom line: It's an old school sublime FPS with treasure hunting, intrigue and Nazis to shoot. It's such a pity the multiplayer is so horrific.

Now for 2014 we have *Wolfenstein: The New Order* which is looking mighty tasty.

-RedTide





tie-in here). And beyond even that, a number of missions in the game showcase a decently capable stealth system, with a focus on silent take-downs, messing with alarms and staying out of sight. There's also an "entirely optional" snap-to (destructible) cover system, should you be inclined to use it, as well as enough environmental laterality to enable a few flanking manoeuvres at times. But with all of those options to wipe out hordes of Nazi forces, you can rest assured that there will almost always be the option to play *The New Order* like the corridor shooter that lies at its heart.

Reading the above paragraph, one might think that MachineGames has overscoped with *Wolfenstein*, but there's even *more* to play with. On top of what seems like a list of gameplay features from every FPS from *Quake* to *Riddick*, *Wolfenstein: The New Order* also features a light RPG system that rewards play diversity. BJ starts off as a typical FPS grunt, but

throughout the campaign he'll gain new abilities depending on your playstyle. There are a number of achievements set out for you to attain: do so and you'll be rewarded with new perks from the categories of Assault, Tactical, Stealth and Demolitions. These perks include passive bonuses to ammo clip size, speed and so on, as well as new abilities like throwing knives for instant kills. These perks operate on a tiered system so the more you play a certain way, the greater the reward. While this system is decidedly modern and *COD*-like, on the flip side there's a classic hitpoints mechanic with a twist (of course): you need to collect medikits to fully regain health, but you will regenerate up to the next 20 hitpoints if you manage to stay out of combat long enough. We fondly remember a similar partial health regeneration system from *The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay*, and on the higher difficulty levels it made for one hell of an anxious experience when you're down to your last chunk of health.

Some of the cast of *The New Order*.
Is that a love interest we see..?



And if you find yourself dying just a little more than you'd like, be sure to grab some armoured vests or armour shards – just like the old days! In addition, there will be five levels of difficulty that you're sure to recognise, from "Can I play, Daddy?" to "I am death incarnate!" MachineGames senior gameplay designer Andreas Öjefors describes the experience in the highest difficulty level simply as "You will cry blood," and the mid-level difficulty selection is designed to be a solid challenge, even for veteran players. In our own playthroughs we certainly found this to be the case.

Everything that we've seen and played so far of *The New Order* has been invigorating. There's so much history here to draw from – both as a game

series and the real-world events that lay its foundations – and MachineGames' treatment of both speaks of maturity and a real understanding of what a lot of people want out of a shooter. The studio founders' legacy as former Starbreeze key people speaks volumes as well – there are clearly some elements of *Riddick* lurking in the darkness – and this wild mix of classic and contemporary aspects seems to be coming together somehow. It's not a done deal just yet, though, but with the delays this game has faced we can only hope that the developers have spent more time balancing and polishing gameplay than layering on the next-gen blur effects. This is certainly an ambitious title; we just hope that it can live up to its massive potential. **NAG**

- GeometriX

MARVEL
THE AVENGERS WAS JUST THE BEGINNING

CHRIS HEMSWORTH NATALIE PORTMAN TOM HIDDLESTON AND ANTHONY HOPKINS AS ODIN



MARVEL

THOR

THE DARK WORLD



NOW ON BLU-RAY™
3D BLU-RAY™ AND DVD

©2014 Marvel

MARVEL STUDIOS PRESENTS CHRIS HEMSWORTH NATALIE PORTMAN TOM HIDDLESTON AND ANTHONY HOPKINS AS ODIN "THOR: THE DARK WORLD" STELLAN SKARSGÅRD IDRIS ELBA CHRISTOPHER ECCLESTON ADI WALE AKANNIOTYE-ABRAHE KAT DENNING'S RAY STEVENSON ZACHARY LEVI TADANORU ASANO JAMIE ALEXANDER WITH BENE BUSSETT SARAH HALLEY CANN C.S.I. BRIAN TYLER JAMES DAVE JORDAN JESSIE JANE MORRISON
MARVEL EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MENDY PLOTKIN PRODUCED BY DAN LEIBENTAL WRITTEN BY WYATT SMITH DIRECTED BY CHARLES WOOD COSTUME DESIGNER JACQUES KRAMER MUSIC BY MICHAEL YACOBSON EDITOR NIGEL BIGGS EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS STAN LEE PRODUCED BY ALAN FINE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS VICTORIA ALONSO EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CRAIG KYLE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS LOUIS D'ESPRISSO EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS KEVIN FEIGE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DON PAYNE AND ROBERT RODAT EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CHRISTOPHER L. YOST AND CHRISTOPHER MARKUS & STEPHEN MACFEEY EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ALAN TAYLOR

Available at **Look & Listen**

Not all items are available in all stores. Please call your local store to enquire. Availability subject to change at the discretion of the supplier.

Reviews *Intro*

We assembled a team of experts in their fields – the greatest game reviewers humanity has ever known. Unfortunately they all bugged off after a week, so this lot will have to do... Meet your reviewers.

Question / What is the single biggest thing that's kept you gaming all these years?



CHRIS "SAVAGE" SAVIDES
The Batman.

CURRENTLY PLAYING
StarCraft II



DANE "BARKSKIN" REMENDES
I've managed to get through all my years thus far without losing one or both of my hands. That's been an incredibly important factor in my continued gaming, and I'd like for it to stay this way..

CURRENTLY PLAYING
Thief



DELANO "DELANO" CUZZUCOLI
Mods, of course. I'm a total mod whore. I still play the likes of *C&C3*, *Half-Life 2* and even ancients like classic *Doom* simply for their mods.

CURRENTLY PLAYING
Starbound



GEOFF "GEOMETRIX" BURROWS
It's a security blanket. Gaming has just become part of my life, not having it there would feel weird. But when something new comes along that tries something special, it re-ignites that passion, and so the wheel continues to turn.

CURRENTLY PLAYING
Many games that aren't *Titanfall* :(



MATT "SAND_STORM" FICK
It's my job to find new games for my family to play, so I need to play everything to find recommendations. Like a pioneer. Or a test-dummy.

CURRENTLY PLAYING
Tomb Raider, *DayZ* and the rest of my backlog.

▶ mini review

Fable Anniversary

peter Molyneux, creative mind behind the likes of *Populous*, *Black & White*, and *Fable*, has the habit of over-promising on his games. He wasn't always like that, but as time goes on his delusions seem to have grown and, subsequently, the under-delivery of his games has grown too. All of this naysaying is really just to give you a bit of perspective, really, as to why the first *Fable* was so gosh-darn lovely, and why, if you haven't played it, then this remake is just for you.

Built on the Unreal Engine and brought up to current/last/whatever-gen visual spec, *Fable Anniversary* is exactly the same core game as the original *Fable*, with the added quests from *The Lost Chapters* DLC which

appeared on the PC re-release some years ago. Considering that many people likely never played the original *Fable*, the lack of any additional content is excusable, but thankfully the game's interface and control scheme has been given an overhaul to behave well on Xbox 360 controllers (the original was released on the first Xbox, which had a somewhat unconventional button layout), but it has to be said that the updated inventory/map/quest interface is rather on the sluggish side.

-Geometrix



90 *If you enjoy plenty of action and humour with your light RPGing, then Fable Anniversary is a must-play. This updated version is perfect for anyone who missed the first couple of boats.*

HEARD AT THE OFFICE...

"I don't care how many penises are in that show, Spartacus is too violent!"
- Cheryl



MICHAEL "REDTIDE" JAMES
I was going to say Lara Croft, but the reality is I'm stuck in a pattern of playing the latest shooter each year for most of the year, I don't really know why and I can't seem to stop.

CURRENTLY PLAYING
Battlefield 4 :(



MIKLOS "MIKITO707" SZECSEI
Escapism. That's pretty much it really. I like seeing the technological changes in games as well, but really it all comes down to the escapism.

CURRENTLY PLAYING
Diablo III after the big patch and changes



MIKTAR "MIKTAR" DRACON
I'm not really any good at anything else. Growing up, all I cared about was gaming. It's still all I care about.

CURRENTLY PLAYING
Dark Souls II, Diablo III, Risk of Rain, Bravely Default, TxK, Banished, Guild Wars 2



NEO "SHOCKG" SIBEKO
Gaming is fun. As a result of technological advancement, the narrative has become much stronger and the experience so much more engaging. More often than not gaming beats movies for escapism.

CURRENTLY PLAYING
The Walking Dead



TARRYN "AZIMUTH" VAN DER BYL
I hate leaving stuff unfinished, and somehow I have this entire shelf of unfinished games. And achievements. Mostly the achievements.

CURRENTLY PLAYING
Titanfall!

▶ mini review

Dragon Ball Z: Battle of Z

Not helped by its awkward name, *Dragon Ball Z: Battle of Z* struggles to find its audience. It tries to shake up the formula of previous games by implementing a team-based, MOBA-like fighting system. Unfortunately it feels like a mess of half-baked and poorly implemented features that do an injustice to the source material. The biggest offender is the storyline, which is mangled and disjointed for no good reason, so expect to see characters popping up in the wrong fights often (even if they should have been dead by then).

The gameplay feels like a stripped-down brawler that lacks the subtleties and required skills of a real fighter or MOBA. Your AI team is difficult to coordinate, most fights can drag on for too long, and unfortunately there is no local multiplayer. The main focus is online play, which offers slightly more thrills than solo. Players can join up

with others for team battles or a chaotic eight-player free-for-all. Design-wise, the menu sound effects are jarring and there is no in-fight music. The character models are ugly compared to the rather pretty environments, the lip-syncing is awful and each fight is weakly connected to the next by boring cut-scenes.

A terrible story, shallow controls and lack of local-multiplayer make this game difficult to recommend. It tries to be a *DBZ* MOBA, but there are better examples of each out there. While you might find yourself caught up in an exciting moment, most entertainment is short lived.

- Sand_Storm



56 *DBZ: BoZ may have some nostalgic value and unique gameplay, but the boring fights and poor design make this for serious fans/masochists only. If you want a good DBZ game, play Budokai 3 instead.*

PLATFORMS / 360 / PC / PS3

REVIEWED ON / PS3

GENRE / Action adventure

DEVELOPER / Mercurysteam

AGE RATING / 18

MULTIPLAYER / Local > None Online > None

PUBLISHER / Konami

WEBSITE / www.konami-castlevania.com

DISTRIBUTOR / Ster Kinekor Entertainment

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2

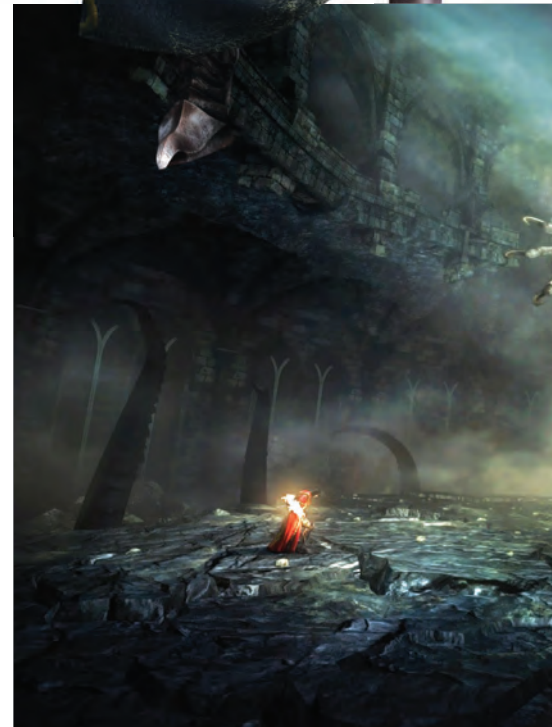
Gabriel is back, but he's looking a little pale

in 2010, Konami and developer Mercurysteam reimagined the *Castlevania* series and brought us an entirely new story arc subtitled *Lords of Shadow*. Taking creative licence with the pre-existing lore, Mercurysteam created a new action adventure game in the IP. *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow* was a relative commercial success, going on to ship over a million copies in Western territories. Despite the game borrowing heavily from other games in the genre, *Lords of Shadow* netted itself a considerable fan base. The cliffhanger ending ensured that those fans were kept eager to see how Gabriel Belmont's tale would end – an eagerness that would have to endure four years for a sequel. Sadly, that sequel is a frustrating ride.

Lords of Shadow 2 picks up right from where the first game ended. Gabriel is now Dracula, and together with Zobek (voiced once again by Patrick Stewart) the two set

out to locate Satan's acolytes in an attempt to stop Hell's frontman from entering the mortal world. It's a very drab plotline that's little more than a vehicle for a series of boss fights and extended exploration of the expansive game world. Luckily there are a number of sub-plots that are far more captivating, but that are unfortunately left with very little in the way of closure by the time the credits roll. It's a pity, because the divergent *Castlevania* lore that Mercurysteam has created is rich and enticing, but feels largely unexplored by this sequel. Those hoping for overall closure to Gabriel's trilogy (the side-scrolling *Castlevania: Mirror of Fate* acted as the second game in this reimagining) are going to be left disappointed: the game's ending fizzles and pops with a largely anticlimactic end boss battle that does little to round off the narrative.

