

# NAG

BUMPER  
**116**  
PAGE ISSUE

| 23 PAGES |  
OF E3 HOTNESS

| 13 PAGES |  
STRAIGHT FROM  
COMPUTEX TAIPEI

PC / PLAYSTATION / XBOX / NINTENDO / HARDWARE / LIFESTYLE

## RAINBOW SIX SIEGE

CASTLES AND CATAPULTS ARE BORING  
- THIS IS HOW YOU LAY A SIEGE!

11

REVIEWS

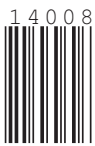
HOLY  
MOTHERBOARDS,  
BATMAN!

4-way Z97 shootout

PREVIEWS

- Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain
- Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor
- Battlefield Hardline
- Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel

VOL.17 ISSUE 5 SOUTH AFRICA R49.00  
OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA R42.98 EXCL. VAT



9 771028 053002

ULTIMATE EVIL EDITION™



DIABLO®

# REAPER OF SOULS™



PS4 PS3 XBOXONE XBOX360

\* 23 SEPTEMBER 2014

PlayStation-3



© 2014 Blizzard Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. Reaper of Souls and Ultimate Evil Edition are trademarks, and Diablo, Blizzard and Blizzard Entertainment are trademarks or registered trademarks of Blizzard Entertainment, Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All other trademarks referenced herein are the properties of their respective owners. "PS4", "PlayStation" and "PS3" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Also, "PS4" is a trademark of the same company. "Sony Entertainment Network" is a trademark of Sony Corporation. All rights reserved. P871752E

## 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 "Guardi3n" 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  
Ben "Bensonace" Myres

## 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  
Deven Pillay / 011 713 9185

## 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

- 6 Ed's Note
- 8 Inbox
- 12 Bytes
- 22 home\_coded
- 68 Mosh Pit

## OPINION

- 12 I, Gamer
- 14 The Game Stalker
- 16 Miktar's Meanderings
- 52 Hardwired
- 72 Game Over

## PREVIEWS

- 30 Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor
- 32 Battlefield Hardline
- 34 Metal Gear Solid V:  
The Phantom Pain
- 35 Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel

## REVIEWS

- 42 Reviews: Introduction
- 42 Mini review: The Shivah:  
Kosher Edition
- 43 Mini review: Bound By Flame
- 44 EA Sports UFC
- 45 Tomodachi Life / The Stanley  
Parable
- 46 Murdered: Soul Suspect
- 47 Creeper World 3: Arc Eternal /  
PixelJunk Shooter Ultimate
- 48 Valiant Hearts: The Great War
- 50 Transistor
- 51 WildStar

## HARDWARE

- 53 Dream Machine
- 54 Versus: SteelSeries Sensei  
Wireless vs. Razer Mamba
- 62 GIGABYTE TITAN  
Black GHZ Edition
- 63 Corsair Hydro H105 CPU Cooler /  
Samsung XP941 M.2 SSD
- 64 Philips 242G5DJEB  
LCD gaming monitor
- 65 Sades SA-922 gaming headset /  
Crucial M550 1TB / Nikon Seecoat  
Blue anti-reflective lens coating
- 66 Lazy Gamer's Guide: Mad Catz  
M.O.J.O. micro-console for Android

## FEATURES

### 24 STEAM EARLY ACCESS

In years gone by, getting hands-on time with early builds of video games was something only games journos and industry insiders were privy to. That's all changed with services like Early Access and paid-for alpha/beta releases. We peek behind the Early Access curtain to see what all the fuss is about.

### 36 RAINBOW SIX: SIEGE

The newest *Rainbow Six* wants to tap into the oldest *Rainbow Six* and bleed it of all its flavoursome tactics-sap. We strap on a Kevlar vest, grab a riot shield, and prepare for the barrage of punishing goodness promised by *Siege*.

### 56 Z97 4-WAY SHOOTOUT

It's not an actual shootout, see. It's mostly just four motherboards, talking things out in a calm, collected manner. But it's still pretty exciting, because technology.

### 73 COMPUTEX TAIPEI 2014

If hardware has an E3, its name is Computex. We wandered the halls, soaking in the glow radiating from all the expensive toys we'll get to play with in the future. Our eyes wept tears of joy, while our wallets wept... just regular tears, really.

### 89 E3 2014

E3 has come, E3 has seen, and E3 has conquered. Read our exhaustive coverage of all the games on display at the show that we think deserve every bit of attention you can muster.



# BIG PERFORMANCE IN A SMALL PACKAGE.



## DC3217IYE Powers up to two digital displays at the same time

Imagine a computing device powerful enough to produce stunning visuals with responsive performance. Yet small enough to drive digital signage, kiosks, or other applications demanding performance in a tight space. We did. The result is the Intel® Next Unit of Computing (NUC). With a visibly smart Intel® Core™ i3 processor in a highly customizable package, the NUC is a breakthrough in compact but impactful computing. Drive two digital displays at once with dual HDMI.\* Get reliable connectivity through Gigabit LAN. Effortlessly move between applications with smart multitasking delivered by Intel® Hyper-Threading Technology. Get a difference in performance you can truly see and feel. Because the only thing more amazing than Intel® technology is what you'll do with it.

### DC3217IYE STUNNING VISUALS AND PERFORMANCE

INTEL® CORE™ i3 PROCESSOR  
INTEL® HD GRAPHICS 4000  
POWERS TWO DISPLAYS

SIMULTANEOUS MONITOR  
AND DISPLAY APPLICATIONS  
1 — 2

GIGABIT LAN  
DUAL  
HDMI\*



Look for the Next Unit of Computing  
with Intel Inside® at  
[www.intel.com/nextunitofcomputing](http://www.intel.com/nextunitofcomputing).

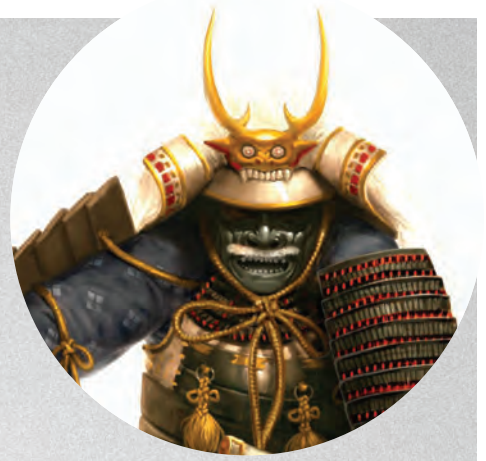


JHB: (011) 466-0038, CPT: (021) 561-7200, DBN: (031) 566-2793



**FRONTOSA**  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
[www.frontosa.co.za](http://www.frontosa.co.za)

The Shape that Fits the Future.



# The art of war

As I write this, World Cup 2014 fever has all-but come to an end. It's been an interesting World Cup, with many people (myself included) being surprisingly interested in a sport that they wouldn't give a second glance to any other time. I'm sure the memory of our own World Cup hosting has a lot to do with that. But what surprised me even more was when I was jokingly accused of being an Argentina supporter because I said that their win against Netherlands in penalty shootouts was as fair as it could've been. I don't think I've ever been accused of supporting a sports team, or supporting very much at all in my life other than common sense.

The same thing happens in gaming. You see it every day. You're probably part of it in some way. It has a lot to do with humanity's tendency towards tribalisation (possibly not a real word, but it's working for me so I'm sticking to it) instead of individualisation. We identify ourselves by our hobbies, our possessions, and our friends, and we wave around that identity like it's the most important thing to us. In gaming this is seen in the ridiculous "PlayStation vs. Xbox", "PC vs. console", or "Android vs. iOS" arguments (among a million others), but it goes right down to the core of gaming.

"If you're not with us, you're against us" is a saying that's done the rounds for as long as anyone cares to remember. It says so much about how people think and why people care about what other people think. But it's destructive. It's limiting. And in gaming, it's crippling your ability to have fun. How many times have you disregarded a game or platform for little reason other than "it's not what I usually play", or "it's not my cup of tea"?

Over the next month, I want you to try something: ditch your hang-ups. Borrow a friend's console and a pile of games; buy some indie game bundles; try a demo for a sports game or a management game; have a board or card game evening; play a few Facebook games. Maybe it's been ten years since you've picked up a console controller because you long-ago committed yourself to the "Glorious PC Master Race", or maybe you've written off all indie games as self-fellating smarmy attempts at art. Go back to something that competes with your gaming identity, and spend some time with it. Give it a decent go – don't wuss out after 20 minutes of *Mario Kart* because you keep getting hit by those damn shells.

## SUPER MEGA ALPHA EDITION

This month's NAG is a big 'un! We've included loads of extra pages thanks to our E3 mega-feature and a detailed look at the Computex Taipei tech expo. We've all worked long and hard to pack as much info as possible into these 116 pages, and I sincerely hope that you'll enjoy this issue and all its wonderful content. **NAG**

-GeometriX

ULTRA DURABLE™  
**BLACK EDITION**

168 Hour Server Level Durability Tested



**GIGABYTE 9 Series**  
Black Edition Motherboards



# rage

expo

COMPUTERS | GAMING | TECHNOLOGY

10-12 OCT, THE DOME, JHB

# OVERLOAD

YOUR

# MIND

BOUNDARIES | IMAGINATION | REALITY | SENSES

[www.rageexpo.co.za](http://www.rageexpo.co.za)

**NAG**

 **IGN**  
AFRICA

# 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 August 2014

**From:** Tristan Tugman  
**Subject:** SA refugee in Germany

Good day awesome people at NAG . Today I write this letter from my hospital bed in mellrichstadt (Germany) .After being in the country for about half a week now for a school exchange trip a sudden unlucky and truly painful event occurred causing me to go in for surgery in the middle of our visit . Further details will not be expressed as to what surgery was needed , but one thing for sure is that its extremely hard being in hospital when everybody except for yourself speaks german (even when you have a pocket sized dictionary ) . Anyways - after explaining to my doctor that I am not in fact a refugee but rather a simple exchange student, the surgery had commenced and after a very painful recovery period I finally regained the ability to read and play games on my phone ounge again . But my games were limited in numbers leaving me with the german tv sevice :! but there was one piece of heaven alongside my bed that I especially packed in for this exact porpoise and that was of course my NAG magazine which reminded me exactly why I shan't die from bordem or frustration . I can honestly say that it was the best thing in the room especially when you cant understand anything else :) thx for the life saver!

(ps: if this does get published then id like to give a shoutout to all my bros at SCS )



*Hey, at least you're there right after Germany won the World Cup. Imagine if they had lost!*

*It sucks greatly that you're trapped in a hospital in a foreign country – especially with that TV. What's with TV in Germany? It's like 40% soap operas, 40% sitcoms and 20% porn. Once, while sitting in a hotel room in Cologne (where Gamescom happens), I was doing some work and decided to put the TV on in the background. There was a dubbed episode of The Big Bang Theory on one of the channels and I found myself utterly engrossed in it, despite not knowing what the hell they were talking about. It sounded like they were really angry most of the time, which is probably why the Germans have a reputation for being very terse.*

### 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 of cleverness. **NOTE /** You can't change the games or the platform they come on.



*It really warms our blackened, cold hearts to know that you've brought your NAG with and that you're reading it cover-to-cover to keep yourself sane. Maybe that's not the best reading material for the purpose but hey, it's something, right?*

*And if ever you're feeling particularly down, remember the German proverb "Was stinkt, das düngt." No experience in life is wasted! Ed.*

**From:** Luke Meyer  
**Subject:** Can Men accept Woman Gamers?

Ok, first off great magazine buy it every month. Anyhoo. The topic I want to address is 'Can woman be gamers?'. I have spoken to my friends about it and they all say: No. But I completely disagree. I remembered a while ago I was playing my COD Black Ops II multi-player on Xboz360 and joined in a game of team death match. I heard over my headset a womans voice. I don't usually

play with women so I didn't know what to do. I wanted to shoot her but something was holding me back. Be it the fact that I don't particularly like woman screaming at me or the fact that I didn't want her to think I was some kind of woman hater. I may sound crazy but in my experience with woman. Sometimes they can be completely irrational (No offense). I then saw her guy jump out of a window and I shot her in the head. I then accidentally said sorry. My game paused and my friends (and her) laughed over the mic. I

felt soooooo embarrassed. Well after that I found out she was really good. Like a pro. She got me every time and her team won all matches. So, I told my friends and they now agree with me. Proof, I showed em' proof. So now we play often and I sometimes nail her with a bullet. What do you guys think about woman and gaming???

*Let's break down the question by means of comparison.*

*Can a dog be a gamer? No, because*



# ON THE FORUMS

*it can't wear a headset properly. Can a desk be a gamer? No, because it doesn't have any way of interfacing with a game. Can a Tyrannosaurus Rex be a gamer? No, because they are extinct. What do all of those have in common? They're not human beings. So now let's really push the boat out and make a statement that only human beings can be gamers. Are women human beings? Yes. Are men human beings? Yes. Thus, we can deduce, through the thorough application of science, logic, and not-being-a-giant-asshole, that, indeed, women can be gamers.*

*I'm glad that you've come to this realisation and have a new gaming friend, now tell your other friends to stop waving around their ignorance (among other things) and get with the program! Ed.*

**From:** Kyle Kemink  
**Subject:** What is okay?

At the moment I'm 16 and in my time iv moved from a small 8 bit console to a Xbox 360 slim which I have today, and I don't mean an NES or a anything of its kind in terms of the "8 bit console" but rather a, well let's just call it a "box" because when I think back to it now, that's all it was, a "box".

My particular "box" had six games like sonic the hedgehog and the chameleon kid (which I don't expect many people to know), but my point is that this is what I grew up with, and it was what I stuck with until I got my PS2 (my first proper console). And so this is my, well I can't exactly call it a question, so let's just call it a quarrel: the other day I walked into BT games and following me I saw a child who couldn't have been more than 9 years old walk in with his mom and proceed to purchase Call Of Duty: Ghosts for the Xbox 360. Now this was something that really "peevd" me off, the kid was no more than 9 years old and he had both an Xbox 360 and he now had Call Of Duty: Ghosts (which if you don't know, has a 16 age restriction). So now here is my question: do age restrictions really matter in our modern day and what should the youth (if I can say that) really be playing and even playing on.

*You and your "box" (it's a sex thing, isn't it?) have touched on a topic that drives me insane. Gaming, like*

If life were a fantasy tale, the NAG forums would be called something like "Craggy Death Mountains", and adventurers would go there in search of great treasure and hordes of goblins. Whatever your purpose, don't be afraid to join us at [www.nag.co.za/forums](http://www.nag.co.za/forums)

**QUESTION** / What is the most memorable collector's edition you've ever bought?

*It was Warhammer: Mark of Chaos collector's edition. There was a glitch with the advertising, so I got it for something like R120, instead of R500 odd :)*

*- ZoRPA*

**Hitman Absolution. Should have been called Hitman Absolutpieceofrubbish because not only was the CE trash so was the game.**

*- Acinixys*

*Never bought a collector's edition ever before, never felt the need to, won't ever start.*

*- Squirly*

**Dark Souls 2 CE, thought I was going to get a tiny little figure. Instead I got a giant statue that I could bludgeon an intruder to death with if I needed to.**

*- Death\_cometh*

*The God of War III Pandora's Box edition. Now I have a very fancy and intimidating sweets box in the lounge! And it has a hidden compartment for my good stuff :)*

*- Incognito*

*any media, should be consumed responsibly. Some people can't handle the weird stuff that goes on in games, and children are fragile, malleable creatures that need guidance in this bizarre world. I do think that most kids will be okay playing even violent games (I've managed to get through life without murdering anyone so far), but having a bit of perspective from an adult never hurts. So, yeah, age restrictions do matter, or they should at least, but ultimately it's not the government's job to control people, but to give them an idea of what's right and wrong.*

*Still, good on you for getting peeved, it means you care enough to want to do something about it. The next time you see this happen, speak to the manager of the store. Ed.*

**From:** Ziyaad Moola  
**Subject:** Impossible dreams

I'm a 13-year old boy named Ziyaad Moola (I'm using my dad's e-mail). Ever since I started playing Call of Duty (and I kick butt at it) I wanted to make video games for a living but I soon realized that there are almost no opportunities in SA and there's no chance that I'm going to America to work for Treyarch (which is my dream) so I decided to give up on that and choosing a more realistic career like a lawyer, mechanical engineer etc. Or maybe I can become like you guys reviewing games and making the best gaming magazine in the world.

And one more thing why are games so easy and short nowadays? I mean, I recently finished Beyond: Two Souls in 2 nights!



**Bradford de Boer**, "NAG is the bomb."

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 *Gears of War Judgement special edition Steel case*. Valued at R599



*It's good to have a goal that's easily defined, but don't limit yourself to wishing to work for a single company. Why not aim to start your own company? There are infinite opportunities in the world no matter where you are, but most of those are going to come from you, not from someone else. Yes we need lawyers and mechanical engineers and people to sell you fast food and people to make you want to buy that fast food, but what nobler job is there than creating fun? Don't wait for the world to find a place for you: find your own place! Don't move out of home yet, though, you're a bit young for that, and I don't think I could handle the angry email from your father.*

*But what I'm saying is: make games for yourself. Start now! Get some software like Construct or Game Maker and tinker with it. Game design is something that you'll learn with practice, so the sooner you start doing it, the better.*

*PS: Not all games are short and easy: spend some time with a management game or an epic RPG and you'll soon see the nights, weeks and months fall by the wayside. Ed.*

**From:** Cameron Damon  
**Subject:** Gaming Going DownHill

Okay first off GREAT MAG I buy it like every month! Now before we start with my subject of le Month I just wanna say that am a Multi-console Gamer if that's even a thing? But anyway I never bought in the Ps4 vs Xbox One or Ps Vita vs 3DS

because I have 3DS, Xbox 360 and am planning on getting a Ps Vita and PS4 (By saying planning on buying a PS4 I mean am waiting for a price drop) Now even though I have a Xbox 360 I love my handheld ! So when I started playing 3ds (at launch) I really liked it but these days I don't really know the 3ds doesn't offer any action games so I decided ill buy a vita too but I picked up that Sony and Xbox (microsoft) have gone downhill I mean I don't think the Xbox One brought anything new the ps4 though brought a whole new universe then the vita is getting great ports but they aren't selling and with Nintendo ....I don't even want to go there so my real question real here is do you guys personally think its time for a brand new company to make a console or for an old contestant like SEGA to come back into the Market just to Enlighten the gaming world ?

*Everything we've seen in the last few years has shown that there's very little room for new entrants in the console market. Take a look at Ouya and the slew of Android gaming consoles – they're not doing too well these days.*

*I guess if a new console came along that actually offered something that people want, that could change things. Maybe that's Valve's Steam Machine concept – who knows?*

*For the record, I'd love to see SEGA make a return. I don't think it'd be especially useful, but I'd just*

## THE SHORTS

[ extracts of LOL from the NAG audience ]

"Sooooooo, here's Insanely normal Saying CHEERS FOR NOW"  
– Rick Booyesen

"Must be getting old – I'm already reminiscing on the bygone days of gaming!"  
– Lee Mugleston

"Thank you NAG magazine for the great magazines I've been buying every month for the past 5 years"  
– Justin

*love to see it for the sake of seeing it. But hey, SEGA has finally found its place in the current market by shacking up with Nintendo, so maybe that's the best we can expect for now. Ed.*

## ON TWITTER

@nagcoza

**Luane Breedt**

@nagcoza is there a future where being a geek is going to be a "in thing"?

**Diamond Llama**

@nagcoza Does anyone else think Mikit0707 looks like Miroslav Klose?

**Nahuel Graziani**

@nagcoza Yep can confirm. Didn't know what overclocking was, saw the image, now I'm turning everything up to 11.

**Pieter POI de Bruyn**

Bit sad right now, but actually it is very funny. Just opened my July @nagcoza and discovered a June DVD in a July Cover. #StuffHappens

**Sheridan Moonsamy**

@nagcoza I read all your magazines monthly but unfortunately I don't have a console to play games..I wish I had one though.. #sad

**Luke Meyer**

@nagcoza ... How many Nag writers does it take to change a light bulb. No seriously. Mine popped and I am hiring.



# RULE YOUR GAME WITH THE POWER OF SOUND

## SIRUS-C

Professional 2.2 Channel Gaming Headset  
For PC / Console

SIRUS-C IS AN ULTRA-HIGH PERFORMANCE GAMING HEADSET FOR BOTH CONSOLE AND PC GAMERS. THE GROUNDBREAKING 2.2 CHANNEL SETUP ADOPTS THE SAME DESIGN AS HI-FI SPEAKER SYSTEMS, WITH EACH SIDE UTILIZING 44 + 40 MM DRIVERS TO BETTER COVER THE ENTIRE AUDIO SPECTRUM FROM LOW TO HIGH FREQUENCIES. THE INTERCHANGEABLE OVER-EAR, BREATHABLE MESH AND ARTIFICIAL LEATHER EAR CUPS PAIRED WITH THE ULTRA-FLEXIBLE HEADBAND PROVIDE GAMERS WITH THE GREATEST COMFORT AS WELL AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE NOISE CANCELLATION. THE SIRUS-C PROVIDES UNRIVALED GAMING, MUSIC, AND MOVIE PERFORMANCES TO THOSE WHO DEMAND THE VERY BEST.

coolermaster.com  
CMSTORM.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

by Miklós Szecsei



# I, GAMER

## Pre-order NOW!

Pre-ordering video games is nothing new. The practice of getting gamers to part with their money before a game is ready to ship is something the industry has been perfecting for years. The concept, however, has become increasingly absurd: we're in the Kickstarter age, which means we're now giving money to people who have a plan for a product but insufficient funds to bring that product to market. We also have Early Access, which is (pessimistically) a way for you to pay for something that's broken so that you can provide free QA testing for the developer. Pretty soon we'll be giving money to creative types just to get them *thinking*. Imagine this: Tim Schafer is seen scratching his luscious, creative beard before saying, "I feel the need to *create* something FOR YOU, but I can't put financial burdens on hold while I sit in the thinking stages. Pay for my thoughts and it may turn into a new video game one day." And after that? Well, maybe after that we'll just give creative types money for nothing whatsoever, because after so much preconditioning that'll just seem like a good idea. (Spoiler: it's a stupid idea.)

Pre-ordering, however, seems to be a swearword among critics of the video games industry. The main concern stems from when publishers embargo reviews until the day the game launches. This way when they put out a terrible game that's been marketed superbly and pre-ordered to hell and back, they're guaranteed to make some money before everyone reads reviews and realises they've been duped. "Too late to cancel your pre-order, sucker! Thanks for your money!" said every publisher ever.

Now, however, there seems to be a new and more insidious retailer-publisher partnership on the horizon, and it's being spearheaded by GameStop. For those who perhaps don't know, GameStop is the largest video game retail store in the world with nearly 6,500 shops across America, Canada, Europe and New Zealand. (Incidentally, their parent company also owns the biggest video game magazine in the world, *Game Informer*. You know, the magazine that lands an exclusive game reveal cover feature nearly every month; the magazine that then drip-feeds information online for weeks. It's almost like they're a carriage in the game-hype-train that's pulling out of Pre-Order Station and barrelling headlong towards the end of the line where a GameStop just happens to be. If that's not a conflict of interest I don't know what is. But I digress... *horribly*.) *[This is why we introduced featured columns, folks! Ed]*

GameStop's latest weapon involves throwing money at developers so that those developers can create exclusive gameplay content that can only be

purchased through a GameStop. That might mean either via pre-ordering, or by buying the content through GameStop's digital shopfront. Hell, it might even mean that we'll get situations where games will come out in a standard version, and then a "GameStop" version. Imagine: *"Far Cry 4: GameStop Edition – Access 8 hours of additional content set on the northern face of Kyrat's mountain range."* Whatever it is, and whichever way the content gets to you, it is content that has been bankrolled by GameStop, which in turn has netted them exclusivity.