Gameplay remains largely unaltered from the first *Lords of Shadow*, with the exception of Gabriel's new vampire powers and two new weapons: the Void Sword and the Combat Claws, both of which replace the original game's Light and Shadow Magic. The Void Sword leaches life from enemies, and the Chaos Claws are used to break through enemy armour. The primary weapon, the Blood Whip, plays almost identically to the Combat Cross found in the first *Lords of Shadow*. Each of these three weapons has an

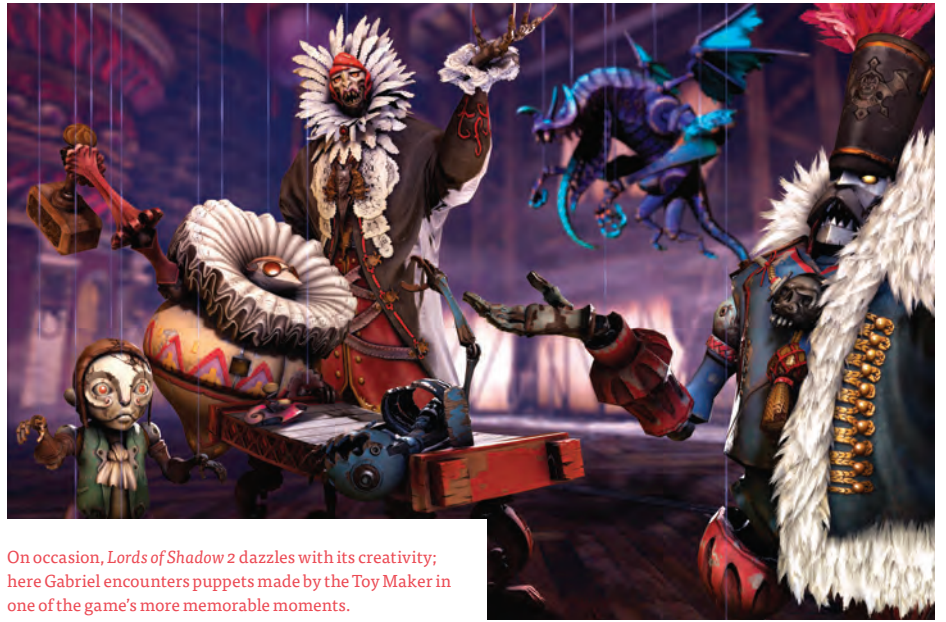


extensive skill tree to unlock, but a number of those skills will look very familiar to fans of the first game. In effect, the game's combat system remains unaltered, which is a good thing considering the first game's combat made for a solid action experience.

One-shot magic items return and with a healthy dollop of creativity; the Seal of Alastor, for example, unlocks the entire skill tree for a limited time, but there's also this elaborate lore tied to the item which fits perfectly with the world of the game.

And this is where a sizable amount of frustration comes in: *Lords of Shadow 2* has moments of stunning design decisions and incredible imagination. Then the converse applies: there are portions of the game that are so utterly dull and broken that it almost feels like you're playing two different games.

The events of *Lords of Shadow 2* take place in two realities: the main plotline plays out in a dreary modern day city that's devoid



On occasion, *Lords of Shadow 2* dazzles with its creativity; here Gabriel encounters puppets made by the Toy Maker in one of the game's more memorable moments.



Boss fights are a mixed bag; the encounter against the twisted form of the three sisters Euryale, Stheno, and Medusa (pictured) is one of the better ones.



of any life; it's a cookie-cutter game setting that feels completely out of place in the *Castlevania* IP and brings with it gameplay mechanics (like turning into rats to scurry past invincible guards that kill you on sight) that are uninspired. In stark contrast to this are the sequences that play out in the ancient castle that Dracula called home a long time ago. Here is where the creativity and spectacle that imbued the first *Lords of Shadow* can still be found. Furthermore, the sections of the game set in the City of the Damned are just as interesting and full of imaginative enemies and amazing visuals. Unfortunately, the majority of the game plays out in the awful modern day city, and I found myself pushing through just so I could get to the next sequence set in the castle or City of the Damned. The clear divide in the game's aesthetics, atmosphere and gameplay is actually quite startling. As a result, there is a broken sense of narrative and gameplay flow, and it reeks of a tumultuous development cycle.

Still, there's no denying the game has some truly memorable moments. One such moment, set in Carmilla's lair, sees you step out onto

a balcony overlooking the rooftops of the gothic castle; a storm flashes in the distance, and a full moon shines brightly, illuminating the snowflakes that dance in the wind. It's in the atmospheric moments like these when *Lords of Shadow 2* sings, but those moments are too few and are juxtaposed with some of the dreariest sections I've encountered in an action game for a long time. Furthermore, the game has some tremendously frustrating portions that are so far removed from the core gameplay experience that they feel like tacked-on ideas that should have been left on the cutting room floor. One of these moments involves you having to avoid Pan's demented brother Agreus by keeping off piles of noisy leaves. It's a poor attempt at a puzzle sequence, seemingly impossible, and very nearly ruined the entire game for me.

Lords of Shadow 2, much like its antihero, has lost its soul and whatever else it was that made the game feel vibrant and alive. **NAG**
- Mikit0707

60 About five months ago I wrote a feature for NAG Online called "My top five games of this generation"; the original *Lords of Shadow* was in my top five games list. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend that game to anyone with opposable thumbs, and it breaks my heart to have to say that I cannot recommend you play this sequel.

PLUS / Incredible music / Very good voice acting / Solid combat / Some truly memorable moments

MINUS / Lots of questionable design / Some cheap boss fights / Convoluted level design / Some truly dull moments

PLATFORMS / 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

REVIEWED ON / 360

GENRE / First-person stealth / action

DEVELOPER / Eidos Montreal

AGE RATING / 16

MULTIPLAYER / Local > None Online > None

PUBLISHER / Square Enix

WEBSITE / www.thiefgame.com

DISTRIBUTOR / Megarom

Thief

Living in the shadow of giants

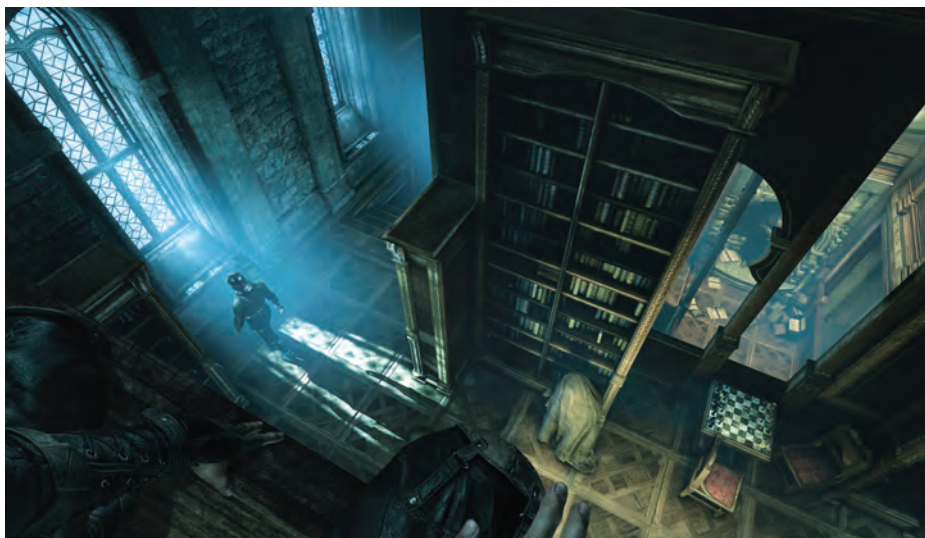
thief is an important word in gaming. Saying it out loud immediately strikes the flame of nostalgia in anyone whose life in the late '90s and early '00s mainly consisted of sacrificing eyesight to countless hours spent staring at a CRT monitor taking in the digital delights offered by the early days of 3D gaming. *Thief: The Dark Project* defined an entire genre, and its overwhelming influence is still felt in many of today's games. The *Thief* trilogy is practically the definition of cult classic, and if you've ever found yourself awkwardly staring at a wooden beam thinking "man, I wish I had a rope arrow right about now", then you no doubt count yourself amongst the legions of fans *Thief* has generated since its debut nearly 16 years ago.

So I kind of feel sorry for this reboot. There's no bargaining with nostalgia, and it's inevitable that fans will spend years picking apart every flaw apparent in Eidos Montreal's stealthy excursion. No, it's not nearly as overtly impressive (nor as important) a game as its forebears. But it does a great many things right, and even occasionally skirts on the fringe of greatness. And if you give it a little

leeway to stand on its own, it's a fantastic stealth game.

First though, there's the story to contend with. It's utter garbage, a hopeless mess of shoddy writing, idiotic pantomime villains and incomprehensible plot points that (almost blissfully) lead to nowhere. There's an overpowering sense that somebody insisted the story be "edgy" and "gritty" and other buzzwords, but it's poorly handled. It's best to just ignore it really. You are Garrett (or a new version thereof, at least), and you like wrapping your fingers around shinies that don't belong to you. You should leave the narrative at that.

It's a meaty game, packed with nooks to explore and crannies to loot. Between story missions, you're presented with The City: an open-world playground that you're free to explore at your leisure. There are optional side jobs to pursue here, in two varieties. The first are quick mini-missions that see you doing everything from disarming traps in offending apartments to stealing offensively valuable hand mirrors from daughters with dads who double as pimps. The second involves two



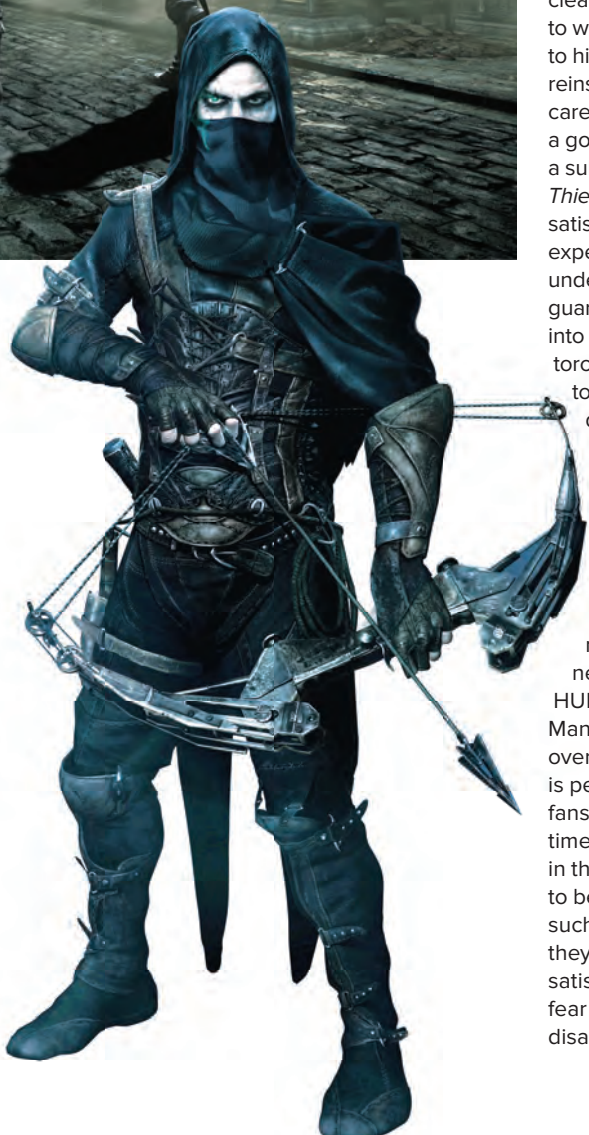
The new swoop movement is particularly gratifying, letting you rapidly dash from shadow to shadow. It feels so good that it's practically cheating.

ongoing sets of more intricate jobs containing multiple missions – neatly packaged secondary stories that prove quite gripping.

Aside from those, you'll spend the majority of your time in The City tinkering with the environment, creating new routes for yourself and finding alternate ways to get around when you're not on the hunt for scattered valuables. Flaws in the design peek through here, because not only is Garrett's movement intrinsically clunky, but the environment is aggressively designed around the game's insistence on *Assassin's Creed*-style one-button traversal. It means you can't jump unless the game deems it's done in the correct context, and it makes environment traversal in a game where you're supposed to be an agile, free-roaming burglar disappointingly oppressive. You get used to it though, just like you'll have to get used to the fact that rope arrows are now nothing more than puzzle-solving items only usable in very specific instances. Unlike with previous games in the series, Eidos Montreal clearly isn't confident enough in their design to allow you to travel wherever you want, however you want.

The main missions are excellent. I love

As you progress you'll gather various upgrades and thieving tools, like a razor that lets you slice paintings out of their frames, and a wrench to access alternate routes.



their intricate design, even though they're clearly more linear than we're accustomed to with this series, despite obvious attempts to hide that fact. When they do loosen the reins, they offer plenty of opportunity for careful sneaking and daring thievery. There's a good number of missions too, all taking a substantial amount of time to complete. *Thief's* stealth gameplay is inherently satisfying if it's the sort of precise, methodical experience you're eager for. There's that undeniable rush of excited panic when a guard you hadn't noticed suddenly bursts into the room carrying a darkness-stealing torch, forcing you to scramble out a window to avoid detection. Or when you manage to quietly snatch all the gleaming treasures along a guard's patrol route without them ever knowing you were there.

While I do wish that enemies were perhaps a bit less dense on the standard difficulty level, it's almost comical how much the developers allow you to tweak the difficulty to match your tastes whenever you start a new game. You're able to disable various HUD elements, and there's even an Iron Man mode where if you die, your game is over permanently. Turning off Focus mode is perhaps the most obvious change series fans will make, because it allows you to slow time and highlight everything of importance in the game world, which you may consider to be a bit of a hack if you like to discover such things for yourself. It's remarkable that they've added in enough difficulty options to satisfy absolutely everyone, no doubt out of fear of rabid fans just waiting to splash their disapproval all over the Internet.

Beyond all that, there are certain parts of the game that feel sloppy. It often feels like the whole game lacks a defining personality, especially when traversing The City. It's a lifeless environment, scarcely populated by cardboard non-hostiles who somehow make the city feel emptier than it would were the streets actually empty. It's also buggy in frustrating ways. On one occasion an event failed to trigger, which made it impossible for me to move past a guard without being detected, forcing me to load from a much earlier save to slip by unseen. NPC audio has a nasty habit of dropping out and becoming illegible, which is a no-no in a game where atmosphere is king. Despite its flaws, *Thief* is engaging. And even though it can't quite match the splendour of the original trilogy, it scratches the same itch. **NAG**

- Barksin

84 *The answer is no, it's simply not as good of a game as its beloved predecessors are. That said, Thief is an admirable attempt at rebooting this franchise. It successfully captures the spirit of the series, but stumbles too often to ever truly rival their greatness. Nevertheless, you should play it. It's lovely.*

PLUS / Intricate level design / Stealth gameplay is effortlessly fun

MINUS / World lacks character / Terrible narrative

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| PLATFORMS / 360 / PC / XBO | REVIEWED ON / XBO | GENRE / Third-person shooter | DEVELOPER / PopCap Games |
| AGE RATING / 7 | MULTIPLAYER / Local > 2 players Online > 24 players | PUBLISHER / EA | |
| WEBSITE / www.pvzgardenwarfare.com | | | DISTRIBUTOR / Apex interactive |



Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare

A horticulture of violence

One of the perks of playing games as part of your job means never having enough time to invest in just one to develop a real addiction to it (or any real skill in it, but I'll totally deny that). Except for *Team Fortress 2*. For about six months between 2007 and 2008, I, uh, might've missed some deadlines because, you know, "just one more game, then I'll type one or two sentences or words or letters, and then I'll reward my very, very hard work with one more game". And then play another game anyway, because the server is already loading the next map and I CAN'T QUIT NOW because I was secretly never planning to quit anyway. Remember, it's technically only a problem if you acknowledge it's a problem.

Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare is very much like *Team Fortress 2*. And not just because it's almost exactly the same game, but... actually, no, that's pretty much it, except *Garden Warfare* also introduces a lot of improvements on the other's own exceedingly compelling formula. Despite some asymmetry between the Plants and Zombies teams, both have their own versions of medics, heavies, and soldiers; the most obvious divergence is that Plants have the sniper, while Zombies

get the engineer, and there's no dedicated demolitions class. It's a subtle but significant change from *Team Fortress 2* that makes gameplay somewhat less predictable, much more volatile, and entirely precludes those tedious 5n1p3r W4rZ that ultimately spoiled the fun stuff forever.

Because, more than anything else, *Garden Warfare* is loads of fun. Where I'd previously almost exclusively played only one or two classes in *Team Fortress 2*, I'm constantly swapping between classes in this game – and even though both the Plants and Zombies teams have medic, heavy, and soldier classes, each one is substantially different from the other, and plays in its own special way. The Zombie medic – or Scientist – is able to teleport short distances, and is armed with a close-range, max-damage Goo Gun. He can also drop a Healing Station that regenerates hit points to nearby comrades. The Plant team's Sunflower, meanwhile, has boosted movement speed and a sort of healing beam that locks onto a single ally at a time, plus a rapid-fire Sun Pulse gun and a devastating rechargeable death-ray. Depending on who's playing what on both sides, the two teams must employ their own, distinctive strategies to win.

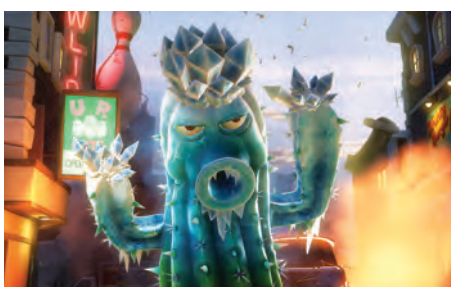
While this might easily have resulted in a lopsided mess and the otherwise inevitable compost heap of complaints about this, that, and the other thing being scandalously over-powered and/or under-powered and/or disempowered, however, everything in *Garden Warfare* just works. I must've clocked over 15 hours or so by now, and no team or class combination has a fundamental advantage over the other, even in the game's most absurdly chaotic moments (and those are in abundance). Despite the sophisticated intricacies and nuances of the game, moreover, it's also extremely accessible for both run-and-gun beginners and more tactical veteran gamers. That's quite an extraordinary accomplishment on PopCap's part.

What's not such an extraordinary accomplishment, though, is the inclusion of only three core modes at launch. That's Team Vanquish (deathmatch), Gardens & Graveyards (an objective-based mode similar



STUCK ON YOU

Completing matches and in-game challenges earns you coins, which you can cash in for virtual sticker packs. These unlock random additional goodies like alternate class loadouts (an electrified Cactus class, for example), deployable potted plants and infantry units, and loads of cosmetic gear. They're also available in several types, with the cheapest unlocking only basic reinforcements, and the more expensive unlocking weapon upgrades, and sometimes even whole class loadouts in one go. There are approximately 48 zillion things to collect in total, making this one of the most instantly compelling unlock systems ever – come for the 'splosions, stay for the super rare pizza accessories. Sooner or later (but almost definitely sooner), the sticker packs will probably also be sold for real money as in-game microtransactions, but you'll get so many coins just by playing the game that any worry about it is completely irrelevant.





Something spineless something something prickly situation something.



Your assets have been frozen.



to *Battlefield's* Rush mode), and Garden Ops (the now standard-with-every-purchase horde mode). There are also “classic” variants of Team Vanquish and Gardens & Graveyards that dump all customisations and upgrades, but I’m not sure those really count and I’m totally sure nobody plays them, anyway. More modes will doubtless be released later as DLC (and, according to the dev’s Twitter account, for free), but for now it’s a bit of a disappointment. So too are the game’s intermittent glitches – sometimes the connection to EA’s servers on the title screen just hangs with zero actual network activity, necessitating a restart to fix it, and respawns can very occasionally get stuck for 20 seconds or more for no discernible reason, or simply not resolve properly and render you a sort of ghost on the field.

Don’t let the game’s zany aesthetics or “casual” legacy put you off – this is an ingenious and ambitious class-based multiplayer game that innovates in almost every aspect of the genre without getting bogged down with unnecessary complexity. Now please excuse me, because I’ve typed, like, a whole lot of words now and somewhere, a server is loading a new map and it’s time for my reward. Just one game, I promise, and then maybe one more.

- Azimuth

85 *Let’s not beet around the bush, but go out on a limb and till it like it is – if class-based mulchplayer games are your thing, you’ll moss definitely take a lichen to it. PEAS DON’T SHOOT MEEEEAAAARRRHHH.*

PLUS / COLLECT ALL THE STICKERS!!1 / Uniquely, wonderfully silly

MINUS / Only three modes / Some bugs

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| PLATFORMS / 360 / PS3 | REVIEWED ON / PS3 | GENRE / Action role-playing game | DEVELOPER / Square Enix / tri-Ace |
| AGE RATING / 16 | MULTIPLAYER / Local > None Online > None | PUBLISHER / Square Enix | |
| WEBSITE / www.lightningreturns.com | | | DISTRIBUTOR / Megarom |

Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII

All things must end

If I were to be accused of Stockholm syndrome* with regards to the *Final Fantasy XIII* trilogy I'd have a hard time denying it. Initially I thought *Final Fantasy XIII* was a horrible cliché-ridden teen drama pie with only a single tasty morsel in the centre, namely the "Paradigm Shift" combat system. I really liked the combat, and that kept me going until the eventual and unsatisfying conclusion. When *Final Fantasy XIII-2* came along, I approached it like a beaten animal. Wary, untrusting. But it was kind to me, gave me an improved form of the Paradigm Shift combat system and even included a mild monster capturing mechanic. The plot was still all over the place, beating me with a stick every time

I showed interest. But it had interesting time-travel elements and mechanics, reminding me of the tender *Chrono Trigger*. *Final Fantasy XIII-2*'s ending didn't resolve anything, but by then I was too numb to care. Or perhaps, too invested. I wanted to see it through. Along comes *Final Fantasy XIII-3*.

It's difficult to place *Lightning Returns* anywhere on the "Japanese role-playing game" scale. There's only one party member. Combat is real-time, not turn-based. You don't gain levels through battle. The only way to improve your stats is to complete quests. And then there's the plot. It's linear from start to end, set across multiple days, but repeating, with multiple layers depending on where you are and when you are when you're there. The closest comparison is *Dead Rising*: you replay the same set days over and over, gaining both statistical advantages (you keep everything through a "reset") and knowledge each time. Successive attempts go faster, you get more done, and more is revealed to you.

Lightning Returns is ambitious, overly so. It tries to do so much with its ageing and ill-suited engine that you need to forget about smooth framerates. The day/night cycle affects everything. People move about on a



It's all about the outfits. The weapon / clothing / accessory combination determines your natural skills, strengths and weaknesses.



schedule, certain vendors only appear in the mornings, important quest characters may only appear at night, and so on. Time flows quickly too, so if you don't get everything you wanted to do done within the day, you might miss out on something until all your days are up and you start over. This *Majora's Mask* style gameplay isn't for everyone, it can carry with it quite a bit of anxiety. But only if you stress about it. *Lightning Returns* asks the player to go through a *Groundhog Day* style loop, over and over, until the player knows what to focus on, who's important, and what it's all about. **NAG**

- Miktar

70 The time-based nature of *Lightning Returns* isn't for everyone. Just like *Dead Rising*, you have to play through the limited number of days multiple times if you want to succeed on the whole. The real-time combat works, for the most part, and all plot threads are tidied up and concluded. A decent endcap for the trilogy.

PLUS / Acceptable story conclusion / Interesting game systems / Some funny moments

MINUS / Horrible framerate issues / Cheesy dialogue

* "A psychological phenomenon in which hostages express empathy and sympathy and have positive feelings toward their captors, sometimes to the point of defending and identifying with them." - Wikipedia

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| PLATFORMS / Android / iOS | REVIEWED ON / Android |
| AGE RATING / TBA | GENRE / Arcade |
| MULTIPLAYER / Local > None Online > None | |
| WEBSITE / www.bytesizedstudios.com | |
| DEVELOPER / ByteSized Studios | PUBLISHER / ByteSized Studios |
| DISTRIBUTOR / Apple App Store / Google Play | |

Atomic Fusion: Particle Collider

You'll be in your element with this atomic arcade game

It's no small task making chemistry appealing to non-students, but this small indie arcade game is an amiable effort.

In *Atomic Fusion: Particle Collider*, you'll play the part of a lowly photon as it absorbs energy and endeavours to become greater than the sum of its parts. Though it may sound like rocket science, the premise is deceptively simple: the photon in question is guided around a subatomic void with the player's one hand, while the energy field surrounding it can be switched between matter and antimatter with the player's second hand. Beams of energy radiate all around the playing field, and it's up to you to make sure you have the corresponding matter type when your photon makes contact.

Your quest begins easily enough, but matters (ha) quickly become complicated as you get bombarded by differing waves of energy and your margin of error rapidly decreases. Moving around limited space and quickly switching your energy types make for an extremely frantic, fast-paced experience that is reminiscent of the most unforgiving bullet-hell shooters.

Accompanying the hectic action is an appropriately thumping, bass-laden electro soundtrack. It suits the neon colours and flashing lights of the game's visuals perfectly, and between levels you'll be treated to assorted chemistry-related trivia as your once-insignificant proton evolves into more powerful elements straight from the Periodic Table.

Though later stages will probably have you leaving dents in your screen from the rapid finger-taping, it's a perfect coffee-break game that will absorb you and even expand your knowledge a bit. Get it. **NAG**

- Delano



WHEREVER YOU'RE GOING, **WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED**



80

A crazy, colourful, fast and frantic arcade game that'll make your fingers sore while filling your head with all sorts of interesting chemistry-related trivia.

PLUS / Fast-paced and frantic / Educational trivia nuggets are good

MINUS / Lack of variety in the levels / Gets a bit too frantic later on

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| PLATFORMS / PS3 | REVIEWED ON / PS3 | GENRE / Japanese role-playing game | DEVELOPER / Bandai Namco Games |
| AGE RATING / 12 | MULTIPLAYER / Local > 4 players Online > None | PUBLISHER / Bandai Namco Games | |
| WEBSITE / talesofgame.com | | DISTRIBUTOR / Megarom | |

Tales of Symphonia Chronicles

“Only the darkness knows...”

First appearing in NAG exactly nine years ago, *Tales of Symphonia* has returned to our pages. Bundled with its sequel, and revamped in HD, series newcomers and veterans will find a lot to enjoy here.

The main draw of this bundle is obviously *Tales of Symphonia*. If you've never played a game in the *Tales of* series, you're going to be surprised by what's on offer. Despite wearing the JRPG badge, *Symphonia* has a tactical yet exciting real-time combat system that is completely different to the genre standard. The story feels familiar and a little cliché: boy and his friends save the world. However, it's presented better than that with good writing and humour and takes a fairly dark turn early on. Character is one of the strong points



Beneath those pretty lights is a great combat system.



Whatever you do, don't ask the robot for a back scratch.



in *Symphonia*, and your protagonist Lloyd Irving is very likable, charismatic and totally unlike the miserable, self-loathing JRPG protagonists we're used to.

Visually, the port shows improvement over its 2004 counterpart. The anime artwork is crisp, the backgrounds look great and the colours are much more vibrant than before. One problem with the visuals is that they're... old. Graphics aren't everything, but some of the character models have muddy textures that clash with the otherwise good visuals. The animations in combat are fluid and detailed, but in conversation they are jerky and robotic.

The game can be unforgiving, especially in the early-game when you're flung into combat without proper tutorials. Often you'll learn something valuable (like health item crafting) only to scream: "Now you tell me!" Worse is the archaic save system, where death takes you back to your last fixed save point, even if it was on the other side of a novel of unskippable dialogue.