There's nothing more stupid than publishers giving different retailers unique pre-order bonuses, but until now, all of these "retailer exclusive pre-order bonuses" have used the word "exclusive" very loosely. Normally, within a year of the game launching, every pre-order bonus item is made available as DLC anyway. Arguably the content that's provided as the pre-order bonus is normally inconsequential to the actual game. But with GameStop's new plan, we could see exclusive gameplay, locations or characters becoming unique to GameStop stores. What happens to those who can't access a GameStop, like us in South Africa?

For many this doesn't sit right because it appears that people in suits (who have proven time and again to have zero creative integrity, and to care only about the bottom line *because that's their job*) are going to have a degree of control over the creative process. GameStop is positing they'll have no creative influence, but if you're bankrolling something, and that something is going to become exclusive to you after completion, then you automatically have an implied degree of influence. And the idea of a non-creative company getting its fingers into the development pie in the name of "exclusive content" detracts from the idea of a developer's artistic freedom. This has corporate bottom lines smeared all over it and any developer with a shred of artistic integrity should tell GameStop suits to shove it.

### The hamburger:

Reliable, dependable, you know what you're going to get. Often hamburgers are topped with cheese, sometimes onions and tomato and lettuce. Often accompanied with chips, or wedges if you like a slightly healthy approach.



# Battleborn is Gearbox Software's newest baby

The “most ambitious” project yet from the makers of Borderlands



Gearbox Software has unveiled their newest title; it's called *Battleborn* and we're still not 100% certain what it is. That confusion is largely thanks to it being described by Gearbox boss Randy Pitchford as an “FPS; hobby-grade coop campaign; genre-blended, multi-mode competitive e-sports; meta-growth, choice + epic *Battleborn* Heroes!” Confused?

So then, it's another first-person shooter, which we're fine with because Gearbox knows how to make those (see: *Borderlands*; don't see: *Aliens: Colonial Marines* or *Duke Nukem Forever*).

What's particularly interesting is that the game almost looks like it should be a MOBA – a multiplayer online battle arena. The *Battleborn* reveal trailer (no gameplay, just CG) had all the trappings of a typical MOBA game: hyper stylised character design, hordes of diverse enemies, dozens of character types, and loads of different weapons ranging from magic to bows to guns. There are also

robots. So while many people spent the days following the announcement scratching their heads and wondering how a first-person MOBA would work, Randy Pitchford took to Twitter in an attempt to eradicate the confusion.

“MOBAs are fun,” he said in response to a fan's question, “but *Battleborn* isn't really a MOBA... it has a deep narrative campaign with heroes, villains, twists, turns and progression.” As far as Gearbox is concerned, *Battleborn* is a “hero shooter”.

At time of writing, Gearbox is yet to showcase any gameplay or provide further details. But the science-fiction setting with a blend of fantasy role-playing is definitely intriguing. Add in the fact that there'll be multiple characters to play as, a co-op campaign designed for five players, and RPG elements akin to what Gearbox did in *Borderlands*, and there's probably enough reason to be a little giddy from excitement here.

You can expect to see *Battleborn* on PC, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One.

## It's a kind of magic

World Cup football mania has probably subsided by time you read this, but if you've still got a hankering for some sportsball action then look no further than your own pocket, in the form of the soon-to-be-released *Blood Bowl* for Android and iOS.

Originally released for PC, *Blood Bowl* is a Warhammer-flavoured take on American football, complete with orcs, elves, dwarves, powerful magic and deadly combatants. The game will include access to an online league as well as cross-platform play between mobile and PC.

# GAME DESIGN

Study What You Love



The Wits School of Arts  
and  
The School of Electrical  
& Information Engineering

For more information contact  
Hanli Geyster:  
Hanli.Geyster@wits.ac.za  
tel: (011) 7174687  
[www.wits.ac.za/wsoa](http://www.wits.ac.za/wsoa)  
[www.eie.wits.ac.za](http://www.eie.wits.ac.za)





**The Nutella cheesecake:** Only because Pippa shared a recipe on Facebook the day these bios were being written. Sometimes the universe just decides things.

## THE GAME STALKER

by Pippa Tshabalala

### Diversify or be forgotten

It seems to be coming across a number of instances on the lack of diversity in video games lately. Most prevalent among the controversy is *Assassin's Creed: Unity* and the fact that Ubisoft claimed it was too much work to create female characters because, "it's double the animations, it's double the voices, all that stuff and double the visual assets," according to creative director Alex Amancio. Understandably this statement caused an Internet furore, and considering the fact that Ubi have previously had a female protagonist in *Assassin's Creed: Liberation*, it seems shortsighted of them to now not only remove their plans for a female assassin, but also to issue a statement that it was "too much work". The controversy was further fuelled by the fact that a former *Assassin's Creed 3* animation director argued that additional female animations would only add an extra day or two to the production time.

I do feel I have to be (at least slightly) fair to Ubi however. Much as the decision annoys me, they do generally cater to a much broader and diverse demographic than most video game developers who, particularly if we look at a number of upcoming games, seem content to put forward the unshaven, white, male anti-hero. So yes, the *Assassin's Creed* franchise usually portrays male protagonists, and this is typical of the industry (for better or worse) at the moment, BUT they've also had a female character (Aveline in *Liberation*), a character of African descent (Adewale in *Black Flag* DLC), a character of Middle Eastern origin (Altair in *AC1*) and a character of Native American origin (Connor in *AC3*).

In an industry that is increasingly pushing for inclusiveness and diversity, to openly state that it was too much work to include a female character sounds not only lazy but also ignorant of the current market in which they're operating. It's not only the under-represented portion of the market (namely women and gamers of colour) asking for increased diversity either, plenty of the more traditional white male market are as well. Do I condone Ubisoft's statement? No, I don't. But do I understand it? Yeah kind of.

When under pressure to get a game out, is it easier to say sorry and make cutbacks regardless, or to delay the game further (not just a couple of days if they're to be believed) to the wrath of gamers everywhere? Because let's face it – gamers are incredibly unforgiving when it comes to delays. The slightest hint that a game might not make its initial release deadline, and forums everywhere will be populated with hateful comments about how the developers have let us down yet again.

That said, any game developer that is still of the mind-set that the gaming market is predominantly white male, is really not paying attention. Sit up, look around you, take notice of what *everyone else* is doing, then change that – otherwise you might just end up blending into the landscape.

## Sunny skies with no chance of cruelty

The Sims 4 won't have pools or toddlers at launch

If there's one thing that unites all players of *The Sims* under a single, unified banner, it's casual digital torture. Everyone's done it, really. At some point, you grow tired of catering to your Sims' needs and trap them in a room without any doors. Or delete the only toilet in the house. Or delete the ladder from the pool, which effectively dooms any swimming Sims to a watery grave. That last one will be impossible in *The Sims 4* at launch, because EA Maxis isn't including pools in the game. There won't be toddlers either.

Following the expectedly boisterous outcry from fans of the series, EA Maxis responded on the official website for the game, clarifying that the developers made the conscious decision to remove pools and toddlers in order to revolutionise other aspects of the game.

"It begins with new technology and systems that we built for this new base game for *The Sims* – a new AI system, new animation system, new audio positioning tools, new locomotion logic, new routing intelligence and much more are all entirely new in this game," says executive producer Rachel Franklin. "The vision for *The Sims 4* is a new experience that brings your Sims to life in deeper and uniquely personal ways – through emotions, personality traits, behaviors and interactions. To do that, our technology base needed a major upgrade."

Franklin gives numerous examples of trade-offs that needed to be made. Pools were removed in favour of adding new features to Build Mode, such as direct manipulation and the ability to exchange custom rooms. Toddler-aged Sims were dropped in order to implement a more rich set of emotions and lifelike behaviours for your Sims. Create A Sim has far more options that let you customise your Sims' personalities (even their walk style can be altered), and Sims have many more ways to interact with each other (Sims can communicate in groups now, for example) and the world around them. Franklin goes on to say that you'll notice and begin to appreciate all these new technologies the moment you start the game. We imagine that it won't be long before EA Maxis adds pools and toddlers back in with one of the game's several thousand inevitable expansion packs.



# Crash and burn

Nintendo consoles have the habit of resisting attempts by console hackers around the world (relatively speaking, at least), but now a British group of hackers has released a video demonstrating them hacking the Wii U's memory in real-time while playing *Mario Kart 8*.

The video shows the group altering simple things like music playback speed, track names, and menu fonts. This is accomplished by abusing an exploit in the console's browser, and only works on specific firmware versions.

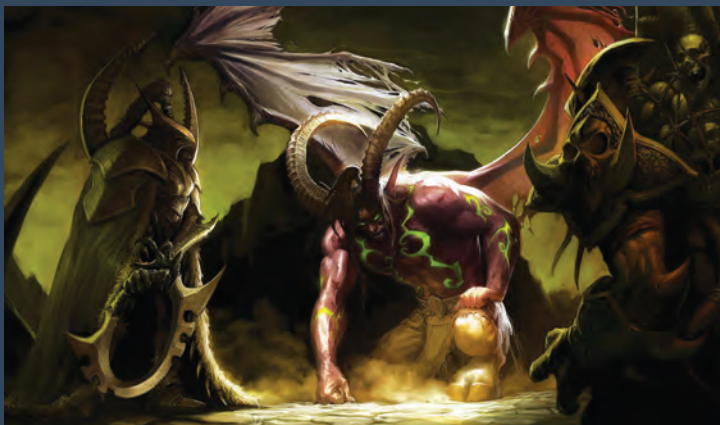
But it seems like many Nintendo players aren't all that pleased with the group (no matter how pleased they are with themselves): complaints flooded the comments section of the video on YouTube that they're damaging Nintendo and *Mario Kart*. But the group is adamant that their intentions are to have fun rather than encourage cheating or piracy. They're more interested in the art of hacking rather than those people who'd rather use it for illegal purposes, and insist that they won't ever release a public hack that could help people cheat in games or install pirated software.



## Blizzard CCO heads out the door

In a company as long-running as Blizzard, there are bound to be a number of personnel changes along the way, and now Rob Pardo is being added to the list. In a thread on the *World of Warcraft* forums, Pardo announced his resignation as Blizzard's chief creative officer, and gave little indication as to what he'll get up to next other than the cheeky statement that he'll let people know "when it's ready".

Pardo has served as a senior designer on many Blizzard titles, having joined the team during the early days of *StarCraft*. Since then he's contributed towards *Warcraft III*, *Diablo II* and *III*, and most notably had the role of lead designer on *World of Warcraft*. From his wording it seems like Pardo will remain in the games industry, but other than that there's no telling what he's up to.



# Huntkey®

Power Your Dream



**90W X-MAN**  
Universal Notebook Adapter

5V-2A USB Port

10 Tips compatible with most Notebooks



Power Bank  
5200MAH



Power Bank  
4400MAH

# Power Solutions

## X7 SERIES



**X7 900**  
900W Modular Gaming Power Supply

**X7 1200**  
1200W Modular Gaming Power Supply

**TVR**  
TECHNOLOGY • VISION • RELIABILITY

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](http://www.tvr.co.za)



**The lasagne:** Lasagne is layered, and within each layer you'll find meat, sauce and pasta. There's some melted cheese on top and sometimes even little slices of tomato.

## MIKTAR'S MEANDERINGS

by Miktar Dracon

### In which we strain a bad analogy...

It was like being asked to eat chocolate chip cookies every day. And get paid to do it. Eating cookies every day may not be the best comparison for what it's like writing for NAG, but it'll do. I love chocolate chip cookies. Which is to say, I love games. But I also like actual chocolate chip cookies. Let's not get confused here. So there I am, being asked to eat cookies every day and then tell people what the cookies are like.

So I ate the cookies. I paid close attention to their texture, flavour, how well they were made. I made note of the ingredients used in their production. Certain brands of cookies were, generally, always better than others. But then a cookie might come from an unexpected place and be super amazing in ways I didn't expect. And there was, and still is, no end to the cookies being put out by the cookie-making industry. So I'd write what the cookies were like, if they were well-made, if they had any pubic hair in them (manufacturing issues do happen), and so on.

Eat enough cookies, and you start noticing patterns. Certain companies always make them the same way – and they're good – but they're just not very interesting after the 100<sup>th</sup> one. That's not a failing on the cookie's part, though. The cookie isn't meant to be interesting to the same person, every single time. But then some companies take the same cookie they've always made and just put it in a different wrapper. Same thing, pretending to be different. That can get a bit annoying, because it's disingenuous. But on the flip side, I noticed that's what people tend to be like. They want the same thing they've always had, but be fooled into thinking it's something new.

At first, I thought people wanted to know everything about the cookies. All the details, the history of their manufacturer, who invented their recipe, who refined it, who was involved in the various steps along the way from discrete ingredients to completed cookie. There are so many interesting questions that could be answers: what does the history of cookies tell us, who benefits from it, what does the future hold for the cookie eating industry? And what about cookie makers that have started replacing the chocolate chip with carob, for "health" reasons?

After a while I realised most people don't really care about all of that. The number one question was always, "is it delicious?" One could write a thousand word essay on the interplay between the eggs, wheat, sugar, cocoa, and how the entire creation process influenced the final flavour, but people just wanted to know how it tastes. And how do you answer a question like, "is it delicious?" Everyone's idea of what tastes good is different. Some people are allergic to chocolate or egg-based products. Some don't like the crumbly texture of cookies. A thousand people asking "is it delicious" is actually a thousand different questions.

And now, things have changed. Seems people would rather watch someone eat a cookie on YouTube and listen to their stream-of-consciousness ramblings as they talk with their mouth full. The cookie is becoming less important than the person that eats it, or how they eat it. Perhaps writing about cookies was never the best way to cover cookies after all.

## Drugs and decapitation in *Escape Dead Island*



It's starting to feel like *Dead Island* is everywhere. First, there was the original *Dead Island* and its follow-up *Riptide*. Then came the arrival of *Dead Island: Epidemic*, the "ZOMBA" that's eagerly looking to grab a slice of the MOBA-like pie. There's also *Dead Island 2*, the upcoming sequel that's in development at *Spec Ops: The Line* developers Yager. And now there's newly announced spin-off *Escape Dead Island*, which is basically *Dead Island* laced with hallucinogens.

It's a story-driven third-person action game, starring you as Cliff Calo, who arrives on the island of Banoi with his friends a few weeks after the original undead outbreak. It's up to you to uncover the origins of the virus that started it all. You'll have to be extra stealthy as you explore the island, because at the start of the game you're not really equipped to deal with the zombies, and you're not immune to the virus either. You'll have to be tactical when it comes to dealing with the undead, even later on in the game when you're better equipped and more capable of defending yourself.

There's a strange supernatural element to the proceedings, with Cliff experiencing hallucinations that'll make it unclear whether or not what you're enduring on the island is real or no more than a fever dream. The game will be out later this year on PC, 360 and PS3 for \$39.99 (around R400).

### Developer Neversoft officially gone, staff burn company logo

In May of this year it was revealed that developer Neversoft was to be merged with *Call of Duty* developer Infinity Ward. Both development teams had previously collaborated on *Call of Duty: Ghosts*, and parent company Activision obviously felt the teamwork was good enough. On the 11th of July, the team at Neversoft had their last day together as a development team before being shuffled into Infinity Ward. To mark the occasion, they created an effigy of their company logo (the eyeball on a spear) and set fire to it. Everyone also received engraved bowie knives as parting gifts. That's one edgy good-b-eye. (Sorry.)



# Ripley returns to the Nostromo



It's been 35 years since *Alien* first took to the big screens to scare the bejeezus out of everyone with a pulse, and it's been 17 years since Sigourney Weaver has voiced a script with the name Ellen Ripley on it. All that's about to change with the upcoming first-person horror/shooter *Alien: Isolation*, which will feature two DLC-based missions starring Weaver along with the voice talents of Tom Skerritt (Dallas), Veronic Cartwright (Lambert), Harry Dean Stanton (Brett), and Yaphet Kotto (Parker).

Initially announced as pre-order-exclusive content, the two missions entitled Crew Expendable and Last Survivor will give players the opportunity to play as multiple characters in a return to some of the scariest moments from the first film. The missions won't mirror the film scenes, however; expect a few changes that fit better with the interactive nature of video games.

When SEGA first announced the bonus content as pre-order-exclusive, the Internet did what it does best: it went bananas. Thankfully some smart decision-makers at SEGA realised that an event as monumental as Sigourney Weaver reprising the role of Ripley can't be kept in isolation, and shortly afterwards they announced that the two missions will be available as DLC. There's no word yet on a release date for the DLC or how much they'll cost, but we're willing to bet it won't be cheap.

## Underworld franchise set to return

Paul Neurath is an industry veteran who's worked on classic video games like *System Shock 2*, *Thief II: The Metal Age* and *Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss*. He was the co-founder of Blue Sky Productions, which would later become Looking Glass Studios – the creators of overwhelmingly important games like *Thief* and *System Shock*. Neurath has now announced that he's started a new studio called OtherSide Entertainment, which he says will focus "on bringing to core gamers reboots of classic game franchises".

In news that caused the NAG office to erupt in a deafening squeal of collective delight, Neurath has announced OtherSide's first project: *Underworld Ascension*. In case you're unclear as to why we're so excited by the return of this seminal franchise, we'll let *BioShock* creator Ken Levine explain: "*Underworld* had a transformative effect on my understanding of what games were. It was the first time I ever felt 'inside' of an imaginary world. It was the game that primed all of my creative ambitions."

# XRocker

Don't just sit there... Start rocking!

## XRocker Gaming Chairs

Premium Sound System with AFM Technology and full rocking motion. Exclusive Audio Force Modulation technology bring games, movies and music to life!



Atom

Sport



SUZUKA

NEW IN SOUTH AFRICA!

Pro



Control



Serious Gamers Only!!

Compatible with PSP Vita, PS2, PS3, PS4, Wii U, Xbox 360, Nintendo 3DS, iPod, iPhone, iPad, MP3 players, TV, CD, DVD, BluRay and most gaming devices.

Contact: [sales@xrocker.co.za](mailto:sales@xrocker.co.za)

visit [www.xrocker.co.za](http://www.xrocker.co.za)

find us on Facebook



## Remastered Grim Fandango launching on PC, Mac and Linux

In last month's issue of NAG we could hardly curtail our girlish squeals of delight at the news that 1998's classic adventure game, *Grim Fandango*, is being remastered and re-released on Sony's PlayStation 4 and PlayStation Vita. Now our squeals of delight can be complimented by the manly chest beating of the Glorious Master Race, because the remastered *Grim Fandango* is launching on PC, Mac, and Linux alongside Sony's platforms. While Sony was integral in striking the deal with IP owner Disney, the game won't remain locked to their hardware. There's no word on it heading to Microsoft's consoles however.

Tim Schafer (the lead designer and head honcho at Double Fine) has also revealed that the remastered edition will include a number of the fan implemented updates and additions that people have been creating and putting out for the last 15 years. "It was really only the hard work of the fans that kept people able to play that game for years," Schafer said. Once the original *Grim Fandango* stopped being printed, it was the fans that continued to create updates and fixes to keep the game running on modern hardware.

There's still no release date for the remastered edition.

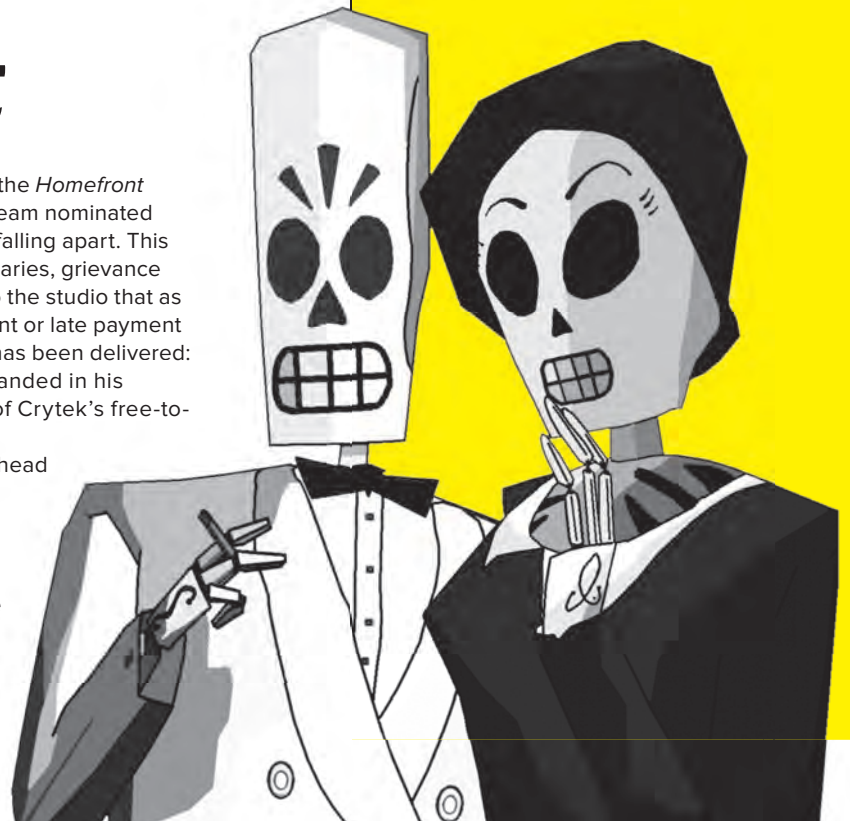
# Crytek is falling apart

If you're one of the (likely few) people who were amped for the *Homefront* sequel, we've got some bad news for you: Crytek UK, the team nominated to develop the game after Crytek picked up the licence, is falling apart. This comes after waves of "insider reports" of late payment of salaries, grievance letters and walkouts. It's been estimated by sources close to the studio that as many as 100 employees have left, mostly due to non-payment or late payment of salaries. Now what could be the final kick below the belt has been delivered: *Homefront: The Revolution* game director Hasit Zala has handed in his resignation. Zala also had a lead role in the development of Crytek's free-to-play shooter *Warface*.

This news follows the confirmation by Kotaku that studio head Karl Hilton is preparing to take off.

"It creates a weird scenario as there are now no upper management," said a person connected to Crytek UK. "Everything is just continuing on a downwards spiral."

None of this bodes well for the company, especially since it was announced that *Ryse 2* has been all-but cancelled following a fallout between Crytek and Microsoft over the ownership of the young franchise.



## Dungeon Keeper Mobile “innovated too much”



When EA launched *Dungeon Keeper* on mobile devices it was met with tears of joy so juicy you'd need a month's supply of kitchen towel to stay dry. Then everyone played the game. Then their tears were very different. But EA soldiered on, after shutting down the developers Mythic Entertainment, and got their best spin doctors on the case. Despite their efforts, the game's horrible payment model was too much for everyone, and, while the game can still be had today, it's accepted as a failure by almost everyone.

Everyone, that is, except for EA mobile chief Frank Gibeau, who claims that *DK Mobile's* failing was that it innovated too much.

“Brands ultimately have a certain amount of permission that you can make changes to,” said Gibeau “and I think we might have innovated too much or tried some different things that people just weren't ready for.”

Gibeau continued to say that the reboot “didn't connect with an audience for a variety of reasons”, which will ultimately sink the title into obscurity and likely prevent the company from having another go at a reboot.

Oh well, at least you can still pick up the original game and its sequel for \$6 each from [gog.com](http://gog.com). Perhaps it's best to leave some titles in the safe haven of nostalgia anyway.