Symphonia is definitely the belle of the bundle compared to its sequel, *Dawn of the New World*. Kicking off after the events of the previous game, this 2008 Wii port improves animations and refines the combat, but falls short of its predecessor. For one, your protagonist (Emil Castagnier) is whiny, pathetic and difficult to relate to. The story meanders, and you never get a sense that

you're getting stronger because power is simply dished out to you as a plot device. It's also hindered by a fixed camera that often loses you behind walls. And to combat the confusion of the first game, you are bombarded by text-only tutorial dumps. It's still a decent game, and pretty enough to look at, but the unlikable hero and same archaic save-system bring it down.

Tales of Symphonia Chronicles offers great value. The two games will keep you very busy, but it's clear the first game will be the one you remember. **NAG**

- Sand_Storm

72 Recommended for JRPG and action-RPG fans alike, this bundle is a highly entertaining way to get into the *Tales of* series. The lacklustre sequel brings the score down, but if you can ignore some of the old-fashioned stylings, there's plenty here to hold your attention.

PLUS / Fun combat / Value for money / Entertaining characters (mostly) / Different to JRPG norm

MINUS / Poor sequel / Clunky animations / Poorly handled tutorials

WIN ONE OF FOUR

CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW 2 DRACULA'S TOMB PREMIUM EDITIONS

TO ENTER THE COMPETITION SMS THE
KEYWORD **CASTLEVANIA** TO **33110**

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 30 April 2014

DLC - 'DRACULA PACK'

CHARACTER SKIN: 'ARMOURED DRACULA'



IN GAME POWER-UP: 'RELIC RUNE PACK'



CHARACTER SKIN: 'DARK DRACULA'



COLLECTOR'S
EDITION
TOMB BOX



CASTLEVANIA T-SHIRT
(NOT PICTURED)

LIMITED EDITION
ART BOOK



EXCLUSIVE
STEELBOOK



COPY OF
CASTLEVANIA
LORDS OF
SHADOW 2 GAME



THREE EXCLUSIVE
10CM FIGURINES
DESIGNED BY
NEIL GOOGE





HARDWIRED

by Neo Sibeko

Welcome to the new and better version of the NAG hardware section. Some things have changed in how we test hardware, but the changes are definitely for the better. Overall, it's about bringing simpler but more informative reviews to you, the readers.

With that said, some of what you should be aware of when looking to buy gaming hardware may sound obvious, but you'd be surprised how this is often misunderstood. Obviously budget is important, but even before a budget is considered, one needs to figure out exactly what it is you intend to do with your PC. For instance, in the modern gaming environment, PC gaming is increasingly becoming an expensive gaming platform. There is simply no point in trying to build a gaming PC for R5,000 because what you'll walk away with is not a PC that will give you a satisfying gaming experience. In fact, for the most part, you will get nothing but an office machine that is anything but pleasant to play games on.

If that is the kind of budget you have then do seriously consider buying a console instead, be it the last generation units or the newer ones. Any one of them will give you a much better gaming experience than anything you could build for that kind of budget. This also applies for PCs that are anything less than R8,000 as well, especially if you're looking to buy the entire machine with the display and the peripherals on that budget.

So your budget, at least for 2014, when building a PC should be in the region of R10,000. It seems like a lot of money, but for that kind of spend you'll not be worrying about system specifications, and you'll be able to play games at 1080p which is what the minimum resolution for PC gaming should be. Anything less, then you may as well be using a console. To that end, after you've decided on how much you're willing to spend, read our reviews for more than just benchmark results. These are very important, but not for every component. A good example is motherboards. There is a very valid reason why you should choose the best motherboard you can for a specific price bracket, but be wary of being swayed by SLI or CrossFire capability. For the vast majority of people, these multi-GPU solutions are just not worth the cost and potential compatibility issues. Unless you're playing in active 3D or with a multi-monitor setup, SLI or CrossFire is the last thing you should be concerning yourself with.

Motherboard vendors would love to sell you this as a feature, but consider that even the most basic motherboards based on the Z87 platform for example has native SLI and CrossFire support. This is simply by way

of having at least 20 PCIe lanes available from the PCH logic within the CPUs. In fact, this is the case for all CPUs these days or at least ones that are gaming appropriate. What should concern you however is the audio element of the motherboard, its connectivity options (USB and LAN and the like), and most importantly the quality of the motherboard in question. No single motherboard will give you a gaming advantage over another, but there is a qualitative difference between a low budget R1,200 motherboard and one that costs twice as much. You may not have experienced it yet, but most cheap motherboards will leave you susceptible to coil whine/general electronic component noise and most importantly offer next to zero protection against power surges, brown outs and spikes. For instance if your PC gets struck by lightning, at the least your LAN port and controller is rendered useless, but if you bought a cheap motherboard chances are you'll lose your DRAM, CPU, graphics card, disk drives or perhaps even all of these components.

The reason we run benchmarks is to check that all is operating as it should be, but performance variations within 3 or even 5 percent should not be a concern. Synthetic tests show such variations in numbers, but for gaming these differences will translate into a 1fps difference at most. So it is the quality of the motherboard that should be most important to you and its relevant features. This qualitative aspect applies to PSUs as well. Do not be concerned about the power rating only but the quality of the PSU. If you're buying a PSU for R500, then the R400 you're saving on a R900 model may end up costing you far more in the near future, in fact it most certainly will.

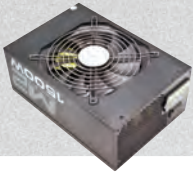
For graphics cards, all the above is important, but frame rates mean the most here. Different vendors will use different components, memory, coolers and PCBs, but for the most part, the actual GPU is what should concern you. If possible always buy the factory overclocked parts, especially at the lower end of graphics cards. This will make the difference between a playable and an unplayable gaming experience.

With that said, hopefully you can read the hardware reviews with a better and more complete understanding than before. **NAG**

Neo. Our resident hardware genius, who used to live in South Africa but is now based in Taiwan because it took hardware too long to get here (or something like that). He has basically lost half his body weight since we last saw him, probably thanks to eating rice and tentacle soup. He is the smartest person we know when it comes to computer hardware and we know a lot of people.

PSU

Cooler Master Silent Pro M2
1500Watt PSU
R3,999 / www.cooler-master.com



GRAPHICS

GIGABYTE GV-N78TGHZ-3GD
R11,799 / www.gigabyte.com



OS DRIVE

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



STORAGE DRIVE

WD Black 4TB FZEX
R3,299 / www.wdc.com



CHASSIS

Corsair Obsidian 900D
R3,999 / www.corsair.com



DISPLAY

ASUS VG248QE
R6,099 / www.asus.com



KEYBOARD

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



COOLER

Cooler Master Nepton 280L
R1,499 / www.cooler-master.com



MOUSE

Razer Ouroboros
R1,399 / www.razerzone.com



MOUSE MAT

Razer Ironclad
R599 / www.razerzone.com



SOUND

Creative Sound Blaster ZxR
R3,499 / www.soundblaster.com



HEADPHONES

Plantronics GameCom Commander
R4,569 / www.plantronics.com



INTEL

INTEL CORE I7 4960X
R14,103 / www.intel.com

ASUS RAMPAGE IV EXTREME BLACK EDITION
R7,999 / www.asus.com

CORSAIR DOMINATOR PLATINUM 2,666MHZ C10 16GB KIT
R6,999 / www.corsair.com

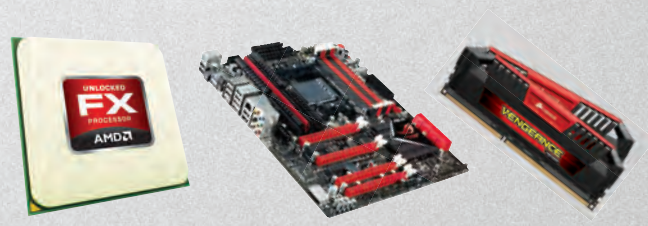


AMD

AMD FX 8350
R3,099 / www.amd.com

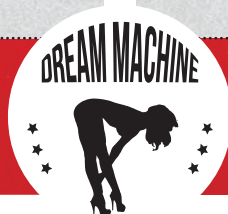
ASUS CROSSHAIR V FORMULA-Z
R3,999 / www.asus.com

CORSAIR VENGEANCE PRO 2,666MHZ C11 16GB KIT
R4,999 / www.corsair.com



INTEL DREAM MACHINE

R75,622



AMD DREAM MACHINE

R58,618

GIGABYTE GTX 750 Ti OC

VERSUS

MSI GTX 750 Ti GAMING

In a rather odd move back in February, NVIDIA introduced their first Maxwell powered GPU. If you're not versed with what Maxwell is, it is the successive GPU family over Kepler, which powered the 600 and 700 series GPUs save for the 750. Maxwell debuted on the 28nm even though the target node was 20nm. However, NVIDIA took it upon themselves to try out the architecture on a proven and mature node, before risking it on an eight billion+ gate ASIC as appearing on the GTX 780 successor (as a result of when this was written, we were not allowed to give specifics on that particular GPU). Thus what you have here is the next generation NVIDIA GPU family which, as it turns out, isn't too different from what we have at present with the Kepler GPUs. In fact, Maxwell's number one purpose or sole purpose is increasing the performance per mm squared. Sounds like something we've heard from AMD in regards to their CPUs, but this time it actually does yield real results and dramatic gains in power consumption.

The GM107 (GeForce Maxwell SKU 107, (entry level)) GPU is actually smaller

than that which is found on the GTX 650 series (GK106). It also has fewer compute cores. From roughly 2.5 billion gates on the previous ASIC we find that GM107 houses around 1.8 billion. From a high level perspective or at least logically, the new GPU has more SM units but each one houses only 128 compute cores, instead of the 192 as found in the GK106 and the rest of the Kepler family. With that, the Texture addressing units have been reduced to 40 from the previous 64 while the front end raster units remain unchanged at 16. Memory configuration and bandwidth also remains unchanged via a 128-bit bus featuring 5.4GT/s for a rather small 86GB/s throughput. The compute cores on the new family, or rather the SM units, are a little more complicated than on the previous family, so a direct comparison in numbers alone is not valid. The raw mathematical performance when just factoring in numbers is still in favour of the GK106, however the GM107 is better able to extract the 1.3GLOPS it is capable of than the GK106 core.

All of these changes not only make for a

weaker GPU on paper, but one that is a lot smaller physically as well at 148mm squared compared to the 221mm before. Keep in mind that we are still dealing with TSMC's high performance 28nm process here.

However, despite all these changes, the GM107 GPU is a good bit faster than the outgoing GPU. In all gaming scenarios it is faster and especially in coin mining the GM107 matches AMD's efforts if not exceeding them a little.

TDP has been reduced dramatically as well, from 110W to a mere 60W for the reference models. That's almost half the power consumption, thus as far as performance per watt and performance per mm is concerned, this is the leading GPU on the market at present. With such a reduced power profile, there's no need for additional power via a 6-pin PCIe connector. The GPU can be powered by the PCIe slot directly. Obviously some models like the GIGABYTE one we have here use a power connector. For all intents and purposes however, this is not necessary. What follows, is a quick rundown between two graphics cards, powered by the new GPU.

GIGABYTE GTX 750 TI OC



FEATURES

The GIGABYTE card features Dual HDMI connectivity, thus you will be able to output to a full 4K resolution. The card has no VGA output, but houses two additional DVI outputs. One is dual-link and the other is analogue, to which you can use a converter to connect it to a VGA monitor. In addition, the GIGABYTE card uses a 6-pin PCIe connector for additional power. This isn't necessary, because the clock speeds are not improved and there is no meaningful addition to the card's capabilities as it never draws more power than what the PCIe slot can provide on its own. (With the reference BIOS at least).

PERFORMANCE

Given just how well the GM107 cores overclock, the factory overclock on the GIGABYTE card is minimal. Still, you'll be able to play most games if not all of them at 1080p provided you use no AA and keep the detail levels at low to medium. Some games can be played at high detail levels, but those are not demanding games to begin with. Certainly nothing like *Crysis 3* should be attempted.

OVERCLOCKING

Overclocking on this card, much like on the MSI card is limited to the card's total power draw limit. You can easily push the slider right to the end to achieve a real clock of 1,300MHz and game away with no issues. The memory also overclocks to a respectable 1.6GHz, which is a lot more than the 1.35GHz it is shipped at. Once again, you may even be able to go to 1.7GHz, but that will depend on the sample. What is for sure though, is that all cards should be able to do 1.5GHz since all the memory is rated at 1.5GHz anyway.

VALUE

This card costs just as much as the reference card. There's no reason to buy the reference one when you can have this one with just about everything about it being superior. We still don't get the point of the power connector, but other than that it is as cheap a GTX 750 Ti as you're likely going to find. However, you'll get the GIGABYTE component quality, 4K capability and a factory overclock that can be further improved upon.

MSI GAMING
N750 TI TF
2GD5/OC



FEATURES

This card has no additional features over the reference model. It will not give you 4K output via any display but that should not be an issue. If you can afford a 4K display, you should not be buying a GTX 750 Ti in the first place. Other than that, this is a standard card with an impressive Twin Frozr cooler which keeps things under the 50°C much like the other card.

The MSI offering has a dual BIOS feature, which is supposed to offer UEFI and Legacy support. However we feel this is best used as a backup BIOS for those who might want to dabble in some overclocking. An odd thing to have on such a low-end card, but one we do appreciate.

PERFORMANCE

This card was outright faster than the competing card. It had a higher factory clock and we were able to push it to a comfortable 1,367 MHz on the core and 6GHz on the memory.

Once again, there was no adjustment in voltage or fan speed required. Even at the overclocked settings it stayed relatively cool at just over 52°C. Games obviously played a little better, within 2 to 3 fps faster. With such cards you'll want to get the most out of them so this factory overclock should come in handy.

OVERCLOCKING

As mentioned earlier, we were able to push this sample to 1,367MHz on the core and 6GHz on the memory. We have seen clock speeds on other GTX 750 Ti models go past the 1,400MHz mark and we've no doubt this card could do the same, BIOS allowing. The issue however is the limit that is imposed in the concerning power draw. Even with the BIOS unlocked, because this card does not feature a PCIe power connector, you'll end up causing some instability by drawing more power than the motherboard is able to provide. All of this aside, this is a good overclocking sample.

VALUE

This card costs more than the competing card. By how much exactly we couldn't tell you at the time of writing, but suffice to say it does cost more. It's bigger and performs well for what it is. We wish it was a little smaller as it would be ideal for these small Steam Box builds. However, even as it is, it's a great card that's worth taking a look at.

msi®

MSI recommends Windows 8.



INCREDIBLY THIN

World's thinnest and lightest 17" gaming notebook

MSI GS70 Stealth Pro powered by
Intel® Core™ i7 Processor



GS70 Stealth Pro

Top Player - Top Choice

steelseries
ENGINE

Customize every key or device to personalize your play style

XSplit
Gamecaster

The best recording and live streaming app for gamers

NVIDIA GeForce
GTX 870M
GTX 860M

The newest NVIDIA GeForce GTX 870M/860M graphics card



3 SSD RAID provides 15X faster than tradition HDD's speed

Killer™
E2200
GAME NETWORKING

The fastest lan solution for online gaming

<http://gaming.msi.com/>

Intel, the Intel logo, the Intel Inside logo and Intel Core are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries.

GIGABYTE P27K Gaming Notebook

Website / www.gigabyte.com

ERP / R19,299

Supplier / Rectron

SPECS

| | |
|---------------|---|
| CPU | Intel Core i7 4700HQ |
| GPU | NVIDIA GTX 765M 2GB |
| MEMORY | 16GB DDR3 |
| STORAGE | 256GB SSD (RAID 0) + 1TB Storage drive |
| OPTICAL DRIVE | DVD writer |
| GPU | NVIDIA GTX 765M 2GB |

Gaming notebooks have always had a tough time going about their purpose at a decent price. More so than desktops, many were limited by what technology could offer and as a result, desktop replacement machines in particular were always the worst. For the most part, this continues to be the case. Fortunately however, here we don't have a desktop replacement machine. The P27K is a simple gaming notebook, which is designed to be appealing in a gaming context, but also appropriate for use in a working environment.

In other words, it is not as vulgar as some units we've seen before. It's simple yet appealing aesthetic works and GIGABYTE has done a great job with it.

Like most 17.3" notebooks, the P27K is not light by any measure, as it tips the scales at 3.2kg. It is still lighter than many desktop replacement systems, but heavier than other competing products. That said, the weight distribution is great and it isn't particularly heavy on any one side.

Aesthetics aside, this notebook is primarily about performance and it must be said that disk performance is incredible. Thanks to the RAID 0 configuration, the machine is very snappy and there is no waiting for any program to open. From pressing the power button to the desktop, it takes a few seconds. You'll be hard pressed to find better disk performance from any notebook for any amount of money. We tested the RAID configuration and recorded scores of 947MB/s in sequential reads and 629MB/s in sequential writes. 4K (QD32) performance was equally brilliant at 471MB/s and 456MB/s respectively. To put this into perspective, there's not a single 2.5" SATA 6Gbps or SAS SSD you can buy that could deliver this kind of performance.

As with the P35K, the full HD screen is great, offering respectable viewing angles and consistent colour reproduction. It is one of the better panels on the market and certainly makes videos and games come



BENCHMARK RESULTS

PC Mark8 Creative Suite
(OpenCL accelerated): **3,732**
Battery time: 2H:49m: **45s**
3DMark FireStrike: **2,599**
Catzilla 1080p: **3,426**

alive. This would be an even better display had it been paired with a faster GPU in the form of the GTX 770M. The GTX 765M is an acceptable GPU, but just doesn't have the oomph to drive the display at the native resolution. Unlike the desktop GTX 760, the 765M only has at its disposal 64GB/s of memory bandwidth. That means it has even lower bandwidth than what you'd find on a GTX 650 Ti for instance. Since that GPU isn't capable of 1080p gaming, it stands to reason that any similarly configured GPU would not be and this is the case with the 765M as featured in the P27K. We do feel that sacrificing some other features on the notebook would be worth it just so that the GPU would be a GTX 770M instead as that would make virtually all games playable at 1080p with medium to high detail settings.

That aside, we were once again underwhelmed by the speakers on the 27K. They simply lacked the bass and clarity we would expect from such a notebook, which is another wasted opportunity. Given that there are several general use notebooks that offer better audio, you may want to consider headphones rather than using the built-in speakers.

Overall, this is a fairly good notebook, but it's not quite ready to challenge for the top spot when gaming comes to mind. There are some component decisions that offset what is otherwise a sublime machine. For the right price however, it is certainly an attractive offer and should allow you go about your gaming without much trouble. If you're looking for something a little special perhaps, do consider GIGABYTE's other notebooks instead.

- Neo Sibeko

7 Much like the P35K, the P27K is decent at playing current games and offering a solid computing experience. It can still be improved upon, however at lower to similar pricing.

PLUS / Phenomenal disk performance / Great display

MINUS / Keyboard could do with improvement / Speakers are poor / Heavier than necessary

Featuring Everki's Gaming Laptop Bags



Lifetime Warranty Protection

BEACON

Laptop Backpack w/Gaming Console Sleeve, fits up to 18" (EKP117NBKCT)

Gaming is serious business, and with the range of high-end consoles on the market, today's gamer needs a serious bag to protect his device.

This deceptively compact backpack safely stores an Xbox 360/One, PS3/4, or Wii in its own padded, felt-lined, fully removable sleeve, with plenty of room left over for an 18" laptop and anything else you need to ensure that your journey is all fun and games.

- * Console Sleeve fits Xbox 360/ One, PS3/4, Wii
- * Laptop Compartment fits Asus G73/G74/G75 Series, Alienware M17X, MSI GT680/ GT70



Spacious Storage Compartment with Removable Sleeve for Wii, Xbox 360/One, PS3/4



5-Point Balance Strap System



Optional Hidden Stash Compartment



Checkpoint Friendly 18.4" Laptop Compartment



Spacious, Well-Organized Compartments



5-Point Balance Strap System



Lifetime Warranty Protection

TITAN

Checkpoint Friendly Laptop Backpack, fits up to 18.4" (EKP120)

Your bag should meet your device's expectations. Today's high-end gaming and multimedia devices will feel well-represented, secure, and comfortable in this sharp, smartly-designed and spacious backpack. The Titan is the behemoth of laptop bags, designed with a ton of unique features and accents that set it apart from the crowd.

- * Laptop Compartment fits Asus G74/G75/G750 Series, Alienware M17X, MSI GT680/ GT70

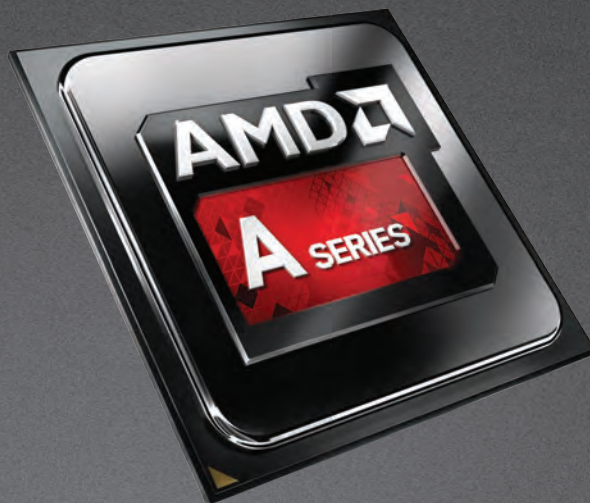
AMD A10 7700K

Website / www.amd.com

ERP / R2,599

Supplier / AMD

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| S P E C S | CORE | 28nm Kaveri (4 threads) |
| | FREQUENCY | 3,400MHz (3.8GHz Turbo) |
| | CACHE | 4MB total (2x 2MB L2) |
| | TDP | 95W |
| | PLATFORM | FM2+ |



In only a fashion that AMD's CPU department could master, the new family of Kaveri APUs launched several months ago but they are only now available to buy in quantities. This is typical of product launches, but AMD has said to us that demand was high, so that was the reason for the shortages.

Be that as it may, our first encounter with AMD's 7000 series APUs was an odd one. Right now you can buy the A10 7850K flagship model, the A8-7600 budget model for those who are power conscious, and finally the 7700K which we have here. All three of these APUs are built around the Steamroller architecture that AMD has been touting as their next architectural evolution.

As it stands, comparing Richland to Kaveri in compute performance shows some gains. However, these gains are minimal on average. Yes there are some scenarios where the changes result in massive gains but most of those are in synthetic tests. In general computing terms and where gaming performance is concerned, there's no difference at all between the previous 6800K and the new 7850K. This is of course when using a dedicated GPU. If you resort to the IGP you'll see the most significant gains and in benchmarks that can take advantage of OpenCL. The number of applications that can take advantage of this are increasing, however there are still more applications that rely on raw single thread performance, and this is where AMD is lacking severely.

That aside, there is some reason to be excited because once again AMD has delivered the next step in IGP performance. The move to the GCN architecture has enabled the Kaveri APUs to put even more distance between them and what Intel offers. A quick comparison showed the AMD part (7700K) delivered performance that is in some cases more than double what Intel can muster with the HD4600. Moreover, some games that are simply unplayable with the Intel

graphics hum along smoothly with the new APUs. This is of course keeping in mind we are talking low detail settings here for most games. You'll be able to play games based on the UE3 engine for instance fairly well at 1080p. However the best resolution for this APU is 720p. At this resolution you can get frame rates well above 40fps for almost all games at medium settings. A stretch to 900 pixels can be made, but then you're at the edge of what we would consider playable.

Overall, the 7000 series APUs are what you've seen before just with much better graphics. A fundamental difference between the last generation parts and this family is that for the first time, we have a true heterogeneous die where both the GPU and CPU parts are not only in the same package but on the same die, sharing many resources. This allows for a great many programming techniques which were previously not possible or costly to execute. As far as future looking technologies are concerned, AMD is spot on in focusing on heterogeneous computing and a large part of that needs powerful GPU logic.

The 7700K specifically differs from the A8-7600 only in that it has an unlocked multiplier and has a 95W TDP. The 7600 on the other hand is confined to 3.3GHz (non-Turbo ratio) as opposed to the 3.4GHz we have here. More importantly, the 7600 is a 65W part with the capability to run at an even lower 45W. It costs a little more, but for the power conscious it may be the better APU to buy. This is

especially because it has the exact same specification as the 7700K in the number of compute cores and turbo frequency.

For Steam Boxes this would make a great APU, and definitely one to consider if you're trying to stay within a tight budget. That however only works if you're not going to be adding a discrete graphics card, because as soon as you do that, then you may consider the Core i5 CPUs which sap even less power, cost less and offer significantly better CPU performance.

As it stands this is a respectable APU, but we do feel that you'd be better off with the A8 7600 or the fully fledged A10-7850K (reviewed in the next issue) with more GPU processing cores. If you must have the latest APU however at any cost, then this will not disappoint you.

- Neo Sibeko

6 AMD have done a great job on the GPU side of things, but have done nothing at all where the CPU performance is concerned, which ultimately hurts these APUs.

PLUS / Great OpenCL performance / GCN GPU offers plenty of performance

MINUS / Costs more than the Core i5 4430 / Power consumption / Disappointing single thread performance

The HyperX team works as hard as you play

Extreme gamers need extreme kit.
These heroines are designed to be
quick, agile and always cool in a fight.
They offer unbeatable performance
and exceptional reliability.

SERIOUSLY
~~E~~XTREME
PERFORMANCE



SteelSeries H Wireless Headset

Website / www.steelseries.com

RRP / R3,699

Supplier / Megarom

SPECS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| WIRELESS RANGE | 12m (40ft) straight line |
| LATENCY | <16ms, fixed |
| PORTS | Analogue in, analogue out, mini USB, optical on, optical out, power |
| BATTERY TYPE | Rechargeable Lithium-Ion, 1000mAh |
| BATTERY LIFE | 20 hours per pack, typical usage |

The SteelSeries H Wireless headset ticks all the right boxes, it's quick and easy to setup, the battery lasts forever and it looks good while still being comfortable to wear. Connecting it to your PlayStation, Xbox and PC is done using the supplied optical, analogue or USB cables; it also supports iOS and Android. The Wii U is off the menu because it has no optical out. The Xbox 360 chat functionality requires another cable (supplied) and while it will get sound from the Xbox One, it doesn't support chat because Microsoft hasn't released a headset adapter yet.

The real magic happens between the headset and a small but very functional transmitter that features an intelligent OLED display telling you everything from battery life and volume to which device is connected. The transmitter has a large volume knob that also functions as a select button and another smaller 'back' button. Around the back we have connection points for analogue in, chat out, USB and optical in and out as well as a USB driven DC power adapter with multiple country power connectors. The transmitter is sleek and impressive and provides access to a multitude of menus and options, from fiddling with the equaliser to setting up profiles as well as the brightness of the display. Two additional options you'll find useful are ChatMix and LiveMix. ChatMix lets you decide the volume ratio between voice chat and a game's sound level, while LiveMix automatically detects when a voice chat comes in, and reduces the volume of the game sounds.

The headset itself is comfortable and snug on the head, not as much as other premium products from SteelSeries, the Siberia Elite for example, but more than adequate for long gaming sessions. The microphone is retractable and features a red light to show if it's on or off; do bear in mind that pushing the microphone in doesn't turn it off like other headsets – something to be aware of. The connection

between the transmitter and headset is about as lag free as you're going to get in a wireless environment and no movie, game or music tested produced any noticeable lag, even when the battery was dying. On the topic of battery, SteelSeries has seen fit to supply two batteries, one in the headset and one spare which you can charge inside the transmitter. This is pure genius and means zero down time while playing and considering the batteries last around 20 hours, it's almost like having them plugged in permanently. The only misstep here is the battery cover needs somewhere to grip when removing it or you're going to need one of those rubber mats your mom has in the kitchen.