## Thief movie allegedly in the works

According to a report on Hollywood news website The Tracking Board, film production companies Vertigo Films and Prime Universe are currently in the early stages of developing a *Thief* movie. Producers Adrian Askarieh and Roy Lee are allegedly part of the project as well; Askarieh is currently working on the *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* movie (you didn't know? Yeah, there's a *Deus Ex* movie coming as well) and he was also behind 2007's rather bland *Hitman* movie. He seems to be Square Enix's go-to person for film adaptations.

There is no word on who is writing the *Thief* film. Likewise the project is yet to list a director or any cast members. Whether or not the movie will follow the original plot of the 1999 game, or follow the IP reimagining from this year, is uncertain.

Within the next five years or so we're going to be inundated with video game movies. There's the upcoming *Warcraft* film, as well as films based on *The Last of Us*, *Metal Gear Solid*, *Assassin's Creed*, *Splinter Cell*, *Watch Dogs*, *Minecraft* and *Angry Birds*. Either Hollywood is running out of ideas, or they've admitted defeat and realised that the gaming industry is the future of entertainment.

# 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

[www.piracysucks.co.za](http://www.piracysucks.co.za)

# Command & Conquer saved from GameSpy meltdown



With long-running online multiplayer service GameSpy shutting down for good earlier this year, the future of many games that had formerly used the service was unclear, their creators opting to not source an alternative method for multiplayer matchmaking. Fifty of Electronic Arts' titles were affected, including the venerable *Command & Conquer* series. EA stated that they'd reached an agreement with GameSpy to keep the multiplayer portions of five C&C titles running until the end of June while they searched for a community-driven solution.

Enter C&C: Online, a new platform launched and managed by the community to ensure that *C&C: Generals* (plus expansion *Zero Hour*), *C&C 3: Tiberium Wars* (and expansion *Kane's Wrath*) and *C&C: Red Alert 3* can still be enjoyed by those seeking to head online and squish their friends' rocket squads with Mammoth tanks. We love that this has happened, because those are five truly excellent games that deserve to be played forever. Now, if you'll excuse us, we'll be disappearing into Nostalgia Alley, quietly reinstalling *Tiberium Wars*. Because we've just gotten an itch.

# Civilization: Beyond Earth arrives in October, brings gifts

The upcoming intergalactic charms of *Civilization: Beyond Earth* now have a concrete release date. You'll be exploring, expanding, exploiting and exterminating across various alien worlds on October 24th. All our time spent with the game points to it being a delicious treat for fans of 4X, so you'd do well to mark the date on your calendar.

As is expected these days when release dates are announced, Firaxis and 2K have also revealed the game's pre-order bonuses. Well, bonus. It's a map pack containing six extra planets that are based on actual existing "exoplanets" – which are extrasolar planets that don't orbit our sun, but instead orbit another star, stellar remnant or brown dwarf, says Wikipedia.



# Caption of the month



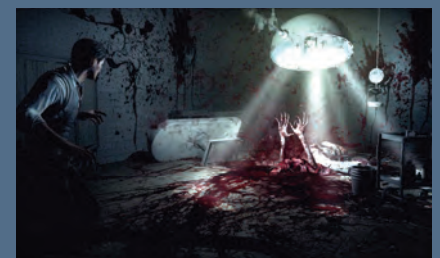
Every month we'll choose a screenshot from a random game and

write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better one. The winner will get a copy of *Sniper Elite III* for PS4 from Apex Interactive. Send your captions to [letters@nag.co.za](mailto:letters@nag.co.za) with the subject line "August caption".



## NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT AT HUMOUR

This is the weirdest Yoga exercise I've ever seen.



## LAST MONTH'S WINNER

"Didn't your mother tell you your room is a bloody mess?"  
- Sajida



# 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

## Skullgirls developer, Lab Zero Games, ingeniously ensnares pirate

Developers are coming up with all sorts of amusing ways to ensnare game pirates. Fighting game developer Lab Zero has now added to this ever-growing checklist of amusements. *Skullgirls* player Dan Hibiki encountered an odd message in his game: "What's the square root of a fish? Now I'm sad." Confused, he did what a lot of people would have: he contacted Lab Zero on Twitter to ask for help. Their response was pretty priceless: "Oh that? It means you should probably buy the game instead of pirate it." The message only displays in pirated versions of *Skullgirls*.

Awkward.

# Roxy hunt

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



## July winner

Anthony Stride, page 29

## This month's prize

Marvel Dice Masters valued at R250. Sponsored by Skycastle.



SKYCASTLE

## Airtight Games pops a seal, is no more

Airtight Games, developers of recent murder mystery / action adventure game *Murdered: Soul Suspect* (the review of which you can read elsewhere in the magazine) and 2012's charming but misguided puzzler *Quantum Conundrum*, have quietly turned off the lights and shut their doors for the last time. The studio had been experiencing tough times for a lengthy stretch, with key people leaving the studio and reports of extensive layoffs, and it seems the ongoing turmoil finally got the best of them.

"Thanks to all of the fans, family, friends and colleagues who supported us and made the last 10 years possible," reads a tweet from Airtight. "Thanks to all of the amazing people that worked on *Dark Void*, *Quantum Conundrum*, *Murdered*, *Soul Fjord*, *Pixld* and *DerpBike*." We wish everyone affected by the studio's closure all the best.



# home\_coded

EXPOSURE FOR SOUTH AFRICAN INDIE DEVELOPERS

by Rodain Joubert

## BOARD INSPIRATION

As mentioned, Clockwork Acorn has been informed by board game design for some of their projects – *Luminare* is based on the design of a game called *Zendo*, while *Monsters and Medicine* is comparable to the tile-based *Quarantine*.

Due to their non-digital nature and other limitations, board games are an excellent study for many important design rules that can carry over to videogames – even if you never intend to make a board game yourself.

The necessity of manually “keeping track” in a game means that resource amounts tend to be small, easily quantifiable and intuitively applied. The placement of physical tokens usually means a clear and understandable grid, while the ruleset and balancing emerges from other non-fuzzy considerations. Overall, board games provide a stable set of principles to work from and help the strengthening and tightening of a game – even when the designer has the option to take advantage of computer control.

**The pepper steak pie:** Everyone likes steak, even vegetarians. Okay maybe not vegetarians, but they'd probably enjoy it if they stopped eating tofu all the time.

## Of clockwork and medicine

Over the past few months, the local game development community has released a plethora of mechanically rich, short-term prototypes. Some members have been producing these prototypes at quite a rate – “a game a week” initiatives are particularly hot at the moment.

One of the entities involved in this approach is Clockwork Acorn ([www.clockworkacorn.com](http://www.clockworkacorn.com)), a three-man development team based in Stellenbosch. Their approach to iteration and experimentation is a pleasure to behold. True to the company name, this trio is very mechanically focused and builds a lot of prototypes with low dependence on art and a high concentration of interesting game concepts.

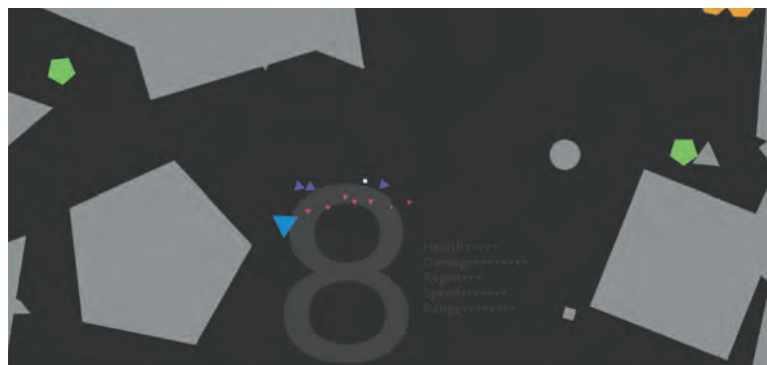
This group's major strength is their ability to draw ideas from a lot of different sources and implement them quickly. Their games have ranged from board game-inspired deductive challenges (*Luminare*) to text-based bank simulators (*Bacchus Bank*) and often have an element of randomisation or procedural generation with their challenges and game environments.

The latter aspect is most clearly demonstrated in their recent stealth game

prototype *Unseen*, which uses semi-random upgrade paths and uniquely generated environments of light and shadow to give players a fresh, varied and fast-paced stealth experience with every playthrough. The speed with which Clockwork Acorn is able to produce this (as well as their ability to experiment with broad brush strokes in gameplay aspects such as abilities and AI patterns) makes for a quickly populated project list and a real intensity of activity and engagement that is only really matched locally by established, jam-focused powerhouses such as Free Lives.

The members of Clockwork Acorn take their work seriously and have aspirations for a commercially sustainable company built on projects that have a development cycle of months rather than years. Their mantra “fail fast” is an important design paradigm that links to this as well as the fact that their prototypes are often on display and publically playable – allowing them to quickly and effectively discover what *doesn't* work so that they have more time to commit to concepts which resonate with players more.

The culmination of these efforts thus far is probably the commercial project called *Monsters and Medicine*, made earlier this





year using a pre-order model to help them fund development and give players access to the in-progress game build. Like several of the company's other game designs, *Monsters and Medicine* draws inspiration from (or is at least comparable to) similarly-structured board games.

It's an elegant, turn-based game that has the player building a hospital to cure endless waves of deathly-ill (but delightfully cute) critters lining up outside the front door. Hospital construction consists of discrete actions on a simple grid, adding facilities one at a time to address whichever ailment is currently the most pressing.

Nuance is introduced with the various kinds of monsters that can fall sick, and how their own biology can radically change needs and priorities – some are excellent at healing up quickly, for example, but take more space per room. Others start off a little unhealthier, or tend to be more numerous, or have some other effect on the patient queue. Booster rooms and other

layout rules round off the package.

*Monsters and Medicine*, overall, ends up being a solid, reasonably-scoped offering which seems a natural fit for the team creating it, aiming for multiple platforms in order to earn and recoup for the next project. It has been through several published iterations in the developer community and the Clockwork Acorn team members regularly seek out meaningful feedback online and at Make Games meetups.

It remains to be seen if this company can maintain their pace of production, communication and good spirits, but the current momentum is an extremely positive indicator for their long-term development and reflects a willingness to research and understand good practice to improve their products. In the harsh world of commercially-viable game design, this is the best way to "earn your luck" and is the reason why Clockwork Acorn are an excellent example to aspiring devs who want to know what goals they should begin heading towards. **NAG**

## WEB PRESENCE

If you don't get around to trying out any of this company's numerous games, prototypes and experiments, do yourself the favour of visiting their website at [www.clockworkacorn.com](http://www.clockworkacorn.com). Look around for a bit.

Their site is clear, navigable and well-populated with projects, news and contact details. Internal crosslinking is frequent. The design is simple, functional and professional. The team also uses the popular and comprehensive media kit from [www.dopresskit.com](http://www.dopresskit.com) (it's highly favoured among local developers and has been mentioned in this column before).

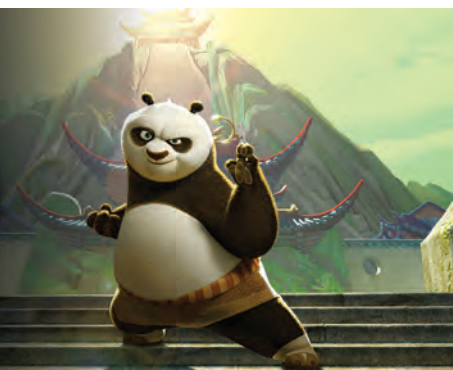
Maintenance is sharp, updates are regular, and perhaps the most exceptional aspect of the site is how lovingly the rough work and prototypes are packaged. Projects are presented neatly and clearly and look genuinely appealing to play before one even loads them up.

This is a fine example of the sort of site that independent developers need to maximise their value. It's easy and appealing for users in many ways. Learning good practice like this is vital for a strong Internet presence.

**2D ANIMATION**  
**3D ANIMATION**  
**VISUAL EFFECTS**  
**GAMES DEVELOPMENT**

[WWW.LEARN3D.CO.ZA](http://WWW.LEARN3D.CO.ZA) - RANDBURG

**LEARN 3D .CO.ZA**  
**MAKE - BELIEVE**



# GET THE WORM

A LOOK INSIDE THE WORLD OF STEAM EARLY ACCESS

Ask a hundred gamers what Early Access means to them and you'll probably get a hundred different answers. It's a concept that's divided the gaming community in the last year or so, and well it should: it's a strange idea.

In a nutshell, Early Access games are released on Steam before they're complete. These games could be in alpha, beta, or even conceptual stages, and they're sold (usually for a reduced price – sometimes for an increased price!) to the public so that the developers can get feedback from players before the game is considered "final". At least, that's the idea: the reality is that many devs use it as a way to get free quality assurance testing (which usually costs a fair bit) while drumming up support for their titles and making money all the while.

Thankfully, this big wonderful industry is filled with variety, so there are many games out there in Early Access that are doing very well, not taking advantage of their playerbase (not entirely, at least), and are using the exposure to build as close to a perfect game as possible. We've selected a handful of games that really stand out for us, for a number of reasons.

## TO STEAM OR NOT TO STEAM?

"Early Access" is a Steam brand, but the idea is far from Valve's invention. Before Valve went and gave it a special name, this concept was known as alpha-funding (technically it still is). Perhaps the best example of this is *Minecraft*, which brought in millions of euros before it even reached beta. Other games like *Prison Architect* and *Wasteland 2* began their development journey outside of Steam, but have found a happy home there with gamers who don't mind a little DRM with their indie development.



Bohemia Interactive's

# DAYZ

PRICE: \$14.99

I've died a hundred different ways in a hundred different games, but dropping dead of starvation halfway through a can of spaghetti is an experience entirely unique to *DayZ*. It's also the only game where other players will murder you for a tin opener or a nice pair of pants or even a plastic bag of your precious bodily fluids – but every death is an important lesson about survival in the zombie apocalypse, and that's why I only buy ring-pull canned products, wear skinny jeans, and tell everybody I have Hep-C.

First launched in 2012 as a total conversion mod for *ARMA II*, a standalone version of *DayZ* is now in the works over at ARMA developer Bohemia Interactive (with original mod creator Dean Hall also on the team for the time being), and an Early Access alpha has been available on Steam since December 2013 with new features added on a regular basis.

Although some objective-based gameplay is expected at a later date, right now there's not actually much point to *DayZ* besides not dying, but not dying in *DayZ* is a major accomplishment in itself. Just like a real zombie apocalypse, except in this one, I get to start over when I die. And next time, I won't wait until I'm on the verge of collapse before taking a lunch break.

- AZIMUTH



Double Fine Production's

# SPACEBASE DF-9

PRICE: \$24.99

Very much still an alpha, as it's just a sandbox with no real goals, *Spacebase DF-9* is a colony management sim where you have to keep humans and aliens happy as they go about their lives in space. You can mine asteroids for materials needed to expand your colony, come across derelicts with hidden artefacts, and will have to deal with meteors, raiders and explosive decompression.

Right now, all you can do is build your base, expand upon it, and try to manage the various needs that your population may have. If someone gets too depressed, they might think turning off the oxygen generators is a good idea. Citizens will mingle, form friendships, or become enemies. As you assign them duties, like mining, repairing or security, they'll improve at these tasks. You can build turrets to defend your colony, and assign security personnel to patrol.

*Spacebase DF-9* is a great idea, and we can always do with more management sims, especially ones set in space. It's difficult to recommend the game in its current state however – Double Fine still has a lot of work left to do. Several room types and technologies don't do anything yet, the citizens can get pretty erratic, and there are plenty of bugs in the code. But if all this gets sorted out, and a functional campaign is added, *Spacebase DF-9* is going to be a great addition to the genre.

- MIKTAR



Endnight Games'

# THE FOREST

PRICE: \$14.99

When *The Forest* was unveiled it caused a veritable landslide of hype and publicity thanks to some stunning visuals and the promise of a survival horror game with *Minecraft* styled gathering, exploration and crafting.

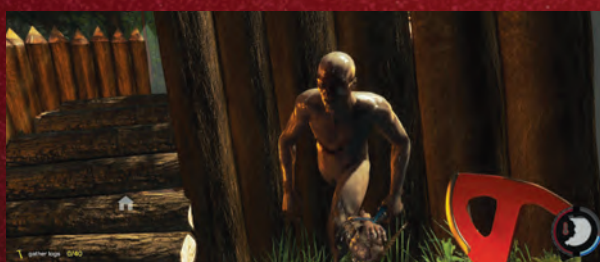
After spending some time with it, it's clear that the game still has a long way to go, but the potential is staggering. All the basic mechanics are in place: you get a survival book that provides you with blueprints for various structures (walls, traps, boats, shelters, fires etc.) and some of the crafted items are ready for you to figure out. Unfortunately the save system is a little buggy so I lost some progress on more than one occasion.

The forest inhabitants (which I'm assuming are cannibals of some sort) are very eerie, but their AI still needs a lot of work. Collision detection and character clipping often ruins the immersion, which at times is welcomed because the game can be pretty tense, especially when you wake up in cave and there are horrifically mutated creatures bearing down on you.

The game will dump you in a random area and while the immediately lootable items don't change, once you venture past the confines of the plane crash, you'll find different objects and environments each time you start a game.

If you are adamant that you want *The Forest*, then you may as well pony up for the Early Access alpha. If you can wait for the final release then do so; it's fun, but the alpha feels like the tip of the iceberg.

- MIKIT0707



inDev Brain's

# DEAD EFFECT

PRICE: \$4.99

*Dead Effect* is yet another zombie-themed FPS that began life as a freemium mobile endeavour and is now reaching out to desktop PC and Mac players. This jump between platforms is a risky business: the desktop gamer market is far more cynical, especially with regards to shooters. Can *Dead Effect* etch a name for itself successfully in a new environment?

If it's inspired gameplay you're after, look elsewhere.

*Dead Effect* is a shameless mish-mash of FPS clichés and tropes: guns, zombies, space ships and narrow corridors are all here. But while it may hardly be called original, it is pure fun. Shooting undead creeps in the face never gets old, and it successfully provides that feeling of dread whenever you're cornered and are frantically trying to swap ammo mags whilst a raging horde approaches.

There are a few leftovers from the game's mobile heritage. Weapons are upgradable and the general pace is slower compared to other games in this genre. The enemy count has been increased, though these new hordes have messed with the game's balance somewhat, and hopefully this will be addressed in upcoming builds.

The game makes excellent use of music to set the mood, though sadly the sub-par voice-acting has been carried over. Graphics are clean and functional and an excellent showcase of the power of the Unity engine, though not quite up to par to the latest shooter standards.

It's shaping up to be a decent game that, while nothing revolutionary, will satisfy those with a sci-fi/shooter itch.

- DELANO



Introversion Software's

# PRISON ARCHITECT

PRICE: \$29.99

Your first job in the game is to build an execution chamber for Edward – guilty or innocent, your values aside, this is what needs to be done. The interface is a little clunky and there are plenty of icons and options that lack visual individuality to easily pick them apart. The promotional video does talk about inspiration coming from *Dungeon Keeper* and *Theme Hospital* so if you're going to make those kinds of claims you need a flawless game dynamic.

The opening tutorial and ongoing game forces you to answer questions about how you will treat prisoners under your control, the fact that they lack any real visible personality can help or hinder what you do with them – depending on your personality. There are controls in place to prevent you being a total dick – for example, not feeding prisoners will cause them to riot. It's a balancing act that still needs polish. Early Access is always hit and miss and if you don't know the developer then it's really a bit of a lottery. Thankfully *Prison Architect* is already pretty interesting and will only benefit from constructive feedback and continued development. It's never going to be another *Theme Hospital* but this isn't really that kind of game, and a cartoony theme wouldn't fit in well with the overall feel the developers are going for. Introversion have a great track record (*DEFCON* and *Darwinia*) and are fiercely independent so your Early Access money is in very good hands.

- REDTIDE



Double Fine Production's

# NUCLEAR THRONE

PRICE: \$12.99

*Nuclear Throne* is the future of video games. Kinda. Who needs an Oculus Rift when you have a game that oozes with so much movement and feeling? Playing *Nuclear Throne* is a continued bombardment of sensation – each sword slice or bullet fired has a collection of crunches, snaps, swishes and shakes that make the overall experience feel like virtual crack. Coupled with a stellar random generation system that makes every run of the game completely different, playing *Nuclear Throne* is dangerously addictive. All eleven playable characters have quirks that will make you chuckle too: there's a scientist who injected himself with steroids, and a... thing whose skin is melting off its body, plus... a fish. You'll empathise with these mutants, and if you play *Nuclear Throne*, you'll probably become one. You will click and screech away at this game until some unknown nuclear apocalypse in the near future makes you mysteriously inclined to pursue a "Nuclear Throne".

*Nuclear Throne* is an Early Access game, and as such it is supposed to still be in development. However, the quality and polish of the game throughout its weekly update cycle is pretty astounding: bugs are rare and the gameplay feels solid and complete. Plus, the randomised level structure and enemy makeup transforms a mechanically simple game into something deep and engaging in much the same way *The Binding of Isaac* does. This 2D roguelike shooter is definitely worth its asking price, unlike many Early Access games.

- BENSONANCE



Team 17's

# FLOCKERS

PRICE: \$19.99

Team 17 seems to have a flair for cuddly-animal murder simulators. *Flockers* is no exception, and is a fun way to explore the *Worms* world.

Let's get this out of the way: this is a *Lemmings* clone starring the ballistic sheep from the *Worms* franchise. Your objective is to herd a flock of these woolly fools from point A to B, all the while saving them from falls, saw blades and themselves. Power-ups are scattered throughout the level and can give your sheep the ability to jump, fly, stack up into shapes, and explode amusingly.

The game has an interesting difficulty curve, one that spikes up so quickly it feels like you are actively getting worse with each passing level. This isn't bad, and contributes to the OCD-inducing nature of trying to perfectly nail a level and save as many of the woolly bastards as possible. It feels strange and refreshing to play a modern video-game that is so punishingly difficult, where one wrong move turns half your flock into mulch.

Even in Early Access it feels complete. Controls are tight, Steam Achievements are implemented, and the bundled 25 levels are a great indication of the final game. Twitch support was recently added, and Team 17 has promised level design in the future. The graphics are terrific, the puzzles are fiendish, the level design is macabre, and you will always feel a twisted sense of glee watching your entire flock leap moronically onto a massive death trap.

- SAND\_STORM



Double Fine Production's

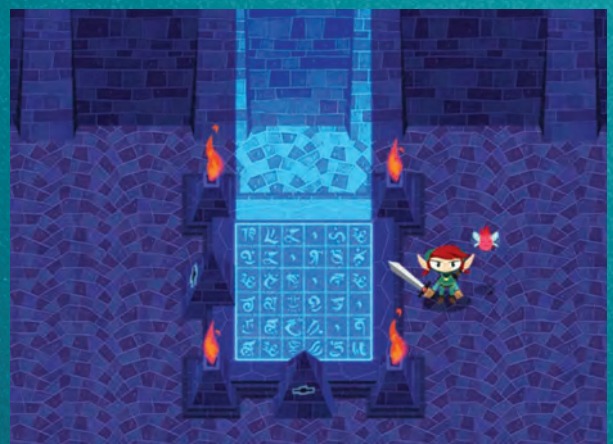
# HACK 'N' SLASH

PRICE: \$19.99

Despite the initial impression given by its title, Hack 'n' Slash is not an action game. It's actually a puzzle/adventure hybrid, its charming heart pumping brain-bending puzzle-juice through its veins, placing central focus squarely on the "hack" part of its name. Early on you find a sword, which you promptly shatter, revealing that it's not a sword at all, but a USB stick. Within the game's world you'll find numerous USB ports that can interface with this sword, and when you do this, you'll literally have access to the game's inner workings, letting you twist and tweak and break its code to suit your in-game needs. Enemies can have their behaviour re-coded to make them friendly, or have them explode on impact after charging, or make them move faster. Immovable blocks can be made movable. That sort of thing.

Along the way you'll find other useful items, like one that lets you slow down time, and another that lets you see the game's various building blocks to uncover secrets and solutions that are otherwise invisible. Your ability to hack the game world and bend it to your will gradually becomes more advanced and complex as you progress. There's clearly a ton of potential in the idea, with thoughtful puzzles already in place in the game's incomplete state – but it does feel like a strange choice of game for Early Access, given that puzzle games tend to be one-and-done affairs, which means that the game's magic may have already worn thin for some people come launch day.

- BARKSKIN



# ASRock

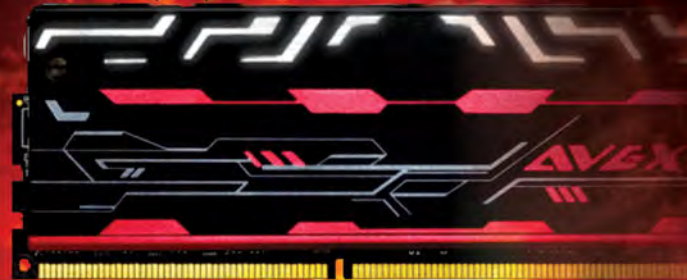
## Z97 KILLER



## AVEXIT RED DRAGON



## BLITZ



**NEW**

**SAMSUNG**

### 850 PRO Series SSD

128GB 256GB 512GB 1TB



# ASRock

# AVEXIT

What We Believe is How We Behave

# SAMSUNG

Business hours:  
Monday to Friday: 8:30 to 17:30.  
Saturdays and Public holidays: 9:00 to 13:00.  
We are closed on Easter, Christmas and New Year.  
Tel: 012 998 5668

Address:  
774 Jacqueline Drive  
Carsonfontein  
Pretoria  
[www.titan-ice.co.za](http://www.titan-ice.co.za)





# Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor

Lead your orc army to battle

Pop quiz, what do you do if you're a ranger of Gondor protecting the Black Gate when Sauron and his army return to Mordor? You die horribly, along with your whole family. Dying is nothing new for gamers, but for Talion, the game's lead character, it's kind of a big deal. Now imagine his surprise when he's later resurrected with wraith-like powers by a Spirit of Vengeance. Coincidentally, this is where players step in: resurrected, new wraith powers at their command, and a burning need to seek revenge based on the distressing opening sequence. Or maybe not; perhaps you just want to explore a little or go and kill those orcs over there or even just flip to the options screen to find out what all the buttons do. *Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor* is a third

“Once you're inside the head of an orc you can see who he's loyal to and can then force him to undertake missions, betray loyalties, or simply just end him right there.”

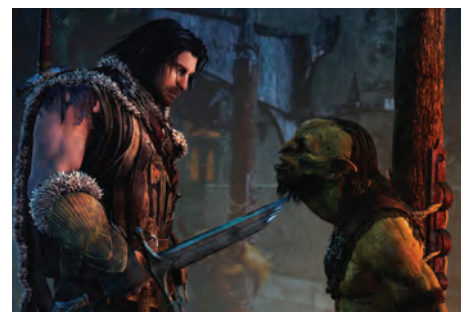
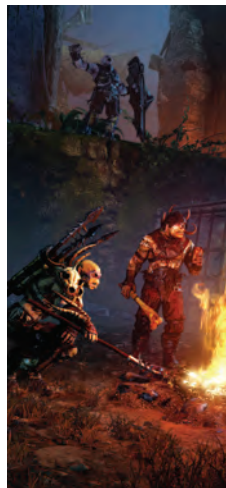
person action game set behind enemy lines in an open world version of Mordor. It also takes place between *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

You'd be easily forgiven for not getting too excited about another Lord of the Rings game, aside from the always fun LEGO versions, this movie to game franchise hasn't always blown critics away or left gamers grunting for more. Monolith's last outing in this arena was in 2012 with the average MOBA, *Guardians of Middle-earth*. But the studio has a decent pedigree if you think back to games like *No One Lives Forever 2: A Spy in H.A.R.M.'s Way*, *F.E.A.R.*, and even *Aliens versus Predator 2*, so they've got the chops to make this work... and boy have they done so. There's a bit to get through here so strap in and pay attention because you're not going to want to let this one slip away unnoticed.

At its core, *Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor* is a straight-up action adventure that will see players climbing castle walls and sneaking around as they do in *Assassin's Creed*, or taking on groups of bad guys like they do in

## MY RUNE

Let's say you challenge a war chief using the nemesis system; this challenge will cause him to grow in power and surround himself with bodyguards and even garrison in a stronghold. Challenging him also increases the chance that he will drop a rune when you kill him. Collected runes allow unique upgrades for your weapons. In the world of Middle-earth, weapons are also characters of sorts; you may remember Glamdring (also called Foe-Hammer), if you were paying attention in the cinema. That in mind, you can assign a rune to your sword that will, for example, increase its power thereby increasing the level of fear felt in your enemies when you wield it. Your unique and personal story path through the game is thereby ultimately detailed in the legendary weapon you wield in battle and the overall effect and role it plays in the game. Like your character, your weapons have their own unique role in the game.



any of the *Batman Arkham* games. In between all this climbing, sneaking and fighting there's a fresh new game dynamic to master – the nemesis system. Think of it as a manipulation tool that will aid you in your ultimate goal of building a mighty orc army and killing Sauron. It gives the player an overview of the current orc social setup in the region: who is loyal to who, which orcs are in command and also weaknesses, allegiances and strengths of known orcs. You can, at a glance, understand the orc's social hierarchy and use this knowledge to build your army. You access the nemesis system by using your wraith powers to control and read the mind of an orc. This can happen during battle or by sneaking up on one unawares. Once you're inside the head of an orc you can see who he's loyal to and can then force him to undertake missions, betray loyalties, or simply just end him right there. You can do all sorts of fun things in the nemesis system and then watch the results play out in the dynamic and random game world. But be careful, all your actions, even dying, will impact the game world for better or worse. Each orc war chief and his underlings are uniquely different in both the way they look and in their personalities, and all this is again influenced by your actions in the game



❶ In the films, the Black Gate is shown as two gates because of a typo in the script given to the art department.



❷ The game takes place beyond the Black Gate and into regions of Mordor mostly written about in the books.



world. The nemesis system is a key part of the game and learning to manipulate the orcs is essential for success.

The demo we played at E3 saw us tracking down an orc with the intention of using him to further our influence in the region. We had at our disposal wraith powers and stealth, and a bow, sword and dagger for everything in-between. These are the only weapons you'll have in the game but they can be upgraded using runes – but more on that later. After a stealthy approach at night the plan was controlling the mind of a nearby Caragor, a large predatory cat; using our wraith powers allowed us to ride the Caragor into battle against the targeted orc encampment. Dismounting the beast caused it to continue attacking random enemy orcs and creating confusion while we got on with the business of isolating our target. There are plenty creatures you can control in the game including some very large and powerful beasts. The combat itself was silky smooth and allowed us to effortlessly string together combinations between three surrounding

orcs. If you don't want to get your hands dirty like we did, other options include stealth kills, long distance bow kills or even something simple like shooting down a hive of wasps and watching the resultant havoc. The emphasis is on playing your own way and the game is set up to satisfy any style of play. After some more killing, sneaking and distracting we were able to influence the targeted orc and learn the location of the war chief we had to take down. The session lasted about thirty minutes and the path we chose was just one of many alternatives. We could have snuck around the encampment silently instead of charging in on a giant cat, for example.

Through the use of unique wraith powers, you can play the game in a Mordor you won't recognise – antagonising, subverting and infiltrating the ranks of the orc army of Sauron. The combat is fiercely fluid and exciting and you can pretty much do whatever you like in the game world. *Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor* looks like it might be (prepare for cheese)... the one game to rule them all. **NAG**

- RedTide

**RELEASE DATE** / October 2014  
**PLATFORM** / 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO  
**GENRE** / Action adventure  
**DEVELOPER** / Monolith  
**PUBLISHER** / Warner Bros. Interactive  
**WEBSITE** / www.shadowofmordor.com

# Battlefield Hardline



This is a stick up!

Speaking out loud as a sceptical and deeply jaded game journalist, hang on just one damn second here! Why exactly are we looking at another *Battlefield* game only a year after *Battlefield 4*? It's not even a DICE game – Visceral are doing it... that is, doing a *Battlefield* game instead of the next *Dead Space* game. Didn't someone at EA or DICE also say not too long ago that *Battlefield* wouldn't end up sprouting a soulless new game each year – like *Call of Duty*? So many questions and raised eyebrows, this is no way to approach the announcement of an exciting new game, but you can't blame anyone for asking these questions. Some answers do come from EA Studios executive vice president Patrick Söderlund who said *Battlefield Hardline* is actually Electronic Arts just letting their studios work on the games they want to make. Perhaps Visceral Games needs a break from the dead in space while

they figure out how to get gamers interested in the next creepy chapter on the new hardware. And if the EA brass is to be believed, *Hardline* is actually an organic idea cooked up by the heads of the respective studios long, long ago. Now to find out if EA are just rolling the dice with this one or if they have something worth the asking price.

## TELEVISION CRIME CHANNEL

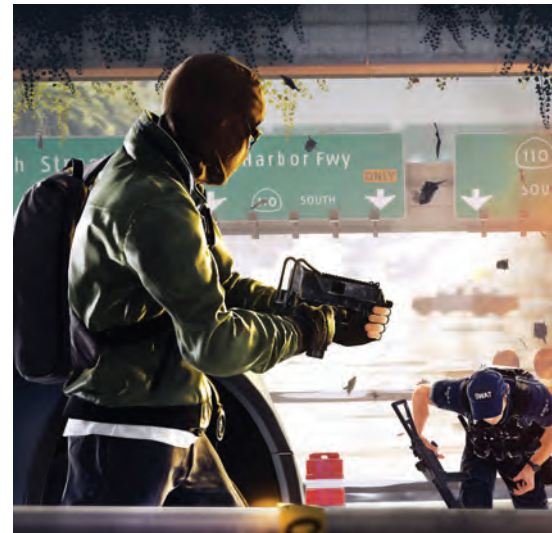
There is a single player story attached to *Hardline* involving a character called Nick Mendoza who brings his former partners to justice. Players will have access to a police scanner and apparently the freedom to complete missions their own way. There is scant information about the campaign at this stage but all indications point to it being inspired by popular crime shows on television. As much as that sounds exciting we all know that multiplayer is where gamers will spend the bulk of their time, so that needs all the attention and fortunately was exactly what EA had on offer at E3.

The hands-on demo saw cops against robbers on the streets of downtown LA. Currently there are four known game modes in *Battlefield Hardline*, namely

“The folks at Visceral seem to have taken the idea of destroying levels to a whole new, umm... level – fun to watch and even more fun to play in.”



1 Visceral Games already have some *Battlefield* experience under their belts in the form of *Battlefield 3: End Game*; DICE wanted them to develop some DLC in the *Battlefield* franchise before setting them loose on this project.



Heist, Blood Money, Hotwire and Rescue.

Blood Money is the mode we played in the demo and the action focused on a safe full of cash in the middle of the map. The objective is to grab money and head back to home base and secure it in an armoured truck. If you die you drop the money, and as a nasty twist it's also possible to steal money from the opposing team's truck and take it for your own team. It's an interesting take on an old game mode and proved to be a hell of a lot of fun in practice. In Heist criminals must blow the doors off an armoured security truck and take a package to an extraction point, on the opposing side the police must prevent this from happening; both teams have vehicles to help them achieve their objectives. Heist is a good way to focus the action around a common mobile objective – in the presentation the extraction point was on a rooftop via helicopter and proved to be one hell of a battle. In Hotwire the police track and chase down the bad guys in high speed chases, and in Rescue the objective is to save



innocents from sucking bullets.

Technically, nothing is new in terms of multiplayer staples: preventing teams from capturing things, blowing up (or stealing) other things or even rescuing hostages can all be traced back to well-known modes from many games. What *Hardline* has done is put an interesting spin on these tried and tested multiplayer conventions and this move might just be a stroke of genius.

## TROPES

All the regular trimmings from *Battlefield 4* are in place including ranking up, unlocking items and so on, but of course in *Hardline* it'll all be tweaked and styled a little differently. Another hidden benefit is the years' worth of patching, community feedback and tweaks already present in the core *BF4* game engine – so we can expect stability and a working game at launch, right? *Hardline* has similar classes to *BF4* and they look like this: The operator is the healer and is equipped with assault weapons and medical bits and bobs. The mechanic



📌 The fog of war isn't actually a meteorological phenomenon but rather the dynamic of not knowing where your enemies are or what your enemies are doing.



carries a submachine gun and tools to disable or repair vehicles. The enforcer carries spare ammunition, explosive gifts and shotguns. Finally, the professional is the sniper class with all the standard surveillance and anti-personnel toys. In terms of weapons we've got the M16A3, MAC-10, M240B, PTR-91, M1911 and almost everything in-between and all the usual attachments, scopes and grips.

If you want something new then look no further than the gadget selection: grappling hooks and zip lines get you around the maps. Robbers get a baseball bat and for the police, a baton. A selection of grenades is also available as well as cameras, decoys and booby-traps. There's enough fresh stuff in *Hardline* to keep old players interested and blow the minds of newcomers to the series. Oh, one other thing – Taser guns! Non-lethal takedowns and interrogations (using the baseball bat or baton) temporarily reveal the location of the bad guys or if you're the sadistic type, humiliation kills. Levels now explode, crumble and change much more than in *Battlefield 4*; cranes come crashing down creating new walkways, tankers explode allowing access to the top levels of parking lots, and all this in the first ten minutes.

The folks at Visceral seem to have taken the idea of destroying levels to a whole new, umm... level – fun to watch and even more fun to play in.

## YOU'RE BUSTED, PUNK

After all is said and done you can't help but wonder if this should just have been sold as a different kind of premium DLC, the inclusion of a single player experience kills that idea however because now it's a full new game. It's hard to know for sure if the world is ready for another *Battlefield* game in an already crowded festive-season market. In our effort to give a balanced opinion we asked a few NAG staff what they thought about *Battlefield Hardline*: "I feel like they should be spending time making something new." – Dane; and "what a convenient opportunity to introduce Necromorph cops." – Tarryn. The real bottom line: all they really had to do was tell us that they need some time and money this year while they spend all their effort working on the highly-anticipated, goose-bump-summoning, hair-raising, next-generation *Star Wars Battlefront* for 2015. Nobody would hold that against them. **NAG**

- RedTide

## Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain

↑ This side up ↑

The E3 presentation opened with Big Boss / Snake and Ocelot riding horses in Afghanistan – it's 1984. Filmed in-engine, we see that Snake is back in action with a fully functional prosthetic arm and bit of metal sticking out his head. He's also out of the nine year coma from *Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes* and is rebuilding his mercenary group the Diamond Dogs, and Mother Base, both decimated in *Ground Zeroes*. The presentation was liberally dotted with farcical moments reminding everyone that despite the game's amazing visuals and serious theme it's still very much a video game. Hideo Kojima's take on this joviality is more practical, saying his games are stressful and require a lot out of the player so he enjoys lightening the mood.

The game's scope is very different in that players now have a very large (200 times larger than *Ground Zeroes*) open world to play in. There is a dynamic weather system

“You can ask for reconnaissance, air strikes or even ammunition and cardboard boxes.”

including sandstorms, roaming domestic animals, raw materials to find, sheep and pooping horses [ugh, finally. Ed]. Helping you do everything is the iDroid device, used to access a map of the area allowing for waypoint setting, checking objectives and request assistance from Mother Base. You can ask for reconnaissance, air strikes or even ammunition and cardboard boxes. Mother Base is a bit resource intensive so Snake must help pay the bills by searching the game world for materials like diamonds which are converted into GMP, the games currency. Another way to bring home the bacon is by using the Fulton surface-to-air recovery system. Essentially any person (even rescued hostages) you subdue can be attached to a self-inflating balloon and then recovered by aircraft and sent back home for processing. This includes vehicles, containers and even sheep.

The E3 mission saw Snake take the high ground above a base and, using his binoculars, marking a number of enemy soldiers and

🕒 *Metal Gear Solid 4* holds two world records: one for the longest individual cut-scene in a video game, at 27 minutes, and one for longest cut-scene sequence in a video game, at 71 minutes.



setting infiltration waypoints. Next step was lighting up an electronic cigar (the phantom cigar), this functions as the game's time warp complete with holographic smoke. While you smoke time moves faster allowing Snake to monitor guard shift changes or as a quick way to advance nightfall. Once a plan was formulated, Snake summoned a cardboard box airdrop. Yes, it's back and now much upgraded: players can pop up and shoot out of it, change its skin, peep out from inside or even roll out of it leaving it behind as a decoy. After more enemy elimination, sneaking around, freeing hostages, finding the objective (some documents) and scanning them into the iDroid and then calling in an airstrike we successfully finished the mission and returned home. Phew...

The big surprise is that Mother Base is a real place you can both explore on foot and design and build yourself. Remember all those things you've been sending back using the Fulton system, well they've all been delivered to Mother Base – even the sheep. Each player will have their own distinctive looking Mother Base, one they've had to build up from just a simple platform in the ocean, and they'll have to protect it from attacks. *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain* is a fine looking game so far and does a lot different from recent games in the series. It also brings back a few favourites and hopes to deliver the most provocative sneaking, shooting and self-analysing experience yet. **NAG**

- RedTide



🕒 For the original *Metal Gear Solid* the production team came up with the principal designs of the game's areas by building miniatures out of LEGO.

## Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel



RELEASE DATE / October 2014

PLATFORM / 360 / PC / PS3

GENRE / First-person shooter

DEVELOPER / Gearbox Software

PUBLISHER / 2K

WEBSITE / [www.borderlandsthegame.com](http://www.borderlandsthegame.com)

That's no moon...

This game isn't a leap forward for the series but instead a little jump backwards in the storyline. *Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel* happens between the original *Borderlands* and the sequel, and shows players how Handsome Jack went from being a decent chap to the nasty piece of work we hated in *Borderlands 2*. This game is not available for the PS4 or Xbox One, so we'll have to wait until the next game for all that excitement. For now think of this as a fun bit of extra meat on the *Borderlands* bone, a warm chunk of delicious medium rare you found while licking the bone.

### IT'S TOO BIG TO BE A SPACE STATION

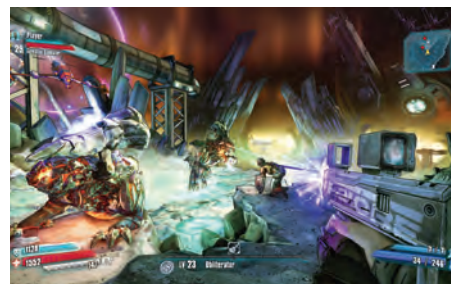
The action takes place on Pandora's moon (Elpis), the one with the big H hammered into the side of it. You'll get to go up there

“the level designers have opened up the map so players can decide for themselves which route they'd like to take around the game world”

and see the place for yourself, which means low gravity, limited oxygen and new ways to get around the environment. We're willing to bet the farm that you'll also get to explore the Hyperion Moon Base in detail – perhaps even take it over. Low gravity means a few things and one of those things is verticality: the level designers have opened up the map so players can decide for themselves which route they'd like to take around the game world. Helping you to do this are air geysers and jump pads (still love you *Quake III*) allowing for even more height, so expect some fighting in the air. Of course being high up also allows you to come crashing down at great speed and “butt stomping” the bad guys. You can also vent oxygen to augment movement while adrift and even use oxygen to revive fallen teammates quicker. Venting air means you'll have to resupply sooner but fear

not the world is littered with dropped canisters and air geysers. Besides all that there are new moon monsters to fight as well as fantastical bosses and new vehicles to traverse the lunar surface.

🔗 In the original *Borderlands* you could pick up a gun with the following name: **010011110100110101000111** when you convert the binary to text it reads **OMG**.



Of course being on the moon also mean lasers, in *Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel* they come in two flavours – a continuous beam version and a rapid fire version, so enjoy the pew. Another addition is the cryogenic mod – that's right – freeze your enemies and then smash them into a million floating pieces. It'll bring a tear of joy.

### YOU PERSIST IN DEFYING MY EFFORTS TO PROVIDE AN AMUSING DEATH FOR YOU

The playable characters in the game all come from previous *Borderlands* games and in some respects allow you to explore their origin stories. First up is Athena, the Gladiator, she is packing a kinetic shield that can be thrown and ricochet off enemies as well as absorb elemental damage. Next is Wilhelm before he turns cyborg, Wilhelm has two deployable drones named Wolf and Saint. Interestingly, some of Wilhelm's class upgrades turn him into the cyborg we had to face in *Borderlands 2*. Not much is known about the two remaining characters, Nisha (her and Jack are, well... it's complicated) and Claptrap, but you can bet Claptrap is going to be an annoying hoot to play – especially viewing the world from waist height. It's pretty simple, if you love *Borderlands* then this will be an instant buy. You can play as Claptrap on the moon! Think of it as the *Moonraker* of *Borderlands* franchise – an easy sell. **NAG -RedTide**



🔗 Is there a connection between *Borderlands* and *Codehunters*? Decide for yourself by watching both *Codehunters* and the opening sequence of the original *Borderlands* here and here: [bit.ly/1tH3Cby](http://bit.ly/1tH3Cby) and [bit.ly/1oyz57D](http://bit.ly/1oyz57D).

RELEASE DATE | 2015

PLATFORM | PC / PS4 / XBO

GENRE | First-person tactical shooter

DEVELOPER | Ubisoft Montreal

PUBLISHER | Ubisoft

WEBSITE | [www.rainbow6.ubi.com](http://www.rainbow6.ubi.com)

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX: SIEGE

# RAINBOW TEAM IS BACK

It's been six years since we've seen anything new from the *Rainbow Six* franchise, the latest iteration coming in the form of the decidedly action-oriented *Rainbow Six: Vegas 2*. Between the console generation gap and the cancellation of *Patriots*, the series has been on death's door for far too long. But that will soon all be over – *Rainbow Six: Siege* looks set to take the series into the modern era, and hopefully bring a few classic touches with it along the way.



---

“RAINBOW SIX APPEARS TO HAVE UNDERGONE A RADICAL TONAL SHIFT SINCE ITS LAST, ILL-FATED SHOWING IN PATRIOTS”

---



**A**lmost three years ago I boarded a plane to Canada for the unveiling of *Rainbow 6: Patriots* – a new entry in the esteemed Tom Clancy series that had for many years been a benchmark for co-operative team-based tactical shooters. *Patriots* was, back then, being treated like a reboot of the franchise, as well as a slightly subversive comment on the state of America's internal consciousness. At the time, the "Occupy Wall Street" phenomenon had gained significant attention; I remember seeing smaller Canadian offshoots of the social movement (clumps of tents surrounded by angry placards and tired-looking protestors) as we drove down main street Montreal. Anti-government protests and volatile anger aimed at the power of banks and corporations was at the forefront of American domestic affairs. This internal tension was also at the heart of *Rainbow 6: Patriots* and its bold, almost anti-capitalist America plotline. This was to be a game that depicted an America brought to its knees by its own people and a fictional domestic terrorist organisation known as the "True Patriots".