The headset uses a virtual 7.1 soundscape that accurately allows you to hear sounds all around you and everything else you'd expect from a multiple speaker set up. The audio quality is crisp and features deep enough bass to satisfy most. Those hard of hearing will probably like to

see a few more notches on the volume dial as the H Wireless isn't super loud. It's very hard to find fault here and if you're looking for a wireless solution that will plug into almost anything you own then this is it if you have the cash.

- Michael James

9 It's a perfect mix of almost everything you could ever want out of a wireless headset. The very fact that the H Wireless comes with two batteries and all the required cables tells you that SteelSeries takes you seriously as a customer.

PLUS / Comes with all the cables / Spare battery included / Great sound / Super easy to use

MINUS / The battery cover is tricky to remove / Could be a bit louder





UNCOMPROMISING ERGONOMICS



8200 DPI
MIZAR
PRECISION LASER SENSOR

4000 DPI
ALCOR
OPTICAL SENSOR

AVAGO
9800
LASER
SENSOR

4 LEVELS
UP TO
8200
DPI

7
FULLY
PROGRAMMABLE
BUTTONS

128
KB
ON BOARD
MEMORY

3090
OPTICAL
SENSOR

4 LEVELS
UP TO
4000
DPI

OMRON
SWITCHES



Inspired by classic, right-handed, and ergonomic styles, CM Storm Mizar is a gaming mouse with a natural contoured grip designed for maximum comfort. Outlast the competition regardless of your hand size, grip style, or handedness. The ergonomic shape encourages a firm and comfortable grip that feels more natural in your hand. It has an Avago 9800 laser sensor and up to 8200 DPI. Its 7 fully programmable buttons are arranged and tuned for intuitive operation.

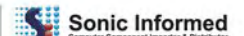
coolermaster.com



JHB 011 466 0038 | Cape Town 021 551 4411 | Durban 031 001 1480



Johannesburg 011 203 1000 | Cape Town 021 555 8200 | Durban 031 582 0200



Johannesburg 011 314 5800 | Cape Town 021 551 8218

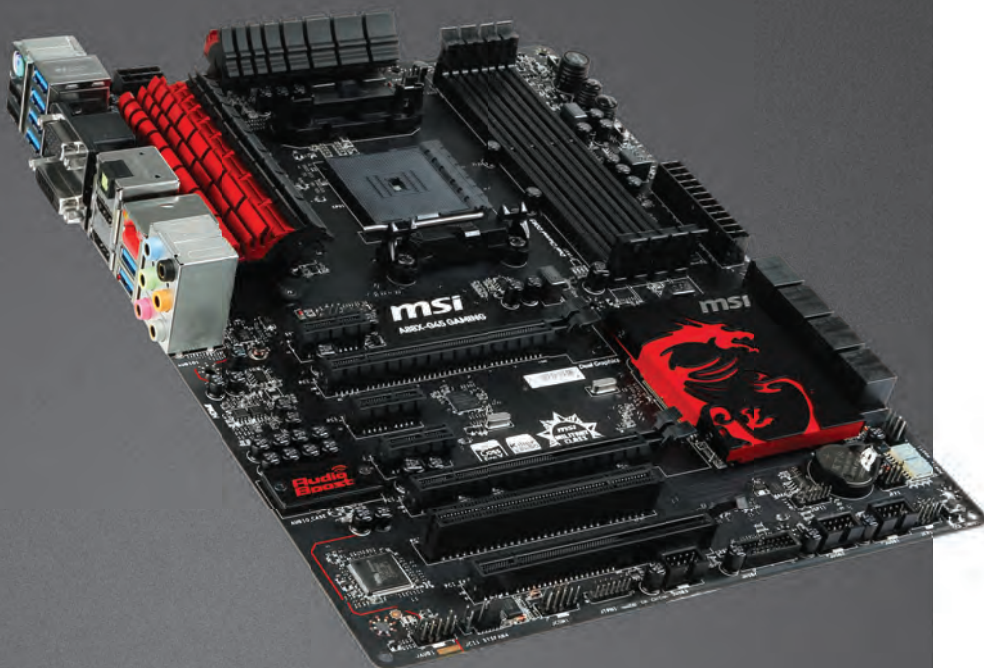


MSI A88X-G45 GAMING

Website / www.msi.com ERP / R1,999 Supplier / Corex

SPECS

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| CHIPSET | AMD A88 |
| MEMORY | 4x 240-pin DDR3 |
| CPU SUPPORT | FM2+ |
| EXPANSION | 3x PCI-E 16X, 3x PCIE 1X, 1x PCI |
| SIZE | ATX |



So here's yet another gaming motherboard from MSI. This time it features AMD's A88 chipset. Since AMD isn't in the business of advancing chipsets in any remotely plausible way, it falls to vendors such as MSI to bolt on as much as they can to make compelling motherboards.

To that extent MSI has done a great job with the A88X chipset and complemented it with a great set of features that make this a very well rounded motherboard for the platform. It is to be kept in mind that gaming on the FM2+ socket is for budget conscious buyers and not ones seeking the ultimate in gaming pleasure. AMD's APUs are not in any way shape or form cut out for that kind of gaming, but they do make the best budget gaming CPUs money can buy. Paired with such a motherboard, it could be exactly what a budget-conscious gamer needs.

To start with, MSI has included with this board their standard Military Class 4 components, which simply put means that the motherboard should not experience any blown capacitors and the like regardless of how long you're gaming. There should be minimal if any electronic noise and you're guaranteed a board that will probably outlast its relevance in a gaming context.

That aside, the two parts that make a gaming motherboard are the audio solution and network interface card. To this, MSI adds a special feature in the form of a dedicated USB 2.0 hub that is configured to decrease signal latency by up to 7ms. This is also applicable to the PS/2 port as well. How much of a difference this makes remains to be seen but for the most part it cannot hurt to plug your peripherals into these ports.

Delving deeper into the audio we find that MSI has resorted to a software layer Sound Blaster Cinema package. This is used in conjunction with the regular Realtek ALC codec. The audio is not up to the levels of what you'd expect on the premium gaming boards, but it's better than what is on other A88X motherboards on the market. If you use headphones you'll

appreciate the now mandatory 600 ohm headphone amp. It actually does make a difference and helps deliver an even better audio experience with the software than you'd initially expect it to.

Where overclocking features are concerned, you'll want to pay close attention here as this is one of the few times where overclocking makes a sizeable difference in gaming performance especially with Kaveri APUs. You will want to get your hands on as fast a set of memory as you can. Two sticks obviously and not four because you'll lose out on latency, which happens across all platforms mostly. With a set of 2,600MHz DIMMs you can boost the rendering performance of the built in GPU quite dramatically, making previously unplayable games very comfortable. This is where you can never have enough bandwidth and fortunately the MSI board has plenty of overclocking features which will allow you to reach speeds of at least 2,400MHz if your set isn't capable of 2,600MHz.

This motherboard supports CrossFire as well, but this would be wasted with the kind of processing power available on the platform. The best scenario for CrossFire use is in hybrid-CrossFire mode where you can use a relatively inexpensive GPU in

tandem with the IGP of the 7000 series APUs to further bolster your gaming performance. The scaling is great for the most part and you can make most of your games playable at 1080p. To that end MSI has also included a free copy of *Assassin's Creed Liberation HD*. It's a port, but it's a good one and a lot of fun to play, especially since it runs so well on the APU (with reasonable settings).

Overall this is a solid offering and definitely one of MSI's best motherboards to date. If you want a full ATX A88X motherboard, do consider this one.

- Neo Sibeko

9 As far as A88X motherboards are concerned, this is the best one we have seen to date. MSI has done an excellent job with this product.

PLUS / Looks great / Good features for the price / Assassin's Creed Liberation included / Performs well

MINUS / Would be even better as a mini-ITX board / Could be potentially expensive / Software audio and LAN gaming solution

ASUS N750J

Website / www.asus.com

RRP / R26,000 Supplier / ASUS

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------|--|
| S P E C S | CPU | Intel Core i7-4700HQ (2.4GHz) |
| | GPU | NVIDIA GeForce GT 750M / Intel HD Graphics 4600 |
| | RAM | 8GB DDR3 (supports up to 16GB) |
| | HDD | 2x 1TB HDD |
| | DISPLAY | 17.3-inch non-glare, 1920x1080 native resolution |

ASUS' N Series notebooks aren't designed especially for gaming. Instead, the N750J is targeted at users looking for a complete multimedia solution that's backed up by impressive performance. And they've succeeded at that, bar a few shortfalls.

Using the notebook for everyday tasks is brilliantly comfortable with its full-size backlit keyboard and spacious, gesture-enabled touchpad. There's enough power under the hood to ensure that general productivity tasks are efficiently handled, while still not being so overly power-hungry that you'll get hardly any unplugged battery life. The 17.3-inch screen is incredibly crisp and vivid, making watching movies and playing games a pleasure.

Unfortunately, the audio that's boasted about in the notebook's marketing falls a bit flat. The N750J ships with a detachable subwoofer that can be placed alongside the notebook to provide bass, while the quad speaker array promises excellent sound production. In use, however, the audio performance is disappointing. It's meatier than most laptop audio, sure, but at the same time it's muffled and unpleasant.

Gaming performance isn't bad at all, with the N750J awarded a score of 1,593 in 3DMark's Fire Strike test. It's not an amazing score (it's held back by the GT 750M that powers this notebook's visuals when the Intel 4600 isn't running the show), but it means you'll be able to play pretty much any game out there provided you're willing to lower the graphics settings for the more demanding ones.

Sadly, the huge price tag makes it difficult to recommend the N750J when for a couple thousand rand more you can get a full-fledged gaming laptop like the ASUS G750, which will get you double the gaming performance that's on offer here. If you absolutely must have better battery life, however, then the N750J is nevertheless a great notebook.

- Dane Remendes



8 If you're on the hunt for a powerful multimedia notebook, the N750J is a strong choice.

PLUS / Fantastic screen / Good all-round performance

MINUS / Disappointing audio / Expensive

CHOOSE ORIGINAL GAMES



DON'T PIRATE GAMES IT'S A CRIME AND IT KILLS OUR INDUSTRY

By supporting piracy you support organised crime



Southern African Federation
Against Copyright Theft

ADATA DashDrive Elite SE720 external SSD

Website / www.adata.com

RRP / R1,650

Supplier / ADATA

| | |
|------------|----------------------|
| CAPACITY | 128GB |
| WEIGHT | 110g |
| INTERFACE | USB 3.0 |
| DIMENSIONS | 117mm x 79mm x 8.9mm |

The SE720's claim to fame is that, instead of packing a traditional magnetic drive into a portable enclosure (as is usually the case with external drives), ADATA's gone and shoved an SSD into this particular portable offering's housing.

As such, it boasts all the benefits of an SSD: faster read/write performance, zero noise, low power consumption and no moving parts – and therefore less of a chance that you'll break something and lose your data if you drop it. It does carry the always less inviting price of an SSD, however, along with a relatively small capacity.

Testing its performance has proven a bit anomalous, because on three different machines the drive provided three wildly different test results. The best of them revealed read/write speeds of 156MB/s and 369MB/s respectively on USB 3.0, and the write performance in particular is a bit worrying given that ADATA boasts write speeds of up to 400MB/s. Still, it's excellent performance for a portable drive. As an added bonus, its housing is made of scratch-resistant stainless steel.

- Dane Remendes



9 The SE720 is an impressively fast external drive, even though it's outperformed by standalone SSDs.

PLUS / Great performance / SSD benefits

MINUS / Not as fast as standalone SSDs / Low capacity

GAMDIAS Hephaestus

Website / www.gamdias.com

RRP / TBA

Supplier / GAMDIAS

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| IMPEDANCE | 32 ohms |
| FREQUENCY RESPONSE | 20Hz – 20kHz |
| MICROPHONE SENSITIVITY | -46db |

Personally, I don't at all like the look of the Hephaestus' chunky white form. That said though, it definitely turns heads, especially thanks to the bright lighting that covers it, but it's a bit much for my taste. Still, I know there are people who will adore its over-the-top sci-fi stylings. And those people are in luck, because it boasts good audio performance beneath its flamboyant aesthetic.

There are some caveats, however, mostly centred around its vibration function, which is designed to vibrate the ear cups based on the position of in-game sounds to help you pinpoint enemies. Unfortunately, I didn't really find this functionality all that useful, because most sounds ended up setting off vibrations in both ear cups anyway.

In music and movies, the variable vibration effect is essential because turning it off practically removes bass entirely. Having it on the highest setting created a tinny rattle on the unit I tested, however, so I'd recommend leaving it on the medium setting. Provided you won't be bothered by having vibrating ear cups, then you should be very happy with the Hephaestus.

- Dane Remendes



7 If you like its over-the-top look, the Hephaestus is a worthwhile choice of gaming headset.

PLUS / Solid audio production

MINUS / Vibration function isn't brilliant

Sony Action Cam HDR-AS30V

Website / www.sony.co.za

RRP / R3,999

Supplier / Sony

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| WATERPROOF | 5m (16 feet) for 30 minutes |
| IMAGE STABILIZATION | SteadyShot |
| LENS TYPE | Carl Zeiss Vario-Tessar lens |

The AS30V is an updated version of the HDR-AS15, so if you're a fan of Sony's previous POV camera offering, you're going to like this one. The AS30V now comes with an improved case which is waterproof to 5m compared to its predecessor's 60m. The new case features membranes to better capture underwater sound and access to all the function buttons on the camera – the previous version required opening of the case for any kind of input. The reduced depth and subsequent improvements here are much more in line with how most people use a POV camera.

The HDR-AS30V also has built in GPS, but viewing GPS information requires the use of Sony's proprietary software PlayMemories Home which incidentally is free to use for Action Cam owners. The Action Cam uses Sony's SteadyShot for image stabilisation when shooting at a field of view of 120°, but is disabled when switching up to 170°. Overall the HDR-AS30V is a big improvement over the previous model and will get the job done in most environments humans can get to.

- Michael James



8 The HDR-AS30V makes a few critical improvements over the previous model and in doing so broadens market reach.

PLUS / GPS / Improved waterproof case / Smartphone functionality

MINUS / Limited in the accessory department / PlayMemories requirement for GPS display

WIN ONE OF TWO

CANON LEGRIA MINI CAMERAS VALUED AT R4,000

LEGRIA MINI FEATURES

- 170° ultra-wide[1] angle lens
- Vari-angle LCD screen and built-in stand
- Switch between ultra-wide and close-up
- Wi-Fi; live streaming and sharing
- Full HD recording
- HS System: 12.8 MP CMOS, DIGIC DV4
- Built-in stereo mic, Audio Scene select
- Detection orientation
- Mirror image recording/playback
- Slow & Fast motion; interval recording



SMS THE KEYWORD WESPEAKIMAGE TO 33110

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 30 April 2014

THE LAZY GAMER'S GUIDE

➤ **Website** / www.gunnars.com

➤ **RRP** / Wi-five Onyx - **R995** | RPG Gunmetal Amber – **R995** | Gunnar Carry Case – **R199**

➤ **Supplier** / Comet Computing

“Eyeballs are pretty important things.” Somebody famous once said that. Look it up. Life sucks a lot when your eyeballs decide that they’re tired of performing your slave labour for little to no pay. And so they form a union. And while they go on strike demanding better work conditions and a 30% moisture increase, you’re left eyeball-less, expected to fend for yourself in a world that’s scientifically proven to be very dependent on being able to see whether or not you’re about to be mauled by that lion over there. You know, the one that you haven’t yet spotted because your sight-orbs are happily picketing throughout your skull. That’s where Gunnar comes in as a sort of eyecare arbitrator. Their eyewear is here to help keep your hardworking vision-spheres satisfied and suitably protected when they’re confronted by modern life’s vision-related hurdles.



DESIGNED WITH PURPOSE

In addition to potentially making you look cool (or like an accidental hipster) at all times, Gunnar's range is designed above all else to protect the integrity of your sense of sight, as well as enhance it in certain ways.

WHY IT'S NEEDED

As you can imagine, modern life places a range of stresses on your eyes. Working under fluorescent lighting. Staring at blue-light emitting screens for hours on end. Stuff like this puts immense strain on your vision, and not only are you physically able to feel the fatigue this causes, but other symptoms like headaches and blurry vision can manifest as well.

DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

Gunnar's lens tint, coatings and the curvature of the lens all serve to help shield your eyes from screen glare, artificial lighting and air currents that could potentially dry out your eyes. They create a more relaxed visual environment, filtering out any harsh elements to keep your eyes safe and functional, even after hours of exposure.

OCULAR CLARITY

Thanks to the tech of the lenses and the fact that your eyes won't have to work so hard, you'll get sharper vision and enhanced clarity when using Gunnar glasses. Gunnar eyewear is also prescription compatible, in case you're wondering.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Gunnar's eyewear is available in a variety of styles to suit your taste. Given their usefulness in long gaming sessions, they've got a whole range designed especially for gamers, called Advanced Gaming Eyewear, as well as Advanced Computer Eyewear. The two models we were sent and pictured here is the RPG Gunmetal Amber from the Gaming range, where gunmetal refers to the frame colour and amber refers to the lens tint. The Wi-five Onyx is one of the Computer Eyewear models. They also offer branded carry cases.



TECHNICAL

RPG GUNMETAL AMBER

Lens width: 62mm

Nose: 17mm

Temple: 120mm

Weight: 35g

Material: Aluminium-magnesium

WI-FIVE ONYX

Lens width: 56mm

Nose: 18mm

Temple: 120mm

Weight: 25g

Material: Stainless steel

SUMMARY

Pros: Protects your eyes /

High quality

Cons: Nothing

Alternatives: GOING TOTALLY BLIND.

Obviously.

MOSH *pit*

This month's hot list of cool stuff and everything else you simply must have. Well, almost everything.

► **GOOGLE NEXUS 7**

- **Supplier /** ASUS
- **Website /** www.kalahari.com
- **RRP /** R5,999

The Android tablet market is saturated with every level of device from the most basic to those that take on a couple of decent notebooks, but sometimes all you want is something simple but powerful, and that's where Google has carved out its niche for the last few years.

Teaming up with ASUS once again, the new Google Nexus 7 sports a powerful quad-core CPU, full HD display and Android 4.3, all while staying at a moderate price point. Its clean design and light weight mean you'll never feel that carrying it around is a hassle, and the no-nonsense version of the OS means navigation is quick and easy.

Perhaps the only let-down on the Nexus 7 is the camera, which clocks in at 5MP but lacks a flash or auto-focus. If you only need it for a few quick snaps in good lighting, it'll be sufficient, but this weak camera is almost made worse by contrast with this otherwise high-end offering. There's also no support for storage expansion, but the entry-level option comes with 16GB on-board so you shouldn't be too bothered by this.



► **ASTRUM TAB 7.0 3G PRO**

- **Supplier /** Astrum
- **Website /** www.astrum.co.za
- **RRP /** R1,899

If you're strapped for cash but absolutely must have a feature-packed tablet, the Astrum Tab is definitely worth your attention. For the price tag on the box you can't expect stellar performance, but the Astrum is capable enough to not drive you completely crazy. What might get on your nerves is the low-quality screen that cripples this full HD display, but the fact that you get HDMI output, SD card support and 3G should make up for it. This might be a budget tablet, but it feels decent overall and isn't too bulky or heavy, although the side buttons feel cheap. Lastly, we'd also recommend that you find a way to get the latest version of Android on the device, as it still runs 4.2.2.

➤ AR.DRONE 2.0 ELITE EDITION

- ➊ Supplier / SMAC
- ➋ Website / www.smac.co.za
- ➌ RRP / R4,499 [Replacement hulls (indoor) R599 / (outdoor) R399]

Parrot wants you to buy their new Elite Edition AR.Drone 2.0 so you can take to the skies (via two high definition cameras) and do whatever you think requires a high flying remote controlled drone. The Elite version of this means the hulls comes in three different colours for maximum camouflage, although it must be said due to the noise the drone makes there'll be no sneaking up on anything. Colours are sand, snow, and jungle. To make it all work, AR.FreeFlight 2.4 must be downloaded onto the mobile device of your choice and then connected to the drone using the magic of Wi-Fi. First up however, you must charge the battery with the provided wall charger. The battery should get you around 12 minutes of flight time; in reality it's a little less and as the seconds tick away to a flat battery, performance also tends to suffer. In other words, get a few batteries for long term projects.

The wireless control is flawless: there are take-off and land buttons as well as a nifty flip you can perform by just tapping twice on the screen – it's impressive and makes you look like a real pro. The software has a multitude of settings for the drone including

sensitivity, maximum altitude, and enabling different kinds of controls such as on-screen joysticks or tilt motion. Camera controls are also on the screen and switching between the forward facing and bottom camera is easy. Essentially the drone flies itself, and can recover from flips and stabilise itself in light wind conditions. All you really need to do is tell it which direction to face and where to go. It's pretty much military grade control in a civilian air space. The AR.Drone 2.0 is very easy to recommend.



Whether you want to spy on your sunbathing neighbour, deliver a dog poop surprise to the noisy kids down the road or simply want to see what your roof looks like, then this is for you.

◀ ICY DOCK BLIZZARD 3.5" SATA EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE ENCLOSURE

- ➊ Supplier / Frontosa
- ➋ Website / www.frontosa.co.za
- ➌ RRP / R750



If you've got a spare 3.5-inch hard drive lying around and you need extra external storage, Icy Dock's Blizzard external HDD enclosure will let you put that spare drive to good use. Its standout feature is an 80mm fan at its front that'll keep your chosen drive cool – which is especially brilliant if the drive you plan to use is, say, a WD VelociRaptor or similar high-performance drive that generates a lot of heat.

At the back of the Blizzard you'll find fan speed controls, which include an auto function that'll adjust the fan speed to match the temperature of your drive. In addition, you're able to adjust the intensity of the fan's blue LED – which turns red to warn you

when your drive hits a certain temperature threshold.

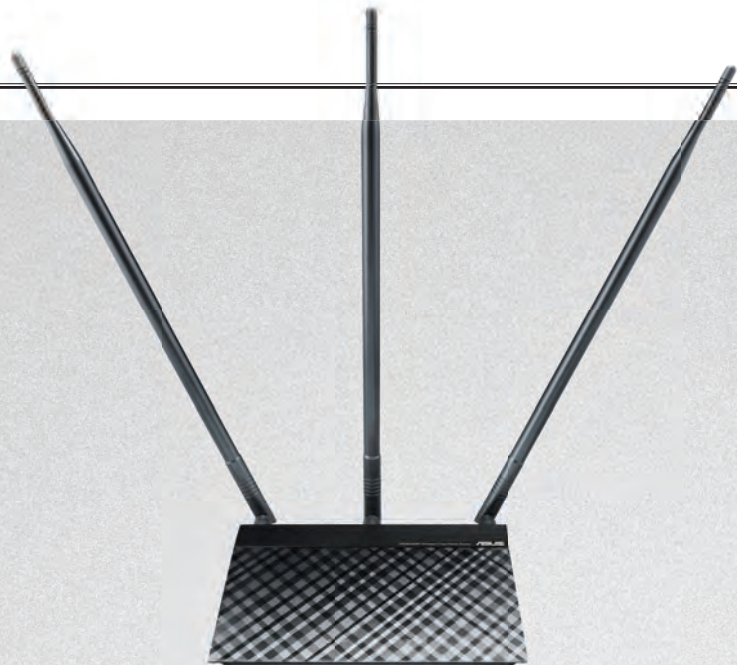
A nice added touch is the inclusion of an eSATA cable in the Blizzard's box, which you don't often see done. The Blizzard also supports USB 3.0 though, which will provide a faster method of data transfer than eSATA. The build quality of the Blizzard is decent, but its plastic outer shell definitely feels flimsy enough that you shouldn't expect it to survive a nasty fall. Still, as far as external drive enclosures go, this one is undoubtedly one of the most impressive, particularly since it'll allow you to use high performance drives without fear of overheating.



◀ **GAMDIAS AEGIS**

- **Supplier** / GAMDIAS/Esquire
- **Website** / www.gamdias.com
- **RRP** / R429

Marketed as a multi-function gaming set, the AEGIS is a unique accessory that easily attaches on to the top right of your monitor using adhesive strips. It has been designed with the intention of removing some of the clutter on your desktop, and provides three convenient functions all in one slim housing. You can hang your headphones on the flat hook at the top, it can function as a four-port USB 2.0 hub, and it can serve as a mouse bungee so all your cables are neatly stored behind your monitor.



⬆ **ASUS RT-N14UHP WIRELESS-N300**

- **Supplier** / ASUS
- **Website** / www.asus.com
- **RRP** / R1,499

This single-band N300 router from ASUS boosts wireless coverage by up to 300%. Features include three detachable high-gain 9dBi antennas, adjustable output power, a USB 2.0 port for sharing printers and files, and 300Mbit/s Wi-Fi performance. The RT-N14UHP can be easily configured to operate as either a router, a wireless access point or a wireless range extender.

➤ **NOKIA ASHA**

- **Supplier** / Nokia
- **Website** / www.nokia.com
- **RRP** / Asha 500 – R899; Asha 502/503 – R1,199

Nokia recently announced three new Asha devices at a showcase event that we attended in Johannesburg. The range is eye-catching and unique and comes in a variety of funky colours to suit all tastes. The interface for this range has been redesigned and all actions are now performed using the swipe gesture. Another new addition is the Fastlane, which is basically a hub that shows all your latest interactions with your apps, calendar and social networks. The Asha 500 features a 2.8-inch screen and 2MP camera. The Asha 502 features a 3-inch screen, a 5MP camera with LED flash and Easy Swap Dual-SIM. The Asha 503 is basically the 3.5G variant of the 502.





PS4 WIRELESS STEREO HEADSET 2.0

- 1 Supplier / Ster Kinekor Entertainment
- 2 Website / www.playstation.co.za
- 3 RRP / R1,299

Looking for wireless 7.1 virtual surround sound for your PlayStation 4? The Wireless Stereo Headset 2.0 has you covered. Plug the USB wireless adaptor into your PS4, PS3, PC or Mac and you can game for up to 8 hours before it will need a recharge. You can also use it with your PS Vita by plugging in the 3.5mm stereo mini jack. The headset features a noise-cancelling internal microphone for online multiplayer chit chat with your friends.

ICY DOCK MB973SP-B

- 1 Supplier / Frontosa
- 2 Website / www.frontosa.co.za
- 3 RRP / R1,325

If you're looking to install three 3.5" SATA hard drives into your computer case's two available 5.25" device bays then the Icy Dock MB973SP-B 3-in-2 SATA Backplane is what you'll need. Last issue we featured the 2B model that had two USB 3.0 ports on the front and cost R130 more. This model has a USB and eSATA port, so will be ideal if your case doesn't have front/top port access. There's also an internal SATA cable and USB header connector built into the rear for easy connection to your rig's motherboard or add-on card. Another appealing feature is the screw-less technology which means you can quickly hot swap your drives with ease. The package includes an 80mm cooling fan at the back.



ICY DOCK MB662U3-2S

- 1 Supplier / Frontosa
- 2 Website / www.frontosa.co.za
- 3 RRP / R1,499

This sexy ICYraid MB662U3-2S is a 3.5" SATA dual bay RAID HDD enclosure that operates independently from your rig. The controls on the rear panel allow you to create RAID 1 (SAFE), RAID 0 (FAST), BIG, and JBOD for a variety of cases. It's as easy as opening the door flap at the front, sliding your hard drive in and selecting the RAID setting you want. Once you turn the device on the RAID process will start automatically.