It's not all that surprising that the game went dark shortly after it was unveiled. Perhaps it was too controversial, and Ubisoft didn't want to risk alienating the American audience? Whatever the reasoning, senior members and team leaders like creative director David Sears were removed from the project by March 2012. The team that had so excitedly introduced the game to us in October 2011 was no more, and by early 2013, *Patriots* was essentially dead. Ubisoft, of course, claimed that the game was still in development, stating they'd delayed progress for the then upcoming new wave of consoles. That excuse was, naturally, a smokescreen to throw off those asking what had actually happened to *Patriots*. The answer would only come in June 2014.

On the 9th of June, during their E3 press event, Ubisoft unveiled *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Siege*. This is *Patriots'* replacement, and while it looks a lot more exciting and team-oriented than *Patriots* ever did, it also looks like the safer option for Ubisoft.

Along with a new development team (with just a smattering of *Patriots* members left over), *Rainbow Six* appears to have undergone a radical tonal shift since its last, ill-fated showing in *Patriots*. The first trailer for the game is set to a hype-building score with synthesised drums reaching crescendos perfectly timed with explosions. Any hint of subversive tones and political commentary seems to have been eradicated for a more traditional *Rainbow Six*

outing, but perhaps that's not necessarily a bad thing – especially for long-time *Rainbow* fans eager to dive back into a tense and tactical multiplayer experience.

*Rainbow Six: Siege* derives its name from the multiplayer mode that looks to be at the forefront of this new entry into the franchise: a five-versus-five co-operative experience that featured the titular Rainbow team pitted against a terrorist group. A siege mode called Hostage Rescue has given us our first taste of this new *Rainbow Six*, and we have to admit that it's looking very impressive. Ubisoft Montreal has chosen to return to the series' roots instead of rebooting the franchise. You can see the years of *Rainbow Six* history all over the multiplayer gameplay – so much so that this is practically a love-letter to long-time fans.

As the Rainbow team, you'll be tasked with breaching a fortified building in order to neutralise the terrorist threat and rescue any hostages. Ubisoft has only shown off a single map for this mode so far: a large,

“...THERE ARE NO RESPAWNS.”



Each round of multiplayer starts with a planning phase: Rainbow team gets to choose from multiple insertion points and scout with drones, while terrorists can spend an allowance on traps and fortifications.



🔗 You'll be able to outfit your character with specific weapons and pieces of equipment. Want to play a heavily armoured tank of a character specialising in close-quarters shotgun tactics? Go right ahead.

---

## THE HUMBLE BEGINNINGS OF **RAINBOW SIX**



Founded in 1996 by renowned author Tom Clancy (who tragically passed away in October of last year) and Doug Littlejohns (a submarine captain in the British Royal Navy), Red Storm Entertainment first made its mark with a handful of strategy games – including *Dominant Species*, one of the first real-time strategy titles to make the jump to 3D visuals. The studio's first true hit arrived in 1998 with the launch of *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six*, which garnered tons of critical praise and commercial success.

Designed to coincide with the release of a novel of the same name (penned by Tom Clancy), *Rainbow Six* was the first FPS to ditch an all-out action focus in favour of something more tactical, more cerebral. As members of a clandestine counter-terrorist organisation known as Rainbow, players embarked on missions across the globe, carefully working with their AI-controlled teammates to rescue hostages and take down terrorists. Each mission allowed you to prepare your infiltration strategy beforehand, setting up

waypoints for your squads to follow and actions for them to perform on your signal. Missions could be completed quickly, but were incredibly unforgiving, with a single bullet often being all it took to permanently kill you or one of your other operatives. It encouraged a more thoughtful, methodical approach that gave the game an innovative edge.

It proved successful enough to spawn a number of sequels and expansions spread across multiple platforms, with *Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield* standing out as a particularly high point for the franchise. Ubisoft bought the studio in 2000, and the series gradually evolved and eventually left the care of Red Storm, culminating in *Rainbow Six: Vegas* and its sequel, developed by Ubisoft Montreal. *Vegas* maintained the spirit of the franchise by being more tactically focused than its contemporary peers, but the increased focus on fast-paced action and explosive spectacle irked some long-time fans.

- **Barkskin**

## FROM THE DEVS

"*Rainbow Six* is based on the reality of counter-terrorism units (CTU). The CTU fantasy is what really drives the game's vision, the siege, and what truly differentiates us from the competition. Counter-terrorist units have very different tactics compared to the special forces/military units found in other FPS titles."

"Counter-terrorism units are experts of indoor encounters. Therefore, their training in close quarters combat and demolition is adapted to confined environments. They are 'short range' specialists. The situations they handle are also very specific; from hostage rescue to airplane hijacking, the way they handle each situation is highly surgical and lethal."

"At the centre of the siege you have a tug of war between fortification and destruction."

"To win a match, the defenders need to maintain control of the hostage until time expires. Attackers need to extract the hostage. If either team kills the hostage, their team instantly loses. Another winning condition is to kill all of the players on the opposing team."

"We can't reveal any details, but we realize that *Rainbow Six* has always been known for quality solo / co-op gameplay, including Terrorist Hunt, so expect more information on these modes in the future."



1 *Siege* is billed as an asymmetrical confrontation which Ubisoft calls "Destruction vs. fortification": each team has different tools that they bring to the battle. Naturally, the procedural destruction engine will play a large role in this conflict.



double-story house set in a typical, affluent suburban neighbourhood. They have, however, promised that further maps will be unveiled in due course, and that some of those maps' locations might look familiar to returning fans. The house on display, however, made for very tight and almost claustrophobic encounters between team Rainbow and the terrorists. If the confines of the suburban house become too much, you can always start demolishing walls, floors and ceilings. *Siege* utilises a procedural destruction system that Ubisoft has called the "Realblast Engine". This allows for some startlingly realistic levels of destructions: wood splinters as you'd expect; different calibre weapons create accurately sized bullet holes; floor boards crack and dry-walling crumbles. Naturally, this opens up a whole new realm of possibilities for breaching and clearing rooms. While the level of destruction is unprecedented for a *Rainbow Six* game, Ubisoft has noted that there will be some indestructible architecture so as to avoid player teams levelling an entire map.

In siege mode, each team of five will rotate between playing as the attacking Rainbow team and the defending terrorist team. There are six rounds per siege match, which means you'll get to attack and defend three times each. Both sides get a chance to prepare before the round commences: Rainbow can scout the map with an unmanned drone, while the terrorists can lay traps, fortify walls, put up

barbwire barricades, board up windows and monitor the rooms with a CCTV system. Each round of attacking and defending has the potential to be over in minutes, with an entire match of siege taking around 18 minutes to complete. The reason for this burst of three minute rounds is to accommodate one of the mode's more intriguing features: there are no respawns. Once you've been killed then you'll get to control a small drone, providing intel for your remaining team members, but if the enemy spots your drone and destroys it, then you're out until the round is completed and the next one starts. This, Ubisoft says, helps to emphasise the inherent tension in the game mode, and also helps to promote true tactical cooperation between team mates.

*Rainbow Six: Siege* has a lot to reveal to the gaming public. We still have no idea what to expect from the single-player campaign in terms of plot. Ubisoft has, however, confirmed that there will be a cooperative mode for the campaign. Choosing to debut the title with its eponymous multiplayer mode is an indication as to what aspect of the game Ubisoft is emphasising. This new *Rainbow Six* seems to be about its team-driven, tactical multiplayer. For many that'll be a good thing, but we can't help but wonder if the single-player portion will offer up something as intriguing and controversial as *Patriots* promised. **NAG**

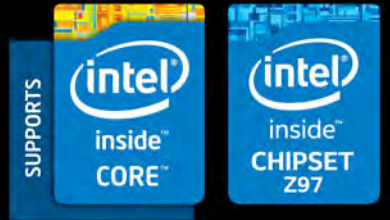
- Mikito707



# msi®

## Get Free Bundle With MSI Motherboards

First Come, First Serve. While Stocks Last.



Supports Intel Smart Response Technology



**BUY** MOTHERBOARD **Z97 XPOWER AC**

**PUSH the LIMIT!**

**FREE** Sharkoon Shark Blades

**Power Cooler Silent**

Professional **Overclocking** Gear

**BUY** MOTHERBOARD **Z97 GAMING 9 AC**

**AUDIO BOOST 2 WITH XTREME AUDIO DAC**

**FREE** SteelSeries Siberia Headset

Professional **GAMING** Gear



# THE BEST GAMING WEAPONS AT HAND

**BUY** MOTHERBOARD **Z97 GAMING 7 5**

**FREE** SteelSeries KINZU Mouse

Professional **GAMING** Gear

Bundle Product:  
• MSI Z97 GAMING 7  
• MSI Z97 GAMING 5

# Reviews *Intro*

Have you ever looked at your friends and wondered if they're all mad, or if it's just you? Imagine doing that every hour of every day you spend at the NAG office. Meet your reviewers...

**Question /** No rules, no holds barred, all categories are open; what do you Kickstart, and how much do you ask for?



**BEN "BENSONANCE" MYRES**  
I would Kickstart an organisation that tracks your lifetime trolling behaviours and if you cross a certain threshold, you are exiled to a single website called [www.UnderTheBridge.org](http://www.UnderTheBridge.org). I would ask five hundred million dollars for this worthwhile venture.

**CURRENTLY PLAYING**  
*Super Robot Unicorn Attack 2* and *Hearthstone*



**DANE "BARKSKIN" REMENDES**  
I'd Kickstart just enough cash to hire myself a butler for a month, just to see how that'd go. I wouldn't even make him do butler-y things, other than wafting around the house with an air of casual importance. Kickstarter goal: 1x Alfred Pennyworth

**CURRENTLY PLAYING**  
*Castle Crashers*, *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*, *C&C 3: Tiberium Wars*



**DELANO "DELANO" CUZZUCOLI**  
I'd Kickstart a campaign to cover the country's major malls with solar panels. I'd be asking for R50,000,000, thereabouts.

**CURRENTLY PLAYING**  
*Drunken Robot Pornography*



**GEOFF "GEOMETRIX" BURROWS**  
A campaign to replace underutilised urban land with small public farms, inviting anyone to contribute some of their time in exchange for food. I'd ask for a couple million bucks to get started. Then I'd spend it all on a games room made of nachos.

**CURRENTLY PLAYING**  
*Hotline Miami*, *Trackmania Nations Forever*, *StarCraft II*



**MATT "SAND\_STORM" FICK**  
Luminous cats, because they would look awesome. And a gun that shoots axes, but that's for science only. Price: More than you'd hope, less than you'd think. And *Dragon's Dogma 2*.

**CURRENTLY PLAYING**  
*Dragon's Dogma*

## ▶ *mini review*

### The Shivah: Kosher Edition (mobile)

**C**onnoisseurs of point-n-clickers will know Wadjet Eye Games well. While not quite up to the legacy of Telltale Games, they've nonetheless proved their mettle time and again with a slew of memorable titles. Now we've been treated to a remake of their original title from 2006, but just how well has it aged exactly and how does it translate to a mobile platform?

The game stars you in the role of Russell Stone, a middle-aged rabbi from New York. Having lost interest in his faith and facing bankruptcy, things take an unexpected turn when he discovers that he's inherited a generous sum of cash. The catch is that it's from a former member of his synagogue who has been mysteriously murdered. Alarmed that he's a potential

suspect, he sets off to find out why the money was left to him and who exactly murdered his associate, all while trying to make amends along the way.

Though short, it's an utterly engrossing experience with realistic, relatable characters. The tone is sombre and melancholic, heightened by the music and the convincing voice-acting. The graphics are a vast improvement from the 2006 original and invoke the colourful look of LucasArts games. It works superbly as a touchscreen title and I can't recommend it enough. Get it now!

- **Delano**



**90** *Mature and thought-provoking, it's the definitive mobile adventure game.*

HEARD AT THE OFFICE...

“...when I was a 20c machine pumper.”

- RedTide



**MICHAEL "REDTIDE" JAMES**  
I would start building gigantic force field domes over the world's remaining wildlife reserves, rain forests and ocean reefs; no humans in or out ever and each year the domes grow by ten metres until they cover 70% of planet. Amount required: \$2,789,000,000,000.

**CURRENTLY PLAYING**  
*Diablo III: Reaper of Souls*



**MIKLOS "MIKIT0707" SZECSEI**  
A rocket to blast my corpse into space and towards the nearest black hole in the hopes that a parallel universe uses my DNA to build an army that can then come back and take over Earth. Because. Amount needed: about \$5 million.

**CURRENTLY PLAYING**  
*Diablols Trois: Reaper of SoooooOh why can't I stop playing this?! D:*



**MIKTAR "MIKTAR" DRACON**  
I'd Kickstart a natural language game creation tool that allows anyone who can write simple sentences to make games. The goal being, to make game creation (the logic and structure anyway) as easy as writing a short story.

**CURRENTLY PLAYING**  
*Heroes of the Storm, Guild Wars 2, Diablo III, Dust: An Elysian Tail*



**NEO "SHOCKG" SIBEKO**  
I'd want to invest in a very low cost rapid food growing technology. Where food takes mere minutes to hours from planting to harvesting, as opposed to months. How much is needed? As much as can be thrown at it. (Billions of any useful currency).

**CURRENTLY PLAYING**  
*COD: Modern Warfare and SuperPi 32M*



**TARRYN "AZIMUTH" VAN DER BYL**  
\$10,000,000 for a castle in Sweden staffed entirely by cats and a cellar full of craft beer. It's the dream.

**CURRENTLY PLAYING**  
*NHL14* (and swearing a lot)

▶ **mini review**

**Bound By Flame**

during an almost interminable expository opening sequence apparently cribbed off the back of a *Game of Thrones* DVD box, the protagonist – a hired thug employed by the Freeborn Blades mercenary company – said something about how “the captain knows his men”. But I'd chosen to play as a female character. This was the first, but not the last inconsistency in the game's narrative, and it's all down the privy from here on out.

Imagine a Dungeons & Dragons campaign written by a socially awkward, hormonally challenged 13-year old boy with an entirely untenable grasp of Middle English. SAVETH THEE WORLDE! BATTLETH MONSTERES! BEHOLDETH BEWBES! Although I suppose even that might actually be fun in an ironic, self-deprecating sort of way – and *Bound By Flame* is none of these things. Instead,



it's a dreary trudge from one clichéd plot point to the next, plus lots and lots of totally f\*\*\*ing gratuitous swears, one guy who talks about himself in the third person except when he forgets to, and the worst voice acting this side of a porn podcast.



The combat is unreasonably frustrating at times, and a level-up is more like an occasional opportunity to be less terrible at everything than more of an epic badass. The game is also ugly.

- Azimuth

**No** In the very words of the game itself, “All doth fall to ruin about you, yet you still bewail your loose bowels and vomitings”. So, something like that.

PLATFORMS / PS4 / XBO	REVIEWED ON / PS4	GENRE / Fighting / sports sim	DEVELOPER / EA Canada
AGE RATING / 16	MULTIPLAYER / Local > 2 players Online > 2 players		PUBLISHER / EA Sports
WEBSITE / www.easports.com/ufc			DISTRIBUTOR / Prima Interactive

# EA Sports UFC

## Thirty second knock-out

Sports games tend to be pretty straightforward affairs: a game is made, it's released, the relevant people enjoy it, a sequel is made, repeat until bored. But, much like the sport on which it's based, MMA games have the habit of challenging the establishment. The UFC brand, in particular, has had an interesting ride, after being scorned by EA, UFC owner Dana White took his championship to THQ and enjoyed a couple of successful games (while slagging off EA's so-called copycat attempt), but when THQ tanked, White and EA shocked the world with the announcement that they'd teamed up to make *EA Sports UFC*. Frustratingly, EA put their excellent *Fight Night* series on hold and commanded all crew to oars on the UFC boat.

If you're a fan of UFC then the career mode will impress. You'll play as an up-and-coming fighter in the franchise and throughout you'll be treated to videos of famous fighters giving

you tips and insight into the industry. White himself makes a number of appearances as he vets your progress through the franchise. In that sense, *EA Sports UFC* feels very much like a documentary, which makes for an interesting experience, but unfortunately once you've done the career mode there's not much else than exhibition matches or more tutorials (which you probably won't need if you manage to finish the career). That's it. As a sport that's fair enough, I suppose, but as a game it doesn't offer much in the way of continued playability.

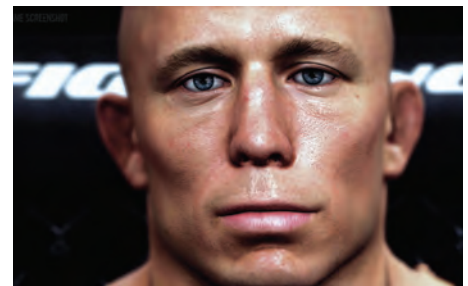
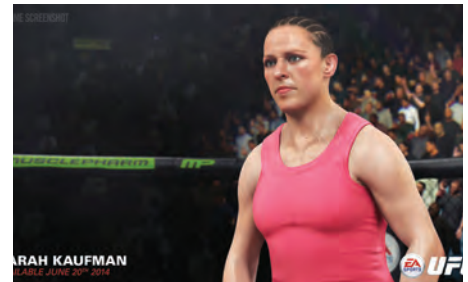
Being based on mixed martial arts means there's a lot of complexity on offer here: wrestling, boxing, kickboxing, Muay Thai, kung fu, and almost every form of hand-to-hand combat comes together in the octagon and it's a hell of a task to get that kind of complexity to work in a game. But everything is crammed in there thanks to a healthy dose of modifiers that can be applied to the face buttons. The flip side to this is that *UFC* has a steep learning curve – learning a moves list is something anyone can do, but as fights change so do your controls, creating moments of uncertainty and confusion when your fighter doesn't behave quite as you expected them to. The tutorials and many training mini-games do their best to teach the player the game's nuances, but be prepared to eat a hundred knuckle sandwiches before you learn the recipe.



You can earn Evolution Points during training in career mode which can be distributed among your fighter's many statistics.



The extensive roster includes all male weight divisions from flyweight to heavyweight, as well as female bantamweight.



And good luck roping in a buddy for a quick game.

Adding to the confusion is the presence of a physics-based animation system. It's a great idea, and when it works well it's a marvel to see the fluid, realistic movement of two fighters going at each other, but too often it creates situations of colliding limbs and crash-test-dummy reactions to impacts as the ragdolls take over, very often leaving you (personally) stunned as your fighter collapses in a heap of self-pity after seemingly dominating a round. Match favour turns on a dime, which can be extremely frustrating. **NAG**

- GeometriX

**68** EA finally has its own official UFC game but its competitors that have come before outperform it. As a tribute to UFC, it does well, but too many failures in the translation to video game are ultimately its downfall.

**PLUS** / Fan-service career mode / Highly technical fighting

**MINUS** / Steep learning curve / Unpredictable fighting physics / Limited replayability

PLATFORMS / PC	REVIEWED ON / PC
AGE RATING / 12	GENRE / Interactive fiction
MULTIPLAYER / Local > None Online > None	
WEBSITE / <a href="http://www.stanleyparable.com">www.stanleyparable.com</a>	
DEVELOPER / Galactic Cafe	PUBLISHER / Galactic Cafe
DISTRIBUTOR / Digital (Steam)	

## The Stanley Parable

Interactive fiction



**Y**ou're sitting in your office, doing nothing in particular, when you realize there's nobody around. You walk down the hall, all the other cubicles are empty. There is a narrator doing the narration thing, talking about how you're looking around and don't see anyone, and thus you decide to go to the meeting room just in case everyone is there. But you didn't decide that, as a player. The narrator simply provided a context for why you would continue down the hall. You reach a set of doors you must choose between. The narrator informs you that the left one goes to the meeting room, and it's obviously the one you will take. The one to the right isn't important.

Which one do you choose? Why do you choose it? Let's see what happens when you do pick one and follow through.

This simple opening to *The Stanley Parable* is the heart of the game. It's all about the choices you make, but that's a gross oversimplification. It's difficult to talk about the game without spoiling anything, since most of what makes the *Stanley Parable* a parable, lies in your own interactions with it. You'll come across many choices. The narrator will talk about a great many things. Like a complex movie with many plot threads, the *Stanley Parable* needs to be replayed several times for full effect. **NAG**

- Miktar



This is not a spoiler. But it could have been.

**87** A bold experiment in how far you can push narrative in the unique medium that is a video game. Games often claim to be "art", usually by pointing at their art assets or leveraging their emotional payload. But *The Stanley Parable* actually is performance art in the form of a game, by being an experience that can only exist as one.

**PLUS** / Fascinating / Funny / Different

**MINUS** / Limited appeal / Can feel short

PLATFORMS / 3DS	REVIEWED ON / 3DS
GENRE / Life simulation	AGE RATING / 3
MULTIPLAYER / Local > None Online > None	
WEBSITE / <a href="http://tomodachi.nintendo.com">tomodachi.nintendo.com</a>	
DEVELOPER / Nintendo SPD	PUBLISHER / Nintendo
DISTRIBUTOR / Core Group	

## Tomodachi Life

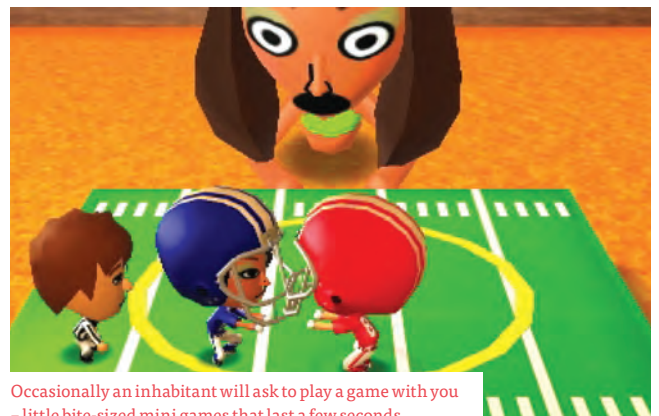
The Mii fever dream

**S**trange sequel to a strange game never released outside Japan, *Tomodachi Life* is a little people-watching game with no real purpose. It's a toy you populated with characters you create (or download via QR codes shared on the Internet), and then... watch. Occasionally, one of the little people will ask for your help with something. Should they profess their love to another character? What should they eat today? What clothing best suits them right now?

The inhabitants of your island will love, get dumped, meet up at the cafe to talk about random things, perform rock-concerts (with actual singing, the lyrics of which you can edit), and perform magic tricks. Events happen in real-time based on the system clock. You have very minimal interaction with them, and the entire experience feels like it would be more at home as a mobile app. It's oddly fascinating though. There is a lot of wacky randomness, especially when you peek inside a character's dreams. Strange things can happen around the island, and over time your characters grow into their personalities (defined at creation).

*Tomodachi Life* is a quirky little thing, sold at a budget price. Its oddball nature makes it very difficult to recommend, but it's not something to avoid either. Thankfully, there's a demo on the Nintendo eShop you can try. **NAG**

- Miktar



Occasionally an inhabitant will ask to play a game with you - little bite-sized mini-games that last a few seconds.

**70** More of an application than a game, *Tomodachi Life* is a cute distraction you can populate with representations of people you know, celebrities, etc. The digital denizens of your island will fall in love, have fights, ask for your help, play mini-games with you, and just generally exist. Like a weird fishbowl without the smell.

**PLUS** / Wacky scenarios / Undemanding / Strangely engaging

**MINUS** / Not much to it

PLATFORMS / 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

REVIEWED ON / PS4

GENRE / Interactive drama

DEVELOPER / Airtight Games

AGE RATING / 16

MULTIPLAYER / Local > None Online > None

PUBLISHER / Square Enix

WEBSITE / www.murdered.com

DISTRIBUTOR / Megarom

# Murdered: Soul Suspect

## Not a ghost of a chance

When *Murdered: Soul Suspect* arrived for review, I was excited. It was a game I'd been looking forward to for a while, and at that moment I realised that I felt the same way about the two previous times I reviewed a title from Airtight games (*Dark Void* and *Quantum Conundrum*). And both times previously, I was left wanting more from those games despite enjoying them for what they delivered. *Murdered: Soul Suspect* is the most extreme version of that idea, which is rather poetic, given that it's the studio's last game – they were shut down shortly after release.

Set in the fog-laden town of Salem, you'll play as robber-turned-cop detective Ronan O'Connor who finds himself on the wrong end of a murder. Now, trapped in ghostly limbo, Ronan will need to solve his own murder before his soul is free to join his wife in the afterlife. But as it turns out, getting things done as an ethereal being is a tad tricky, so Ronan will have to learn to master his undead abilities, and find anyone who possesses both

the sixth sense and the inclination to give a damn about his problems.

As a member of the formally-living, Ronan has a few abilities to help him solve his final mystery and those belonging to other ghosts also trapped in limbo. Ronan can walk through walls and solid objects, but can only enter and exit the sanctified buildings of Salem through an open door or window, which is a surprisingly rare thing. Other neat tricks include reading minds, turning on electronic devices, and occasionally influencing the thoughts of people once you find the right trigger. As a detective, Ronan will also do plenty of crime scene investigation in a manner that devolves into little more than modern-day pixel-hunting, and the process of piecing together clues into a cohesive thought is much like trying to read the mind of the game designers themselves – sometimes it's painfully easy, and other times it's just painful. The wretched "stealth/combat"

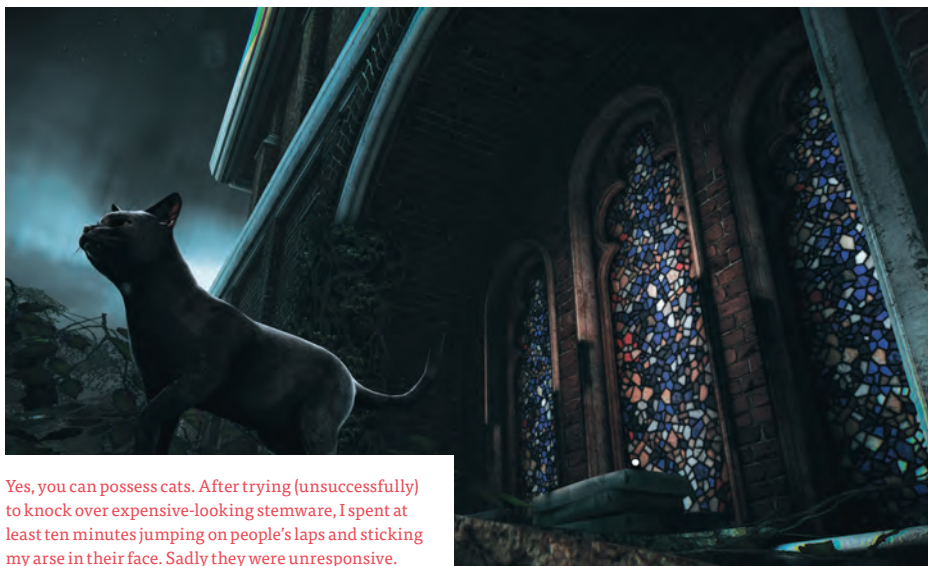
While almost every other ghost in Salem is trapped haunting a particular location, you're free to explore the town.



sequences that throw themselves at the player are much the same.

But none of that actually matters. All of the crime-solving elements in *Murdered* unfold in a linear way, forcing the player to plod through them with absolutely no control over the outcomes. All you can do is guess right or guess wrong – the latter punishing you with fewer badges as "reward" for completing a case. But the badges don't matter, because there is so little actual gameplay here that anyone would struggle to call this a game. It's more like a linear story that someone has tried to gamify with arbitrary rewards and checkpoints. *Murdered* would have been a far better point-and-click adventure game, and an even better film, but instead it insists on checking boxes that add no value to the overall product, dragging it into a category of media in which it simply can't compete. It's almost a pity that it tries to be a game, because in this form it's impossible to appreciate all the great things that *Murdered* has going for it, without being constantly distracted by the negative aspects. **NAG**

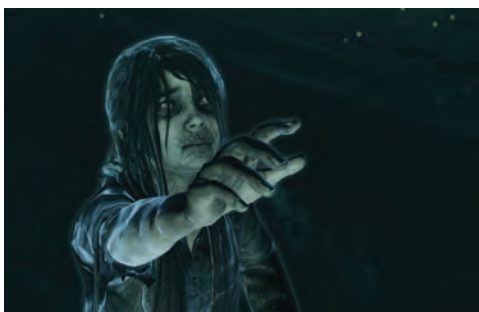
- GeometriX



Yes, you can possess cats. After trying (unsuccessfully) to knock over expensive-looking stemware, I spent at least ten minutes jumping on people's laps and sticking my arse in their face. Sadly they were unresponsive.



**Murdered is not a game, but if you insist on rating it is such then chuck a 40-something in that score box and walk away. If you've got the inclination to see this title for what it is, though, then put on your best blinders, grab a stiff drink and throw yourself into Airtight's last weird outing.**



**PLUS** / Well-acted main characters / Intriguing story and world / Solid visuals / You can possess cats

**MINUS** / Weak gameplay throughout / Poorly-acted, dull NPCs / Shoddy crime-solving mechanics

PLATFORMS / PC	REVIEWED ON / PC
AGE RATING / 3	GENRE / Tower defence / Real-time strategy
MULTIPLAYER / Local > None Online > None	
WEBSITE / knucklecracker.com	
DEVELOPER / Knuckle Cracker	PUBLISHER / Knuckle Cracker
DISTRIBUTOR / Digital (Steam)	

## Creep World 3: Arc Eternal



A diamond in the rough

I never played the first two *Creep World* games. I didn't even know *Creep World* was a thing, it flew so far below my radar. The third came highly recommended to me by someone and it was on sale, so I figured why not. Trying new things is part of the fun of gaming. Thankfully, you don't need to have played either of the previous games to enjoy *Creep World 3*, as it has a mostly self-contained plot.

There's no getting around it: the game looks ugly. The graphics are utterly functional, and that's it. But this ugly duckling has a supernova of elegant swans that explode from its super-dense core the moment you start playing. *Arc Eternal* follows a well-written science-fiction plot as you fight an enigmatic foe known only as "Creep". You can place turrets, mortar launchers, build bombers, cannons, and terra-form the terrain to redirect the Creeper's endless flow, provided you have the resource-generating capacity to sustain it all. By the end of a mission, the sheer scope of your network of energy-producing Collectors can be impressive.

The campaign is lengthily with many unique map elements. There's a huge amount of side-missions and bonus content if you're up for it, and the Dial-a-Map Device can generate infinite random missions. *Creep World 3* is impressive where it truly counts. **NAG**

- Miktar



**90** What we have here is a game that takes a good, simple premise (your enemy liquid) and then really runs with it. Even though the fluid-like "creep" is predictable since it follows the physics of thermodynamics, clever map design mixes in unpredictable elements that keep it engaging. If you like tower defence games even slightly, this one's a keeper.

**PLUS** / Interesting campaign / Much content / Very fun

**MINUS** / Not pretty

PLATFORMS / PS4 / PSV	REVIEWED ON / PS4
GENRE / Shoot-'em-up	AGE RATING / 7
MULTIPLAYER / Local > 2 players Online > 2 players	
WEBSITE / www.double11.co.uk	
DEVELOPER / Double Eleven	PUBLISHER / SCEE
DISTRIBUTOR / Digital (PSN)	

## PixelJunk Shooter Ultimate

A good deal on a good game and its sequel

taking inspiration from the classic Genesis shooter *Sub-Terrania* but with a focus on interesting puzzles involving various fluids, *PixelJunk Shooter Ultimate* is a tidy package. It combines both *Shooter 1* and its sequel into a single cohesive narrative, and brings the upgrades from *Shooter 2* – like the super spin move – into the game right from the start. The visuals have been given a once-over, adding antialiasing, new environmental lighting, a redesigned ship, a redesigned HUD, and more particle effects for the liquids, all running at 60 frames per second.

*Shooter* has a great atmosphere, the fascinating hip-hop electro-beats of High Frequency Bandwidth contribute a lot to the game's unique sense of funky exploration, like you're digging down to the unknown and feeling cool while doing it. The only sharp contrast there being, the game is rather unforgiving. Death can happen very fast, putting you at the last checkpoint or start of the level.

There's no online cooperative, unfortunately, only a two-player online battle mode and local co-op. The game is both Cross-Play with the Vita version and Cross-Save, so you can continue playing on the go if you own the portable version too. *Shooter Ultimate* plays perfectly over Remote Play since it has simple controls. **NAG**

- Miktar



**79** *PixelJunk Shooter* is an interesting blend of subterranean exploration, twin-stick shooter combat, and mild puzzle solving. The sloshing liquids you have to deal with, like magma and water, often leads to very dynamic "oh crap" moments. One wrong shot, and you've just killed all the scientists you were meant to save. For new players, *Ultimate* is great value for money.

**PLUS** / Funky music / Visual upgrade / Two games in one

**MINUS** / Pretty unforgiving / Combat a bit flat / Only local co-op

PLATFORMS / 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO	REVIEWED ON / PC	GENRE / Puzzle / adventure	DEVELOPER / Ubisoft Montpellier
AGE RATING / 12	MULTIPLAYER / Local > None Online > None	PUBLISHER / Ubisoft	
WEBSITE / valianthearts.ubi.com			DISTRIBUTOR / Megarom

# Valiant Hearts: The Great War

All's fair in love and THAT DOG IS ADORABLE

As the younger, probably more handsome and strangely talented sibling of the Brothers World War, it's understandable that World War II gets the lion's share of the world's attention when gazing back at our tumultuous history. I'm assuming you, Attractive Person Presently Reading This Review, are a gamer, so you'll know what I mean when I say that I've played many, many video games that have taught me a great deal about the Second World War. Yet there's not one that springs to mind that's taught me anything about World War the First, otherwise known – with a sort of grotesque affection – as The Great War. That's changed with the arrival of *Valiant Hearts*, a game that wraps the historical conflict in a lovable two-dimensional artistic style, in stark contrast to the horrors that were wrought by humanity over the four bloody years between July 1914 and November 1918.

It's told from the perspective of a number of different characters, their stories curiously intertwined and bridging both sides of the war. There's a deeply human tale underpinning the events that unfold onscreen, full of sacrifice and bravery and the sort of friendships and connections that transcend invisible boundary lines. The narrative is inspired by the letters sent by soldiers and their families and friends during the war, which makes its delivery feel all the more bittersweet, knowing that this isn't purely fiction, but is rooted in our actual history.

There's a game beneath all that juicy narrative stuff, but it's not especially challenging, nor is it anything you haven't experienced before. Most of the time you'll be moving through side-scrolling environments laced with striking parallax effects and enchanting 2D artworks, and along the way you'll encounter puzzles, fetch quests and

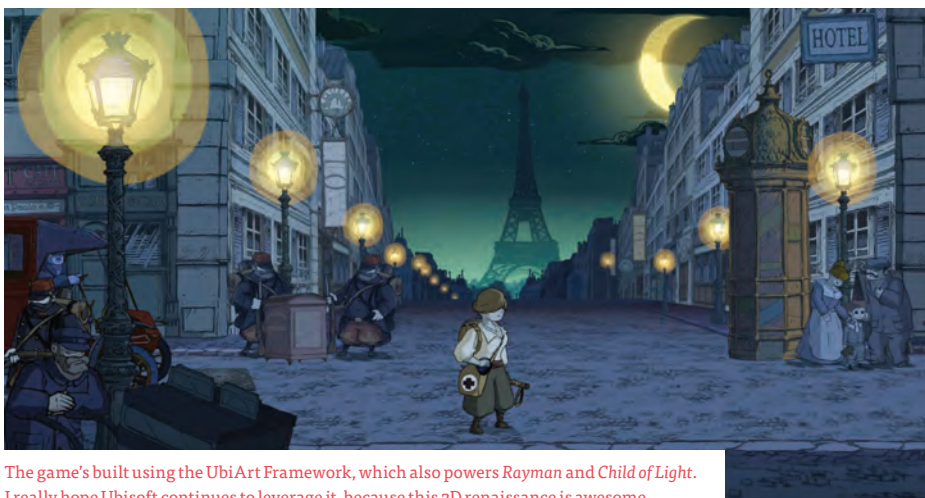
You're often joined by a dog called Walt, who can be sent to fetch hard-to-reach items and activate levers and do other puzzle-y things. He's also f\*\*\*ing adorable, so yay.



various character interactions that will allow progress when completed. It's a very basic adventure game, with the majority of puzzles involving lever pulling and crank turning until things click into place. Sometimes you'll need to work in tandem with one of the other player characters to achieve the desired effect, and you'll spend a good deal of time running back and forth collecting items between multi-layered screens, which can get a bit tedious.

*Valiant Hearts'* basic gameplay serves its purpose well enough, but it's the surrounding elements that make it shine. As you play, you'll find various collectibles with descriptions that convey a sense of what it meant to endure the war, and each level presents a menu filled with educational writings about the conflict and the world at the time. The characters themselves are charismatic and endearing, managing to be vividly expressive even though they never really speak in anything more than mumbles and visual speech bubbles. And on top of it all there's that fantastic visual design, which I'm just going to keep mentioning again and again. *Valiant Hearts* is a strange, lovely creation, and it evoked feelings in me. I can't really think of any better way to praise it. **NAG**

- Barkskin



The game's built using the UbiArt Framework, which also powers *Rayman* and *Child of Light*. I really hope Ubisoft continues to leverage it, because this 2D renaissance is awesome.



**85** *Valiant Hearts* is a beautiful thing. There's not all that much to be had by way of traditional gameplay, with little more than light puzzling and rudimentary adventure game elements to keep your gamer's mind engaged. That said, its stunning art, moving multi-character storyline and abundance of delightful personality have etched out a special place in my heart.

**PLUS** / Gorgeous art / Powerfully evocative narrative / Gimme that education

**MINUS** / Uplay, everyday





OFFERING

# SPONSORSHIP

## CALLING ALL TELKOM "DO GAMING" QUALIFIERS

Tell us why you are the most deserving clan for this sponsorship and how you would champion Ballistix, Crucial and Seasonic in South Africa

### WHAT WE WANT FROM YOU:

- ★ A detailed proposal of how you will build the Ballistix, Crucial and Seasonic Brand and become the best Brand Ambassador ever!
- ★ Show us your proven success by providing us proof of performance and following via your Facebook Page, Website, and Twitter!
- ★ What makes your clan unique and how will that help you to represent these brands?
- ★ Show that you can create a buzz online. Use *#CrucialSponsorship* in your posts.
- ★ *Cut off date 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014*

### SPONSORSHIP INCLUDES:

- ★ 5 x Crucial MX100 256GB 2.5" Internal Solid State Drives
- ★ 5 x Crucial Ballistix Elite 16GB (2 x 8GB) 1866MHz DDR3 Gaming Memory Kits
- ★ 5 x Seasonic X-Series 1050W Modular ATX12V PSUs
- ★ 5 x Kits: T-shirts and peaks

SPONSORSHIP TO THE

VALUE OF R40 000



## STILL NEED A TICKET TO LAN?

# WIN 1 OF 5 x

AND CRUCIAL **BALLISTIX** TACTICAL TRACER 8GB DDR3 GAMING MEMORY KITS, PLUS T-SHIRTS AND PEAKS



Show us just what you would do to WIN a Crucial Ballistix Tactical Tracer 8GB DDR3 Memory Kit and a guaranteed place at 2014 NAG rAge LAN Event!

- ★ Use social media to show us just how far you would go to win your place at rAge.
- ★ Use *#Ballistix* to make sure everything you do gets noticed. The more "Likes" the better your chance of winning.
- ★ *Cut off date 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014*

PRIZES TO THE VALUE OF

R2500 PER WINNER

# ENTER ONLINE AT [WWW.SYNTECH.CO.ZA/RAGE](http://WWW.SYNTECH.CO.ZA/RAGE)

\*Terms and conditions: Entrants agree that Syntech and it's sponsors Crucial / Ballistix are indemnified against any claims which may arise as a result of entrants doing CRAZEEEEEEEEEEE stuff to win!



PLATFORMS / PC / PS4	REVIEWED ON / PS4	GENRE / Action	DEVELOPER / Supergiant Games
AGE RATING / 12	MULTIPLAYER / Local > None Online > None	PUBLISHER / Supergiant Games	
WEBSITE / www.supergiantgames.com			DISTRIBUTOR / Steam / PlayStation Store

Combat is in real-time, but thanks to the Transistor you can pause it to queue up attacks and moves in a mode that's called "Turn". The amount you can queue is limited.

# Transistor

About a woman and her sword full of ghosts

**Y**ou are Red: one of the most celebrated singers in the whole of Cloudbank City. You unwittingly come across a weapon called the Transistor, which is capable of extraordinary things. The people who created the Transistor (a group called the Camerata) want it back, but Red also needs to survive the gradual collapse of her city.

The thing about the Transistor is that Red has no idea what it is and how it works. Her confusion is guaranteed to be felt by you within the first hour or so as you attempt to make sense of the game's user interface and plotline. Much like Supergiant's previous game, *Bastion*, you're just thrown in and left to fend for yourself with only a smattering of information provided by a narrator. Stick with it and things suddenly start slotting into place; eventually you'll be navigating the jargon infested systems as if it were second

nature. It's kind of odd, but your eventual mastering of the game's systems echoes Red's own mastering of the *Transistor* as she levels up and unlocks more attacks. There's a nice synergy here between player and character that I haven't really experienced in a game before.

The city's (and by extension, the game's) soul is compellingly captured in the soundtrack. The music of *Transistor* provides evocative hints at what life might have sounded like for Red before; and the fact that you can get her to hum along with the music when you're out of combat is just lovely.

Combat is where *Transistor* separates itself from the overabundance of arty indie titles. Supergiant Games has created something that is unique and makes sense within the fiction they've imagined. The *Transistor*'s attacks are known as Function Files. Each Function costs



a certain amount of memory. The *Transistor*'s memory capacities increase as Red levels-up. You can map up to four Functions to your controller's face buttons. Each face button will eventually unlock two modifying slots. With this, you can apply unused Function Files to mapped Function Files, adding a new effect to the base Function. You also unlock four passive slots, which can also accommodate Function Files that provide a third, passive function. So for example: the Function called Help, when mapped and used actively, summons a dog companion. If you choose to apply Help to a Passive slot then you'll get a 25% chance to morph Red into a SuperUser when activating Turn (a paused mode in which you can line up attacks), which will give her a one-shot, super-powerful attack. It sounds horrifically confusing (it is for at least the first hour or so) but once it clicked, it became the most flexible and customisable combat system I've encountered in years. **NAG**

- Mikit0707



The city of Cloudbank is an elegant mix of art deco and utopian science fiction. At times it reminded me a lot of *BioShock*'s Rapture, only drier and far less threatening.



**82** This is a great game. There are virtually no technical issues to speak of, and the combat system that Supergiant has created is unique and pretty damn special. At times the story gets a little self-indulgent and can feel forced, but that by no means ruins the experience. While *Transistor* lacks mainstream appeal, there's no doubt it will net a sizable cult following.

**PLUS** / Amazing combat system / Fantastic music / Gorgeous art direction / Masterful difficulty ramping

**MINUS** / Completely baffling for first hour / A little self-indulgent / Combat can get repetitive

PLATFORMS / PC	REVIEWED ON / PC	GENRE / MMORPG	DEVELOPER / Carbine Studios
AGE RATING / 12	MULTIPLAYER / Local > None	Online > Massive	PUBLISHER / NCsoft
WEBSITE / www.wildstar-online.com			DISTRIBUTOR / Megarom

# Wildstar

“Welcome to Wildstar, cupcake”

It takes an effort to make an MMORPG popular, and it's clear that Carbine Studios is trying to push a lot of innovation with their first project.

*Wildstar* is set on the planet Nexus, and focuses on the conflict between the evil, puppy-stomping Dominion, and the heroic, upstanding Exiles. Strangely enough, most of the Exiles' early missions involve massive indigenous genocide, which raises a few eyebrows. The planet was once the world of the advanced Eldan, and both factions arrive to try to harness leftover technologies. So far this all sounds a bit like *Borderlands* and *Mass Effect* fan fiction, but the backstory is woven into the narrative quite nicely.

The presentation shines throughout – the visuals are vibrant, and everything has a great cartoony aesthetic. Further cementing that cartoon theme is the epic and sweeping soundtrack. It always fits the mood, from sombre to upbeat, and constantly makes me wish there was a theme song I could sing along to. There's a good sense of humour too, and some great lines like: “Just die where I can loot your corpse”, or constantly being called

“Cupcake” will cause a chuckle.

The story is told through an expansive amount of lore, cut-scenes, and backstories. Unfortunately, all of the vibrancy to be found in other parts of the game is absent in the voice acting, which falls flat and feels dull. This doesn't stop the game from having a very interesting history that any reading gamer will dive into.

Combat in *Wildstar* is handled very well too. Each attack is telegraphed by a red hit-box, with anything caught inside the box taking damage. The game is built around mobility, making it easy to use dodges, sprints and double-jumps to position yourself for combat. A little too easily, in fact. The game still suffers from immersion-breaking clipping glitches, and these can often be exploited to hit an enemy that's not in line-of-sight.

In addition to choices of class and race, the game also offers players one of four Paths. Paths are a much hyped feature of *Wildstar*, where you are given Path-specific objectives and rewards. What this actually translates into is a cheap way of reminding you to pay your monthly subscription. Think of it this way:

Metal enough to cure iron-deficiencies.



you're ambling about in the Soldier Path (hit stuff, get rewards), when you come across a mountain. A pop-up appears saying “If you were an Explorer, you could get a reward for climbing that!” It's quite clear to see that the Paths will entice players to roll a new character, and replay the game. Granted, it is well implemented, and objectives for your chosen Path will constantly keep you busy.

Ultimately, playing an MMORPG is a commitment, and gamers have to decide on an individual level if a game is worth their time and monthly fees. *Wildstar* offers an exciting and vibrant world to explore, and a growing online community. While some features feel like cheap hooks to either burn subscription time or invite further play, this game has a lot to offer.

**NAG**  
- Sand\_Storm

## CASH MONEY

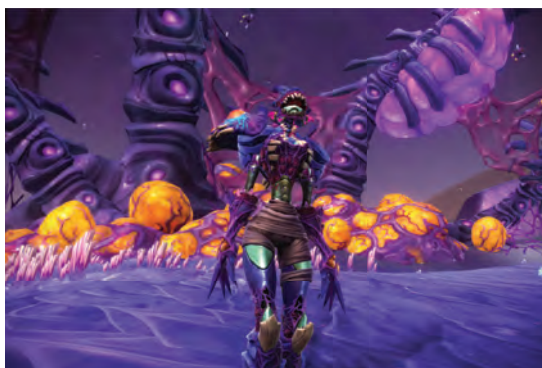
One of the most notable things about *Wildstar* is its subscription model. Like most others in the genre, it asks for a monthly fee to keep playing. However, there is a way to play for free (after the initial purchase of the game), and the inclusion of this makes for a nice option.

Another option allows players to barter with each other using in-game currency to purchase

C.R.E.D.D., an item which gives players another 30 days subscription when used. Also, the first month is free out of the box, so with some dedicated grinding you may never need to pay a monthly subscription. It's a good touch towards making *Wildstar* stand out.



Steve's plans for Reverse Orbital Cannons never really took off.