◀ OLYMPUS OMD-EM-1

- ➊ Supplier / Tudortech
- ➋ Website / www.tudortech.co.za
- ➌ RRP / R20,000 (body only); R28,000 (kit which includes the new M.ZUIKO DIGITAL 12-40mm 1:2.8 lens)

A more compact version of your traditional DSLR camera, but one that doesn't compromise in terms of quality or price, is the Olympus OMD-EM-1. It's smaller and much lighter than a traditional DSLR, but still packs all the features of a high-end camera. The EM-1 is also splash, dust and freeze proof, and sports built-in Wi-fi allowing it to communicate with a compatible smartphone. So you can easily send your pics directly to Facebook and also remotely control the camera.

▶ ALIENS XENOMORPH EGG & FACEHUGGER

- ➊ Supplier / AWX
- ➋ Website / www.awx.co.za
- ➌ RRP / R465

There's an unknown formula that governs the buying of things like this comprising of the following variables: cost, love of the franchise, quality of the product and mental makeup of the buyer. It's not an exact science but it covers all the important bits. What we have here is a plastic Xenomorph egg capsule that stands 13cm tall; inside it has a spring-loaded Facehugger delivery mechanism that must be depressed and locked into place. Once the Facehugger is ready, a button on the outside of the egg launches the Facehugger into the air. The Facehugger itself is realistically textured and coloured and made from a flexible latex type material. Oh, one last thing – the egg glows green if you press another switch underneath... and, if you look close you can see the 'hugger inside – bonus! This bit of movie memorabilia comes from a time when the Xenomorph lifecycle could be understood by 13 year-olds. These days with the black slime, eye worms and weird albino things who can tell what's going on without a two hour documentary backed up by a handy field guide (or a few know-it-all work colleagues) [Not that it's helped. Ed].

It's quirky, kind of cool and something you'll enjoy if you're a big fan of the movie franchise. Of course in terms of things you really want from the movies, nothing beats a replica M41A pulse rifle or a real working motion tracker, so you can finally find out where your cats go each night.



If an ostrich egg is the same as 24 normal eggs then how many chicken eggs are these babies worth?

▶ LIGHT ACTION ROBOCOP 1.0 & 3.0

- ▶ Supplier / AWX
- ▶ Website / www.awx.co.za
- ▶ RRP / R195 (black 3.0) / R220 (silver 1.0)

This is the guy that changed many lives back in 1987 when he first blasted, broke, shot and thumped his way through the bad guys. 2014 sees a cracker of a reboot that comes 27 years after the original and makes up in style and finesse what it lacks in excessive, but lovely, violence. Now we have the figurines. These two guys are mostly identical but differ in colour. Opinion is mixed in the office, but most favour the original silver colour. Robocop stands 15cm tall and is somewhat articulated, he also ships with a little Taser and machinegun. The big highlight here is the light-up visor, activated by pressing a button on his chest. So that's about that... Not a terrible figure but not a great figure, and once again a must if you're an avid must have everything collector.



▶ NICKELODEON: TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES ACTION FIGURES

- ▶ Supplier / AWX
- ▶ Website / www.awx.co.za
- ▶ RRP / R125 each

Heroes in a half shell they are indeed and the need to have them around in figurine form is strong amongst the geek community. Nobody is entirely sure why the turtles became so popular or why their charm and appeal have lasted so long. The smart money is on their love of pizza, ninja skills and cool Yoda-like rat leader. There are many sets in this particular range from the turtles themselves, Splinter, a few bad guys, Shredder and almost everyone between. The figurines stand from 6cm to around 16cm depending on accessories and, in some cases, tentacles. They're well made, articulated and include tons of detail. Each figurine ships with the relevant swords, weapons and other bits of equipment. So, if you're missing your fix of pizza that smells like sewer rat or your renaissance artists kicked seven kinds of cheese out of Shredder then hook it up.



► LAZARUS ONE

- 1 Supplier / Cosmic Comics
- 1 Website / www.cosmiccomics.co.za
- 1 RRP / R149

Dark and moody with pinches of post-apocalyptic science fiction, this trade paperback collects the first four issues of *Lazarus* and is sure to whet your appetite for more. It tells the story of Forever Carlyle, a so-called Lazarus who's been commissioned (or more accurately, built) to be a warrior for the Carlyle family in a future where political and geographical lines have been torn down.

Now, wealthy families rule the world and take care of those people who willingly give up their freedom to serve them. Everyone else is designated "waste", their lives considered to be worthless.

Lazarus is penned by Greg Rucka, who's been credited with work on everything from *Action Comics* to *Daredevil* to *Wonder Woman*. Michael Lark handles the pencil work, while Santi Arcas takes care of the colours. Together, these artists create magic.

► DIRECTORY

WHERE TO FIND ALL THE STUFF FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Apex Interactive | 011 796 5040 |
| Astrum Peripherals | 011 314 0400 |
| ASUS SA | 011 783 5450 |
| AWX | 011 789 8215 |
| Comet Computing | 011 825 8640 |
| Corex | 011 700 7188 |
| Cosmic Comics | 011 782 0819 |
| Esquire | 0861 700 000 |
| Frontosa | 021 551 4411 |
| Megarom | 011 361 4800 |
| Nokia | 0861 166 542 |
| Rectron | 011 203 1000 |
| Tudortech | 011 803 2226 |
| SMAC | 0861 888 222 |
| Sonic Informed | 011 314 5800 |
| Sony | 011 690 3555 |
| Ster Kinekor Entertainment | 011 445 7700 |

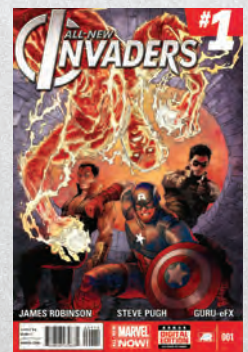
► MANOWAR X-O VOLUME ONE: BY THE SWORD

- 1 Supplier / Cosmic Comics
- 1 Website / www.cosmiccomics.co.za
- 1 RRP / R169

Valiant Comics isn't a company that you'd usually associate with high-end entertainment, but the publisher has been making strides in recent years to align itself better with its competition, and *Manowar X-O* is a great showing of that effort.

This first collection tells the story of a Visigoth who inadvertently travels through time and space, gaining great powers and upsetting rather a lot of people along the way. It plays out much like *Battlefield Earth*, minus all the boring bits and pro-scientology hints.

While Robert Venditti's writing is a little on the cheesy side, we'll forgive it as a means to rush along the story in these establishing stages – there's obviously plenty more to come. The art comes from Cary Nord, Stefano Gaudiano and Moose Baumann, and is as strong as any other top-tier graphic novel, giving equal care to all locations that this book visits.



► MARVEL #1s

- 1 Supplier / Cosmic Comics
- 1 Website / www.cosmiccomics.co.za
- 1 RRP / R50 each

"First issue" doesn't mean quite the same thing it used to back in the day, or really just the other day, but there's still something kinda cool about #1.

And Marvel knows that, which is why this year is host to a whole whack of #1s from across their stable. Here we've got the queen of weak attempts at gender equality She-Hulk, the All-New Invaders, which is only as new as the name as it includes the likes of Cap and Johnny the Human Torch, and lastly Wolverine, who's seen more canon-murdering reboots than anyone else in the history of putting pictures on paper. Maybe it's just us being all old and crotchety, but this all seems rather silly. And look at Wolverine holding a gun on the cover! I'll bet he doesn't even Snikt! Still, if this is the first time you've picked up a comic and you have some sort of allergy to classics, then this isn't the worst possible place to start your collection.

WINTER IS COMING

BUT WITH PER GB PRICES LIKE OURS
YOU WON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE HOUSE!



ADSL - HOSTING - DOMAINS - 3G OUT OF THIS WORLD CUSTOMER SERVICE



great prices, better service
www.imagnet.co.za

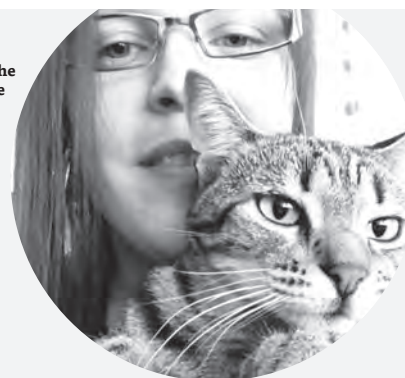
help desk
086 111 1101
info@imagnet.co.za
7 days a week

GG

by Tarryn van der Byl

Storytime

Tarryn is currently in her lab, where she works to create super kitties that are genetically engineered to help around the house for once.



This month or next¹, I'll have been writing for NAG for eight years. It's time I revealed something that will doubtless astound you – if you go back through every issue of the magazine between then and now, you'll find that the first letter of every article I wrote, put together, spells out a sentence. Go on, I'll wait.

...

Okay, so I made that up. But I'll bet you believed me, even for just a moment. That's because making people believe what I write is part of my job². So is being a reliable and responsible source of information, I suppose, but I also liked Hellgate: London in my review, so whatever. The point is that words are invested with puissant powers of persuasion – but as gamers, most of us knew this already. A compelling narrative and credible characters are two of the most important aspects of that otherwise somewhat elusive quality often described by trendy, cool writers like me as "immersion". Oh,

and proper attention to spelling and grammar. I mean, books and TV and the obviously very private dramas going on next door that you like to watch furtively from the windows late at night have been doing this stuff for years, already – it totally works. Everybody loves a good story because it's an escape from the humdrum, predictable normality of our own lives and the taste of leftover spaghetti that might've been in the fridge a bit too long [*There's a "too long"? Ed*].

So why, then, is there so much lousy writing in games? It's a medium that's fundamentally built for exactly that sort of alter-ego experience. Not every game has to be a profound and intellectually provocative magnum opus on the human condition as a subversive deconstruction of neosemiotic sublimation³, mind you, but it's also not too much to ask for plot exposition that at least provides a more tenable incentive to keep shooting the bad guys than just "because". Or is it? I'll tell you a secret

1 Or maybe the one before or after. It's been eight years, okay. I can hardly remember what I did last night.

2 And because I'm just about mad enough to actually do something like that. My cats keep telling me to get help, but what do they know? They're just space lizards pretending to be cats.

3 Or any game, ever. That doesn't even mean anything, but it does make me look really clever. That's part of my job too.

– writing for games is hard. It's even harder than writing *about* games, and that's already super hard.

In a stunning coincidence that definitely, probably, maybe has nothing whatsoever to do with the subject of my column this month and/or disingenuous self-promotion, I've recently been contracted by a local game dev studio to work on a project as a writer. More on that as it happens, but in the meantime, I'm absolutely terrified. I'm thrilled too, of course, but working to create something I'm usually working to destroy instead is an intimidating prospect. I'm taking that "being my own worst critic" thing to a whole new level of masochism, plus the extra work load means I won't be getting much sleep. If nothing else, I'm sure the inevitable hallucinations will be of some inspiration. You know, the parts of the game where everything turns neon pink and the voices start arguing about chocolate pudding. You read about it here first. **NAG**

EXTRA LIFE

By Scott Johnson / ©2014 All rights reserved / myextralife.com



PRE-ORDER NOW

BT GAMES PRE-ORDER



WHILE STOCKS LAST

PRE-ORDER FOR ACCESS

DOOM BETA

TERMS AT WOLFENSTEIN.COM/DOOM

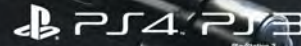


wolfenstein™

THE NEW ORDER™

DOOM Beta invite included with game purchase. Platform/console restrictions will apply. Must be 18+ to participate. Access subject to require platform/console subscription, timing and licenses, to be determined at Bethesda's sole discretion. Participation requires Internet connection and acceptance of beta agreement. Additional terms and conditions may apply. See www.wolfenstein.com/doom or inside packaging for more details.

WWW. WOLFENSTEIN.COM



© 2014
014



© 2014 ZeniMax Media Inc. Developed in association with MachineGames. MachineGames, Bethesda, Bethesda Softworks, ZeniMax and related logos are registered trademarks or trademarks of ZeniMax Media Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Wolfenstein, the W (stylised) and related logos are registered trademarks or trademarks of id Software LLC in the U.S. and/or other countries. "B", "PlayStation", "PS3" and "PS4" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Also, "PS4" is a trademark of the same company. All other trademarks or trade names are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved.



Bethesda



Wolfenstein™, The New Order™ is a fictional story set in an alternate universe in the 1940's. Names, characters, organisations, locations and events are either imaginary or depicted in a fictionalised manner. The story and content of this game are not intended and should not be construed to imply, way, condone, glorify or endorse the beliefs, ideologies, actions or behavior of the Nazi regime or its allies.

PRE-ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY!

bt
GAMES
www.btgames.co.za

msi®

MSI recommends Windows 8.



GE70 Apache Pro

Top Player - Top Choice

steelseries
ENGINE

Customize every key or device to personalize your play style

XSplit
Gamecaster

The best recording and live streaming app for gamers

NVIDIA GeForce
GTX 860M

The newest NVIDIA GeForce GTX 860M graphics card

Sound by
DYNAUDIO

Stunning audio performance

Killer
E2200
GAME NETWORKING

The fastest lan solution for online gaming



COREX (PTY) LTD

Johannesburg
Tel: +27 11 700 7188
Fax: +27 11 700 7140

Cape Town
Tel: +27 21 528 8000
Fax: +27 21 528 8055

Durban
Tel: +27 31 537 4912
Fax: +27 31 537 4988



Like "Corex Alliance" on Facebook. Follow "Corex Alliance" on Twitter. Subscribe to "Corex Alliance" on YouTube. For more information visit www.corex.co.za