**75** *Wildstar* feels like a breath of fresh air in a staling market. There is enough here to attract players and keep their attention, and the potential free-to-play and the later-game content make this easy to recommend.

**PLUS** / Vibrant presentation / Plenty of subscription options / That level-up screen... / Some good innovations

**MINUS** / Dull voice acting / Repetitive quests / Those innovations feel like hooks



# HARDWIRED

by Neo Sibeko

**4K GOOD!** Gaming on the PC has never been better than it is now, at least visually. In fact it's looking to get better in the next 12 to 24 months. The push for 4K gaming has gained tremendous momentum as a result of drastically reduced pricing of substrates.

4K is particularly important for PC gaming unlike HD, which was in effect a step backwards for many PC gamers. The only thing that happened with FHD screens is that most gamers moved to a 16:9 aspect ratio and some 16:10 for those earlier 1920x1200 screens. In pixel density we gained nothing there, at least along the axis that we are more sensitive to (vertical) as many of us were already using 1600x1200 CRTs. Even then, we didn't instantly switch to 1920x1080; we began with 1280x1024 4:3 LCDs and then moved to FHD which has overstayed its welcome.

With 4K we finally get the upgrade that we had needed about 10 years ago. At the time sadly, there were no GPUs or any processors for that matter that could drive that kind of pixel density, so the incentive for vendors over and above the technology limitation just wasn't there. This isn't the case anymore, because by this time next year a 4K monitor should be available for around R5,000 which is incredible given their current pricing. In addition to the screens come the graphics cards, which we presently do not have, which can handle 4K gaming comfortably. You may be fortunate enough to afford a TITAN-Z or even better a 295X2, but those are multi-GPU cards which at best make games at 4K resolutions playable, but are not fast enough to maintain frame rates above the 60fps mark. There are many reasons for this including the kinds of overheads multi-GPU configurations have and latency issues that can cause the minimum frame rates to dip significantly below this 60fps mark. Besides that, it also happens that for games that do not have a split load render profile, you're stuck using a single GPU and the frame rate will be particularly low.

For GPUs fully capable of gaming at 4K, we'll need the next generation AMD and NVIDIA GPUs which should be with us by late 2014 / early 2015. In the mean-time we have already seen a proposed PCI Express 4.0 spec which is a bit further on, but it doubles the available bandwidth over PCI Express 3.0. With the massive increase in PCIe traffic caused by 4K rendering and SATA Express, this new specification will come in handy when it's finally available on motherboards, supported on graphics cards and CPUs.

Getting back to displays, as that's what 4K is really about, surrounding technologies finally make sense especially if you have to pay a hefty sum for it. For instance, 120 and 144Hz screens are generally costly. There aren't any 120Hz or 144Hz 4K monitors but there will be soon enough because we have already seen 144Hz QHD (2560x1440 which is double 720p) from ASUS and Acer with others likely to follow. Over and above the very high sync rate, there are several G-Synch enabled 144Hz QHD screens. Having seen one in action first hand I can safely say that motion fluidity doesn't get much better than this on any platform or medium. It's hard to put into words but it's the closest thing to real life motion as you're likely to have ever seen. If you've seen 60fps video, gaming on such a monitor produces a similar effect when compared to standard 24fps video.

All this 4K goodness obviously means those HD texture packs are no longer good enough, but our games should start shipping with significantly higher resolution textures, which could be anything up to four times the current texture sizes. Naturally that has repercussions on game sizes, but that is a positive change, because we can finally use those Blu-Ray drives for something other than playing overpriced movies.

4K is far more important to PC gaming than the switch to HD was all those years ago and I for one can't wait to move to any one of these new screens. Short of having a 2- to 4-way SLI configuration, most of us don't have systems that are beefy enough to handle 4K resolutions with even 2x MSAA enabled, let alone PhysX or 3D. When we eventually do have those systems though, our games will truly look incredible. **NAG**

Neo spends as much time playing with LN<sub>2</sub> as we do playing games. For those of you who weren't paying attention in science class, Liquid nitrogen can cause rapid freezing when it comes into contact with living tissue. So when your science teacher says don't put your finger in the jar, we suggest listening to him.

➤ PSU

Corsair AX1500i PSU  
R6,799 / www.corsair.com



➤ GRAPHICS

GIGABYTE GV-N78TGHZ-3GD  
R10,999 / www.gigabyte.com



➤ OS DRIVE

OCZ Vector Vector 150  
R2,808 / www.ocz.com



➤ STORAGE DRIVE

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



➤ CHASSIS

Corsair Obsidian 900D  
R4,499 / www.corsair.com



➤ DISPLAY

ASUS VG248QE  
R6,099 / www.asus.com



➤ KEYBOARD

Razer BlackWidow Ultimate  
R1,700 / www.razerzone.com



➤ COOLER

Cooler Master Nepton 280L  
R1,499 / www.coolermaster.com



➤ MOUSE

Razer Ouroboros  
R1,899 / 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  
R13,799 / www.intel.com

➤ ASUS RAMPAGE IV EXTREME BLACK EDITION  
R7,799 / www.asus.com

➤ AVEXIR BLITZ 1.1 DDR3 2,666MHZ  
R4,799 / www.avexir.com

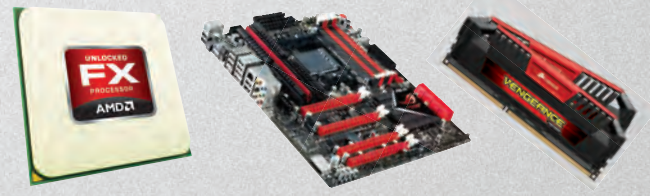


# AMD

➤ AMD FX 8350  
R2,999 / www.amd.com

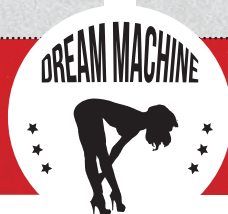
➤ ASUS CROSSHAIR V FORMULA-Z  
R3,999 / www.asus.com

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



INTEL DREAM MACHINE

R74,665



AMD DREAM MACHINE

R60,066

# VERSUS

Maybe you've just gotten a bonus at work and you're feeling especially rich this month. Perhaps your parents have decided that your report card was so brilliantly average that you deserve a reward, and you've decided that a gaming mouse is the only way to celebrate your mediocrity. It might be your current mouse is looking a

little scruffy and/or has one or more of its buttons holding on by little more than some chewing gum and a well-eroded elastic band. Whatever your reasons for suddenly needing a new mouse, maybe it's time to take the wireless plunge, because cords are so last season. That's where these excellent top-end mice come in.



## ➤ SPECS

ERP/ R1,999

WEBSITE / [Megarom](http://Megarom)

SUPPLIER / [www.megarom.co.za/steelseries](http://www.megarom.co.za/steelseries)

SENSOR / Laser, up to 8,200 DPI

BUTTONS / Eight, programmable

ACCELERATION / 30g

RESPONSE RATE / POLLING RATE / 1ms / 1,000Hz

WEIGHT / 120 grams

BATTERY LIFE / 16 hours

## STEELSERIES SENSEI WIRELESS

### ➤ COMFORT

The Sensei Wireless is ambidextrous, which immediately makes us feel that it has the upper hand in terms of comfort in this face-off, because apparently some people out there have left hands that are actually useful and not just worthless finger-holders. It's a comfortable mouse in use, graciously sporting thumb buttons on either side to cater to both lefties and righties. We did find that it's a bit too easy to accidentally hit the thumb buttons on the opposite side during use, but it's an easy niggle to fix by just disabling them.

### ➤ WIRED? WIRELESS!

The Sensei can be used in either wired or wireless mode, allowing you to charge it if its battery runs dry without skipping a beat. For when it's not in use, there's a stylish charging dock (complete with customizable lighting to match that on the Sensei itself) onto which you can place the Sensei. The lighting doubles as a battery indicator, letting you know when the Sensei is at full charge. SteelSeries ensures around 16 hours of battery life.

### ➤ SOFTWARE

Every aspect of the mouse is powered by the SteelSeries Engine 3, which is a pleasure to use. You'll find the expected range of customization options, along with the choice to turn on a useful power-saving mode that'll eke out a few extra hours of life from your battery's charge.

### ➤ PERFORMANCE

If you're worried that going wireless will impact your experience, don't be. There's no telling the difference between the Sensei Wireless and a high-end wired gaming mouse. As with the Mamba, the quality of the mouse is outstanding, and is durable enough to be with you for a long, long time.



## ▶ SPECS

ERP / R2,099

WEBSITE / [www.corex.co.za](http://www.corex.co.za)

SUPPLIER / Corex

SENSOR / Dual sensor (laser and optical), up to 6,400 DPI

BUTTONS / Seven, programmable

ACCELERATION / 50g

RESPONSE RATE / POLLING RATE / 1ms / 1,000Hz

WEIGHT / 136 grams

BATTERY LIFE / 16 hours

## RAZER MAMBA

### ▶ COMFORT

It may not be ambidextrous, but the Razer Mamba's smooth contours not only give it an exotic look, but make it comfortable to hold and use no matter what grip style you employ. Right-handed gamers can't really go wrong with it.

### ▶ WIRED? WIRELESS!

Like the Sensei, the Mamba can be used in wired or wireless mode, letting you charge the mouse as you go. Otherwise, there's a fancy charging dock included, which boasts customizable lighting. There's a battery level indicator on the Mamba itself, and as with the Sensei you'll get around 16 hours of use off a single charge.

### ▶ SOFTWARE

Driven by Razer's Synapse 2.0 technology, there's a ton of customization to be done from within the Mamba's software suite, like adjusting the scroll wheel's customizable lighting and calibrating the Mamba's dual laser/optical sensors to work perfectly with your gaming surface of choice. It'll also let your Mamba interface with other Razer devices you own; your keyboard can be used to adjust your Mamba's sensitivity, for example.

### ▶ PERFORMANCE

Both of these mice do a brilliant job of proving that top-end wireless mice can easily contend with their wired counterparts. The only thing that could put you off buying them is the outrageous price, with the Mamba being the more expensive offering by R100. If you want the best wireless mouse money can buy, you can't go wrong with either the Sensei Wireless or the Mamba.

# Z97

## 4-WAY SHOOTOUT

This month we've taken four motherboards from ASRock, EVGA, GIGABYTE and MSI. The intention here is to find out which one is most fitting for your pocket and needs. They vary in price from R2,799 right up to R6,599. The spread is huge, but they are all quality boards that should be more than enough for your gaming and overclocking needs. Don't forget about the two boards we reviewed in the last issue of **NAG** (July issue page 62-64) since they are worthy adversaries to the four we have here and are also well worth your consideration.

What follows is a brief rundown in three disciplines (audio, performance and features), and how each one measured up against the competition. The MSI and EVGA motherboards are closer in price than the other two so perhaps look at those separately from the GIGABYTE and ASRock motherboards, as those cost a little less.



ERP R2,599

WEBSITE [www.asrock.com](http://www.asrock.com)

SUPPLIER TVR

# ASROCK Z97 EXTREME 6



## SPECS

**CHIPSET**  
Intel Z97  
**MEMORY**  
4x 240-pin DDR3  
**CPU SUPPORT**  
LGA 1150  
**EXPANSION**  
3x PCIe 16X,  
2x PCIe 1X  
**SIZE**  
ATX

## AUDIO

There's nothing to be said here for the audio. ASRock's Purity 2 is familiar to us and is featured on just about every motherboard that the company makes. It's the Realtek ALC1150 codec in combination with Nichicon fine gold capacitors and an NE5532 op-amp. Competent but nothing we've not heard and exhausted already.

## PERFORMANCE

This isn't an overclocking board, but it sure does fly. The memory performance numbers are remarkable. When you enable the memory performance enhancing feature, the board delivers the highest level of performance out of all the boards here. This is not through some magic, but the BIOS tunes tertiary memory timings without touching the primary and secondary ones. That way, the chances of having instability are reduced. The effect on performance is phenomenal and it's a pity

that this isn't an overclocking motherboard because it really does deliver awesome performance. You can achieve this yourself, since there is no work involved and needs little to no experience to enable. For MFR overclocking, you'll be limited here because TRCD is limited to 15 and TRP to 20. Unfortunately for those insane memory clocks you need to be able to select "30" for each setting, so the fun will be short lived. Fortunately this only affects single sided xFR memory when chasing frequency records. For all other memory, the options provided are more than enough to get you incredible performance.

## FEATURES

The big feature on this motherboard is the dual M.2 socket (22110) and SATA Express support. The board has all the basics such as clear CMOS, power, reset and POST LED. It's basic in that regard at least

compared to the other motherboards here, but looking at the price it is exactly what we expected. The unique thing about this board is that ASRock has wired up their M.2 ports to four PCI Express lanes which allows maximum bandwidth for supporting drives. We measured this and found the performance to be far better than on any other motherboard. In fact we were able to extract maximum performance from the Samsung XP941 M.2 drive only with this motherboard. Where value is concerned, the Extreme 6 is hard to beat. There may not be plenty of extras but what it does have, it executes very well.

SCORE

9/10

ERP	R3,899
WEBSITE	www.gigabyte.com
SUPPLIER	Rectron

# GIGABYTE Z97X SOC FORCE



## SPECS

**CHIPSET**  
Intel Z97  
**MEMORY**  
4x 240-pin DDR3  
**CPU SUPPORT**  
LGA 1150  
**EXPANSION**  
4x PCIe 16X, 1x  
PCIe 1X, 2x PCI  
**SIZE**  
ATX

## AUDIO

Audio on this board is just like with many others, courtesy of the ALC 1150 codec and a headphone amplifier. The caps are standard solid capacitors and the audio performance according to Right Mark Audio analyzer is good. It'll suffice for gaming and your movies, but it certainly won't blow you away by any measure.

## PERFORMANCE

For this motherboard, perhaps this section should read "overclocking" as that's what it is strongest at. In fact, by comparison, all others in this roundup are not up to scratch. At the time of writing it held more overclocking world records than any other motherboard on the market. The OC buttons are exhaustive, with everything

from Bclk gear switching (adjust Bclk at 1MHz or 100Hz intervals), OC trigger buttons, memory safe features and just about anything else you can imagine. The UEFI is FHD but the legacy BIOS is available as well, so you get the best of both worlds. Where performance and tuning options are concerned, the Z97X-SOC FORCE is dominant, out shining all others here by some distance.

## FEATURES

Features are a tricky discipline for the SOC FORCE, because they are all related to overclocking and nothing else. The motherboard does not have M.2 support but does have a single SATA connector. There are two PCI slots which could have

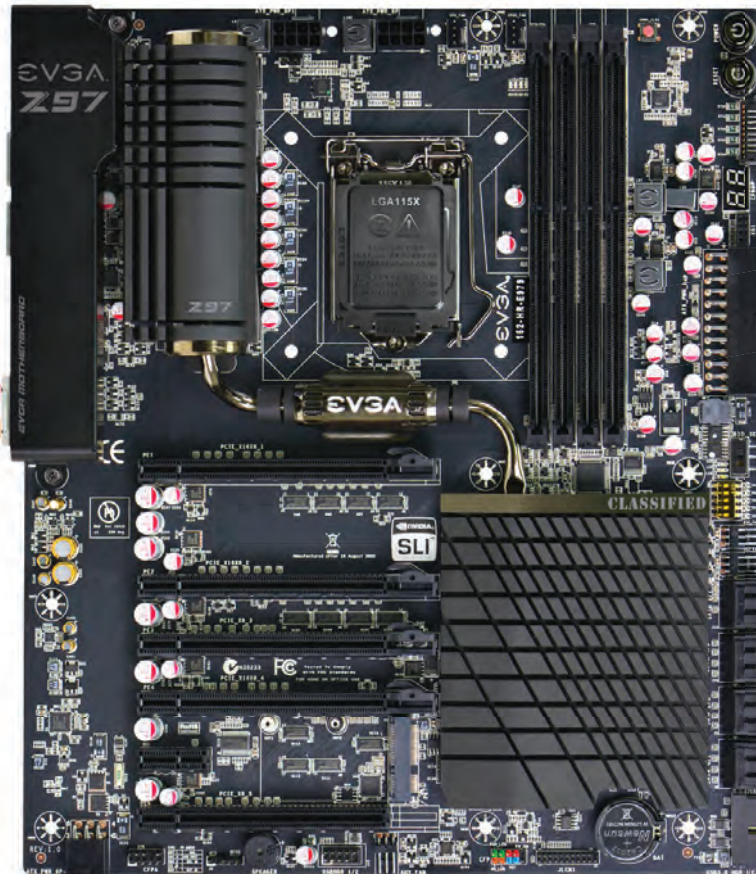
been used for M.2 instead, but that isn't enough to distract from just how incredible it is. Everything here is built for overclocking other than the KILLER 2200 NIC chip, which is almost out of place given how focused it is. Be that as it may, it leans entirely towards a single discipline and very little else which is good for those who are interested but may perhaps be too short of some other features for those who want to build a gaming/overclocking machine.

SCORE

9/10

ERP	R6,599
WEBSITE	www.evga.com
SUPPLIER	EVGA

# EVGA Z97 CLASSIFIED



## SPECS

- CHIPSET**  
Intel Z97
- MEMORY**  
4x 240-pin DDR3
- CPU SUPPORT**  
LGA 1150
- EXPANSION**  
5x PCIe 16X,  
1x PCIe 1X
- SIZE**  
E-ATX

### AUDIO

The EVGA Z97 Classified features the most advanced audio solution out of the motherboards here. Using a quad core Creative Labs Sound Core3D processor and Nichicon fine gold capacitors, it easily outpaces all the others. The test results were very clear as the Z97 Classified blew away the competition by a wide margin. We aren't able to show you the graph data here, but it is impressive, getting an "excellent" rating in every test. Listening to music via this motherboard made it hard to go back to testing the rest as the quality was glaringly obvious and this is likely to increase the more time you spend with the Z97-Classified. EVGA doesn't do enough to sell this feature as you'll find it hardly mentioned on the motherboard box or marketing materials. Truth be told, it's amongst the best there is in the industry.

### PERFORMANCE

Performance on this motherboard is good. It is geared towards 3D benchmarks and users of multi-GPU gaming configurations. If you're looking to peruse memory overclocking records you'll be out of luck as nothing about this motherboard is tuned for that. Mind you it doesn't mean it will not reach some competent speeds as we had no problem running our test kit at 2,666 and 2,800MHz with fairly tight timings. It's just that with xFR single sided memory, you'll most certainly be better served by another motherboard. With that said, every other aspect of this board is solid and the performance is right up there with the best of them.

### FEATURES

For a motherboard costing this much, one is tempted to say EVGA could have done a little more on the Classified. Upon closer inspection though that would not be fair because the

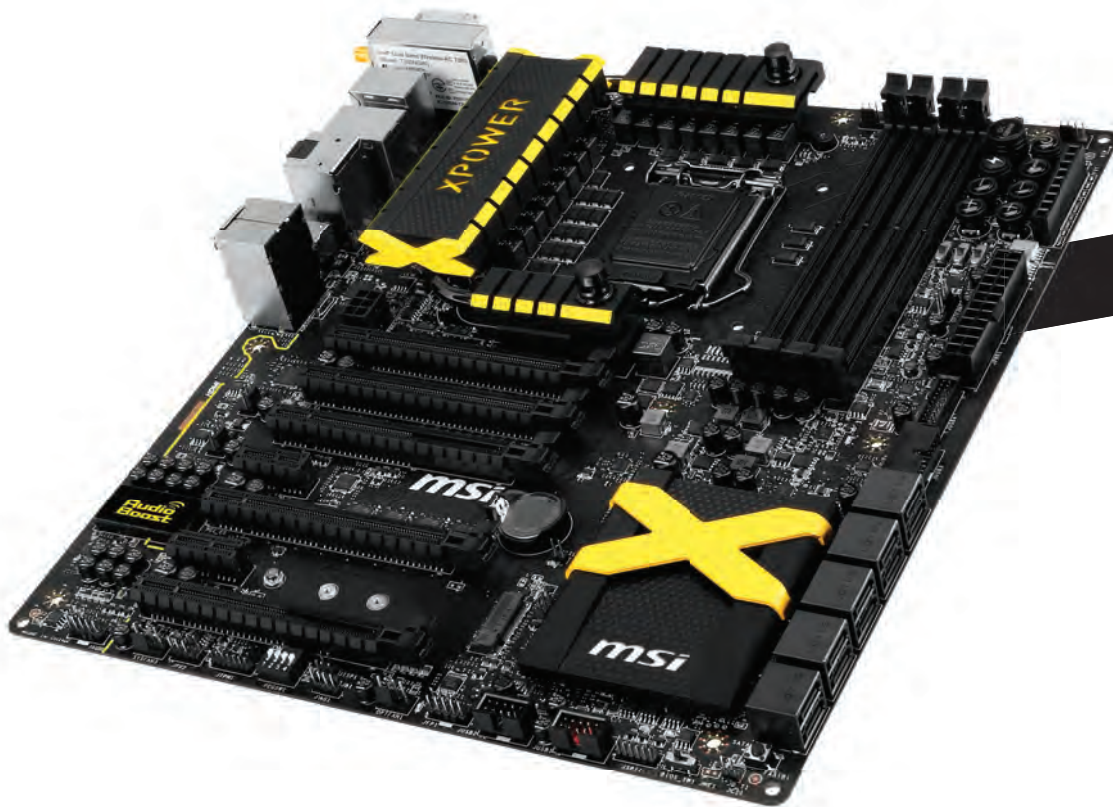
Audio solution is much more expensive than what others have employed. The chip is costly and when you add the PLX bridge chip for the 4-way SLI support, the motherboard was always going to have a steep price. Unlike the two BIOS solution of every other vendor, EVGA goes with a triple BIOS configuration and two mini-display output ports, while they offer nothing in the way of HDMI, DVI or VGA connectivity. The M.2 support while there, is limited to M.2 2260 drives which means (at least for now) capacities greater than 256GB are out of the question. It's an odd mix of features, but a mix that does somewhat justify the pricing.

**SCORE**

**8/10**

ERP	R6,599
WEBSITE	www.msi.com
SUPPLIER	Corex

# MSI Z97 XPOWER AC



## SPECS

**CHIPSET**  
Intel Z97  
**MEMORY**  
4x 240-pin DDR3  
**CPU SUPPORT**  
LGA 1150  
**EXPANSION**  
5x PCIe 16X,  
2x PCIe 1X  
**SIZE**  
E-ATX

## AUDIO

MSI takes pride in implementation and they should, because they really do go the extra mile to provide something noteworthy for their customers. Unlike on their high-end Gaming-9 AC, the XPOWER features no additional audio shielding over and above what the PCB isolation provides. This is more like what you'll find on a Gaming 7 motherboard, which is still good enough for gaming, music and movies. MSI as usual provides not one but two operational amps. It doesn't do anything for the audio quality but it does give the company an edge above others which just rely on the ALC1150 codec, Nichicon gold caps and signal isolation by PCB layers. The software that MSI uses as well looks a little better. It is the same Realtek audio control panel but it is skinned differently. It doesn't mean much for audio quality but it does make a welcome break from the standard tried and tested version we've seen so many times. Had it not been for the vastly superior audio on the EVGA Z97 Classified, the XPOWER would be the motherboard to walk away with top honours here.

## PERFORMANCE

3D performance on this motherboard

is solid and so is memory overclocking actually, at least if you avoid particular sets of memory, like the memory we tested with. The XPOWER would not allow us to set a command rate of 1N. It would make the system extremely unstable resulting in the system failing to load Windows and sometimes getting stuck in the BIOS. Unlike the ASRock motherboard which had the same 1N command rate issue, there is no way to compensate for that with a performance enhancement setting. So the memory and CPU intensive tasks were lower in performance than they should have been. For games and 3D benchmarks however (save for 3DMark11) this should not have any perceivable effect on user experience. On any other motherboard we would ignore this anomaly, but seeing that this is an overclocking motherboard we are puzzled by why this memory issue plagues so many of the MPower and XPower motherboards. For any other memory however (Hynix, MFR, PSC and BBSE) it works flawlessly.

## FEATURES

MSI couldn't have possibly packed more on this motherboard if they tried. There are

switches and buttons all over the place. You name it it's there. 10 SATA ports and an M.2 slot as well. If MSI was determined to make this the best featured board they have ever made, they have succeeded as the list of features and innovations here is nothing short of impressive. It may not have the audio from the EVGA board, but it more than makes up for it with so many other features, including the De-Lid kit for CPUs that have had the IHS popped off. This is a small but, thoughtful addition to the package that further makes the XPOWER that much more impressive. If you need more, you'll get a Bluetooth 4.0 and Wi-Fi 802.11 (AC) dongle and a matching Sharkoon Shark Blades 120mm Fan. The determination that is shown on this board is amazing and MSI is no longer within striking distance of the top, they have effectively arrived at the top and are battling it out with the best of them. **NAG**

SCORE

9/10

Women's Day

I'm a woman phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman, that's me.

Maya Angelou

Phenomenal women deserve a phenomenal service provider.

ADSL - HOSTING - DOMAINS - DESIGN PHENOMENAL CUSTOMER SERVICE



great prices, better service  
[www.imagnet.co.za](http://www.imagnet.co.za)

help desk  
086 111 1101  
[info@imagnet.co.za](mailto:info@imagnet.co.za)  
7 days a week

# GIGABYTE TITAN Black GHz Edition

Website / [www.gigabyte.com](http://www.gigabyte.com) ERP / R16,999 Supplier / Rectron

SPECS	CORE	GK110B (28nm) 1,006MHz (1,111MHz Boost)
	PROCESSORS	2,880
	RENDER OUTPUTS	48 / 240
	MEMORY	6,144MB GDDR5 7GHz (336GB/sec)
	API	DirectX 11.2 / OpenGL 4.4 / OpenCL / PhysX/CUDA



## BENCHMARK RESULTS

3DMARK – Fire Strike: 11,127  
 CATZILLA – 1080p: 13,998  
 HITMAN: Absolution –  
 (DX11 ultra detail) 4x AA: 81

Since the 700 series of graphics cards showed up last year, NVIDIA has had a seemingly unusual cadence in how it releases graphics cards. We no longer have the standard and familiar line up, refreshed every 12 to 16 months.

This time NVIDIA has taken to releasing variations of the exact same GPU, in a manner that may be puzzling to many but obviously makes sense for the company, at least where reference products are concerned. We had the original GTX 780, followed by the TITAN, and then the 780 Ti, which was then, followed by what we have here, the TITAN Black. Unlike with the original 780 and TITAN, the 780 Ti and the TITAN Black both feature a full complement of the GK110 GPU. The only difference is that the TITAN Black houses twice the memory and obviously has full double precision support. Other than that, it's identical to the GTX 780 Ti.

For board partners, the TITAN presents a unique challenge in that NVIDIA prohibits modifying of the base product. That is, no vendor may ship a TITAN series graphics card with anything but the standard cooler and they may not build a proprietary PCB around it. Essentially they must sell what NVIDIA sells them and that's about it.

There are ways around some of these limitations though and it is one of these that GIGABYTE has gotten around with their GHz Edition. Despite the limitations from NVIDIA, nothing prevents a board partner from selling an overclocked version of this card. What usually prevents many vendors from doing this is the heat that the GPU configuration generates. Unlike with the regular 780 or 780 Ti, the TITAN Black makes use of the entire GPU silicon. No parts are fused off including ECC mechanisms, superior precision processing parts and the like. The TITAN is a "budget" TESLA and/or Quadro card for the professionals, but a very expensive 780Ti for gamers and enthusiasts. So as it walks this fine line between the two markets, the challenge that the TITAN Black is facing is substantial.

On top of being a fully enabled GPU, it operates at a higher frequency than the standard 780 Ti but uses the same cooler and PCB. The heat generated as such is measurably higher. The card will never throttle at these frequencies but they are rather low clocks to begin with. You're pretty much guaranteed the reference performance clock at all times. GIGABYTE has devised a way to exploit this using their new and beefy 600 Watt WindForce cooler which is an upgraded version of the 450 watt heatsink and fan combo on the GTX 780Ti GHz Edition. GIGABYTE, as stated earlier, may not ship the card with the cooler mounted, but they can sell you the GHz Edition card with this cooler in the package. All you need do before using it is follow the included instructions and mount the cooler on your card and you can enjoy maximum turbo frequencies over and above the reference clock set by NVIDIA. In the case of the GHz Edition, the card runs at 1,188MHz all the time because the heat is hastily dispatched very effectively. The cooler actually manages

to keep the card below the 70°C mark for the most part even with a vGPU of 1.2V and the much higher overclock than on the reference spec. Needless to say the performance is phenomenal and this card is much faster than any other TITAN Black Edition on the market.

The price is incredibly high, but then again it is the best one around and, like all TITANS, it costs a lot of money. This one is strictly for those with deep pockets but if you do have the funds and need a TITAN Black, make sure to get this one. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko

**8** Short of water cooling your own TITAN Black, this is the best one on the market.

**PLUS** / 600 watt cooler / Very good performance Good overclocker

**MINUS** / That price / Limited to reference PCB and PWM

## Corsair Hydro H105 CPU Cooler

Website / [www.corsair.com](http://www.corsair.com)

ERP / R1,499 Supplier / Rectron

SIZE	275x122x27 (mm radiator)
COMPATIBILITY	2011/1366/775/1156/1155/1150/AM2/AM3/FM2

The H105 cooling unit isn't as fancy as the H100i that was released a few years ago, so there's no software control for it, but it is a better cooler. Where the H105 eclipses all others is it has the best, simplest and most robust installation mechanism we've ever come across.

From the tough, toolless base plate to the chromed thumb screws, it is all high quality materials and so easy to use that you don't need an installation manual at all. It is there for sure, but it's so simple to use that even a novice could be up and running inside of a minute. In fact to change motherboards out of the testing station, takes less than a minute if you use the H105, whereas it's a much more elaborate process with the previous Kraken X60 cooler we used. It's not that the H105 performs better, as it doesn't, it is however quieter and just a breeze to work with.

The cold plate comes attached with the CPU socket mount which means all you need do is place the back plate behind your motherboard, screw four bolts through to hold it in place, place the cold plate and pump over it and use the thumb screws to hold that down. That's it, the H105 is installed and ready to use. This is in contrast to Thermaltake's entire water series for instance which needs at least 15 pieces to install, while the Corsair H105 needs only ten. Once installation is done, your CPU is chilled in a way that very few air coolers could ever manage. We managed to keep a very hot 4790K CPU under 70°C even under a particularly stressful XTU benchmark. The H105 may not be the best performing water cooling solution on the market, but as an overall product it's the most impressive cooler we've ever seen. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



**8** The H105 is probably the most refined AIO liquid cooler on the market, with superb quality and good performance.

**PLUS** / Simplest install mechanism ever / Impressive build quality  
Good performance

**MINUS** / No intelligent (i) version available yet

## Samsung XP941 M.2 PCIe 512GB SSD

Website / [www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com)

ERP / R9,999 Supplier / Samsung

SPECS	CONTROLLER	Samsung MDX processor (300MHz)
	NAND TYPE	19nm Samsung MLC
	CACHE	512MB
	FORM FACTOR	M.2 2280
	INTERFACE	M.2 / PCI Express

This isn't a retail product that Samsung will have on store shelves. You'll only be able to buy it through an OEM if you're willing to pay the scorching price. If you can't find such a retailer then look to import it from Amazon or any one of the online stores locally or abroad that can source it for you.

If you do manage to get your hands on this drive, what you'll find is that it packs a wallop of a punch and is a fantastic showing of just how capable the M.2 standard is. We tested the XP941 on the ASRock Z97 Extreme 6 which is one of the few boards on the market that not only support 80mm and 110mm M.2 sizes but offers double the bandwidth compared to other vendors. This is because ASRock wires more lanes to the M.2 slot (double), thus the performance can be anything up to 100% faster. Depending on the motherboard with which you'll use this drive, your performance may be lower, especially in the sequential read numbers. On ASRock motherboards, you'll be able to extract maximum performance and this is exactly what we observed in our testing.

We recorded a sequential read of 1,129MB/s, a write speed of 961MB/s and a read IOPS result of 85,000. Compare this to the stated 1,170MB/s maximum read, 950MB/s write and 122,000 IOPS performance Samsung claims, we were mostly able to match these numbers. That kind of performance easily eclipses any other PCI Express drive we've tested thus far. In comparison to the older Revo Drives from OCZ and other PCI Express solutions, this one is much faster. The IOPS performance may not be the best we've seen, but the maximum latency measured was 4.1ms which is less than half that of the best drive we've tested. Best of all, the XP941 is bootable provided you're using a recent Z97 motherboard.

With this kind of performance it's hard to find fault with the XP941. It is hideously expensive, but if you intend to edit 4K video or need this kind of performance in a server environment, the XP941 makes sense and in that context is not as expensive as it would be inside a gaming machine. For sheer performance, we've never seen anything faster than the Samsung XP941. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko



**8** The Samsung XP941 is ridiculously expensive, but the performance is equally staggering.

**PLUS** / Extreme fast sequential performance / Low power consumption

**MINUS** / Pricing may be an issue / Availability

# Philips 242G5DJEB LCD gaming monitor

Website / [www.drivecon.net](http://www.drivecon.net) ERP / R5,499 Supplier / Drive Control Corporation

S P E C S	PANEL TYPE/SIZE	24-inch TFT LCD
	MAX RESOLUTION	1920x1080 @ 144Hz
	RESPONSE TIME	1ms
	CONTRAST RATIO	80,000,000:1
	INPUTS	VGA, dual link DVI, HDMI, MHL, DisplayPort 1.2, 4x USB 3.0 (+1 fast charger)



If your faithful old monitor is starting to behave as though it's suffering from a digital astigmatism and you're worried it's about to signal an eternal flat-line and ditch you forever, perhaps it's time to prevent that disappointment by pre-emptively buying a replacement. Or maybe you're not quite so dramatic and you just want a new monitor. If either of those is the case, this 24-inch, gaming-centric display from Philips is definitely worth considering. If you've got the budget for it, that is.

Its most-touted feature is its 144Hz refresh rate. This means that the on-screen image can be updated up to 144 times per second, provided your hardware supports this. It's supposed to make for a crisper image, as well as enabling smoother image motion – but in reality, my eyes couldn't tell the difference between the overall quality of its image and my staple 60Hz LCD screen.

Where it does make a difference is that it'll happily do active 3D gaming and movies at 60 frames per second, provided you use DisplayPort or dual link DVI as your input mechanism. It's really the best way to experience 3D effects with minimal discomfort, which makes this monitor an easy choice for anyone who's actually keen on 3D entertainment. Which I'm not. But you might be.

The stand onto which the display clips is a hefty thing, which it needs to be when the display's positioning is so adjustable. Its height can be adjusted, it can be swivelled left and right, and it can be tilted up and down as well. It can also be rotated from landscape to portrait orientation if you so choose. The stand is one of the best things about the monitor, and it's criminal that not all displays use something similar.

Image quality is excellent. There's admirable contrast, and colour production is top-notch. It's an incredibly bright display as well; even at 20% of its maximum brightness the image remains perfectly clear. The menu reveals myriad options for altering the visuals to your liking, with the usual array of proprietary image technologies that can be toggled



to alter the experience.

There's a wired control box thingy included (called the SmartKeypad) which is useful for semi-remotely adjusting menu options and switching between various presets designed to allow you to set up different visual profiles for different games and genres. Really though, it feels like a bit of a superficial addition, given that reaching for the controls on the actual monitor isn't all that strenuous. It could be that I'm missing the point, but I have to wonder how many rands could've been knocked off the price were it not included.

Added value comes in the form of four USB 3.0 ports (including one that can be used to fast charge mobile devices) that'll let you hook up multiple monitors, and MHL support for connecting your smartphone or tablet to the screen. Features like response

time that dynamically adjusts depending on what you're doing and the ability to manually set your screen size are cool extras, as are the different genre-specific image presets designed to enhance your gaming experience. It's an outstanding monitor, but its cost is a bit daunting. **NAG**

- Dane Remendes

**9** This is a great monitor. The tilt stand is awesome and it produces an excellent image.

**PLUS** / Robust tilt stand / Things look nice and stuff

**MINUS** / Pretty pricy



## Crucial M550 1TB

- Website / [www.syntech.co.za](http://www.syntech.co.za)
- ERP / R7,749
- Supplier / Syntech

The SSD industry has come far to reduce the price of these highly desirable components. While a 240GB drive is now pretty affordable for most gamers, pushing to 500GB and further is a great way to get nasty calls from your credit card company. Thankfully, prices are ever-descending, so you can now pick up this 1TB drive for what could be considered something close to reasonable. In our testing the M550 managed to shift sequential data chunks at read/write speeds of 517.2/499.3MB/s respectively, which is blazingly quick. Random 4K tests prove that the M550's capabilities are suitable for the demands made by today's games, with speeds of 32.99/132.2MB/s in that department.

There's no doubt that when it comes to SSDs, you should get the best you can afford. This drive is so incredibly fast, and doesn't have that common issue of being too small to be useful, that it should be a simple choice: if you've got the cash, this is an excellent primary drive for any PC.

**NAG**

- Geoff Burrows



**9** Sometimes size isn't everything, but when it is, having a terabyte of high-speed solid-state storage is a great way to keep your beast of a gaming pc running well.

**PLUS** / Excellent speeds / Tons of storage space

**MINUS** / Prices are still too high for mainstream use

## Sades SA-922 gaming headset

- Website / Gamers Gadgets
- ERP / R545
- Supplier / [bit.ly/GamersGadgets](http://bit.ly/GamersGadgets)

SPECS	FREQUENCY RESPONSE	20Hz – 20kHz
	IMPEDANCE	16 ohms
	DRIVER UNITS	40mm

The SA-922 is a multiplatform headset, usable with your PC, 360 or PS3 via the bundled connectors. Its build quality isn't brilliant, with lots of flimsy plastic everywhere. There's padding on the cups and headband, and a foldaway microphone tucked in there as well. The in-line controller lets you independently adjust game and chat volume. Aside from build quality that can't hold its own against more expensive sets, the only niggle I have with the SA-922 is that it's only comfortable in short bursts. The on-ear cups are great at blocking out noise, but they press down on your ears and inevitably become uncomfortable after extended use. The quality of the audio produced is excellent, with very little distortion even at the impressive maximum volume level. Meaty bass and clear highs and lows make movie, gaming and music audio equally pleasing.

**NAG**

- Dane Remedes



**8** As with other Sades headsets we've tested, the SA-922 provides powerful audio at an attractive price.

**PLUS** / Low price / Great sound quality

**MINUS** / Not the best build quality or comfort

## Nikon Seecoat Blue anti-reflective lens coating

- Website / [visionoptics.co.za](http://visionoptics.co.za)
- ERP / Prescription dependant
- Supplier / Vision Optics

Blue light is also known as High-Energy Visible light (HEV) and is emitted by LED devices like all those computer screens, smartphones and televisions and even energy-saving light bulbs. Blue light occurs in natural light but is magnified by our device crazed lifestyles. Human eyes naturally block UV light but not blue light, which is where Nikon's SeeCoat Blue anti-reflective lens coatings come into play. We were sent a pair of prescription glasses with this coating applied. There was a lot of swapping between the new glasses and old ones just to see the difference and after using them for three weeks they're easy to recommend and have greatly improved clarity, sharpness and feel much more comfortable. The lenses also proved to be dust resistant and relatively fingerprint free (one of the properties of the coating is reduced smudging) but we didn't test for scratches because we want to keep them. If you want the Nikon SeeCoat Blue for your prescription, speak to your optometrist.

**NAG**

- Michael James



**9** This coating can be applied to clear lenses (prescription free) and not just prescription lenses, so it's a great all round solution.

**PLUS** / Sharper image / Reduced eye strain / Dust, scratch and smudge resistant

**MINUS** / Nothing

# THE LAZY GAMER'S GUIDE

## Mad Catz M.O.J.O. micro-console for Android

➤ Website / [www.cometcomputing.co.za](http://www.cometcomputing.co.za)

➤ RRP / R2,999    ➤ Supplier / Comet Computing

No matter how you may feel about the OUYA and its attempt to create an open-source, Android-powered gaming console, there's no denying that it started something. The Mad Catz M.O.J.O. is testament to that. Designed to satisfy your gaming, Internet and media needs via the countless apps, hacks and doohickies that make Android such a versatile open platform, the M.O.J.O. can be used to play games (via its bundled controller), watch movies, listen to music, engage in social networking and do pretty much everything your tablet and smartphone can do, but with the added benefit of it being purposefully designed to turn your TV into a smart TV.





### SIMPLICITY ITSELF

The M.O.J.O. is an inconspicuous little thing, effortlessly blending in with any television setup. Getting it up and running is quick and easy, connecting to your HDTV via HDMI. The output can also be upscaled to 4K resolution if you've got a supported UHD (Ultra High Definition) TV.

### THE CONTROLLER

The C.T.R.L.<sup>®</sup> mobile gamepad that ships with the console can be used across multiple platforms via Bluetooth, and includes a Bluetooth USB adapter for devices that don't feature Bluetooth support. It handles a bit like the Xbox 360's controller (which is a good thing), and features integrated media controls. It's powered by two AAA batteries.

### SHOW ON THE ROAD

There's a travel clip included which attaches to the top of the controller, into which you can clip your smart devices – so that you can play supported mobile games with the M.O.J.O.'s controller wherever you may be. As an added bonus, two or more gamepads can be connected for multiplayer games.

### GETTING ON THE LINE

Google's Play Store comes pre-loaded (but you're free to use any app store you'd like), so that right from the get-go you've got access to all the apps you need to customise your M.O.J.O. experience. Downloading the OnLive app will give you access to loads of AAA PC games, streamed directly to your TV.

### YOUR TOY, YOUR WAY

Most Android users will tell you that the best way to completely unlock your device's potential is to root it, so you're not at all limited by artificial boundaries. Not only does Mad Catz allow this, but they encourage it – rooting your M.O.J.O. so you can fully customise it won't void your warranty.

### THE EXTRAS

There's Wi-Fi support, as well as expandable storage space via external drives and microSD storage. 5.1-channel surround sound support is a thing, and there's a 3.5mm audio jack for headphones. The M.O.J.O. is also compatible with Mad Catz's GameSmart range of gaming peripherals.



### TECHNICAL

#### SOC

1.8GHZ NVIDIA TEGRA 4 / 72-CORE GPU

#### RAM

2GB

#### MEMORY/STORAGE

16GB

#### OS

ANDROID 4.2.2 (JELLY BEAN)

#### CONNECTIVITY

WI-FI 802.11 A/B/G/N / 1 x USB 2.0 / 1 x USB 3.0 / MICROSD SLOT / HDMI OUT / 100 MBIT/S ETHERNET / 3.5MM AUDIO JACK

### SUMMARY

#### Pros

Really easy to use / Completely open gaming console / Controller

#### Cons

Nothing

#### Alternatives

OUYA / Unnamed Razer Android micro-console

# MOSH *pit*

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

## ► **WOWWEE MiP**

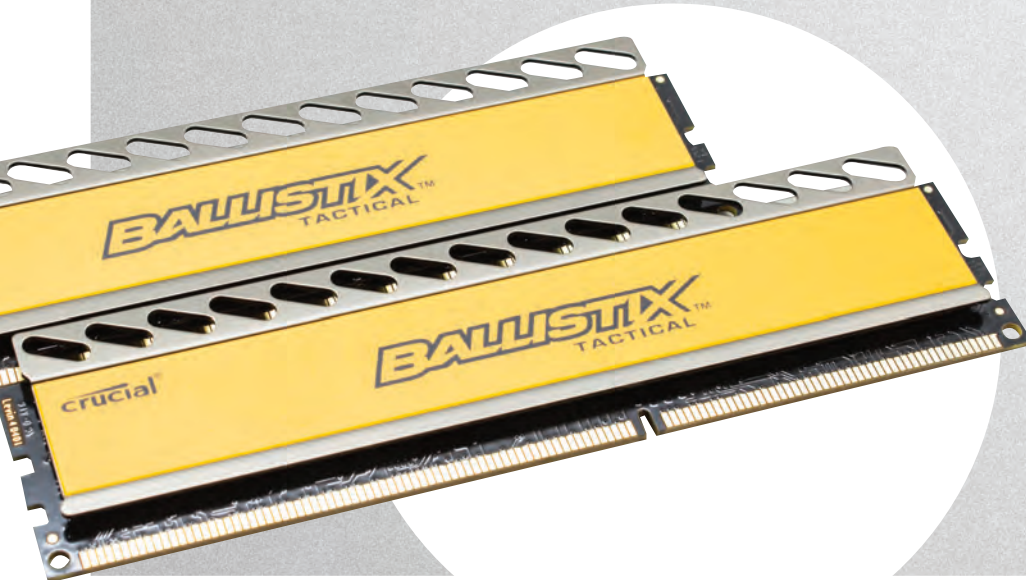
- 1 **Supplier** / Prima Toys SA
- 2 **Website** / [www.primatoys.co.za](http://www.primatoys.co.za)
- 3 **RRP** / R1,799

If, like us, you've dreamed of owning a robot that can bring you cups of coffee on request, you'll be happy to know that we're kinda, sorta, maybe on the verge of being able to make such things a reality. WowWee's MiP won't actually make the coffee for you, nor will it be able to intelligently find its way back to you on its own from the kitchen, but you'll nevertheless be able to drive it around a room balancing a cup of coffee on its attachable tray. And you've got to start somewhere, so hey.

Powered by four AAA batteries, MiP is able to balance remarkably well on its pair of large round wheels, managing to remain stable even when stacking multiple (surprisingly heavy) objects atop

its included tray. Picking it up and rotating its wheels switches between MiP's various personality modes, so that when you place him on the floor he behaves in numerous different ways. One mode makes MiP dance to a tune, for example, while another lets it take an AI-powered stroll around the room, spotting and dodging obstacles as it goes.

There's a companion app for smartphones and tablets, which lets you manually drive around MiP and play various games with it and your friends' MiPs. It's an adorable toy and a range of sound effects and robotic voices bring it to life, but we imagine that the novelty will wear off quite quickly – which makes its R1,799 price tag quite daunting.



## ► **CRUCIAL BALLISTIX TACTICAL 16GB KIT**

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

While the ultra-high-end of DDR3 might be unattainable for most of us mere mortals, there's the likes of this 16GB kit from Crucial to keep us in the game. Reasonably priced and reasonably quick, the Tactical kit clocks in at 1,866MHz with timings of 9-9-9-24. 16GB is still a bit much for most users, but it won't be long until it's the norm, and this is an excellent way to get a head start.

## ▶ ASTRUM X520 2.1 SPEAKER SET

- 1 Supplier / Astrum South Africa
- 2 Website / [www.astrum.co.za](http://www.astrum.co.za)
- 3 RRP / R899

Astrum's proven in the past that the company's no slouch when it comes to producing top-notch audio equipment, and the X520 2.1 speaker set aims to continue that trend. In the box you'll find two 10-watt satellites (with a surprisingly small physical size), one of which holds the volume dial, and a beefy 40-watt subwoofer. You'll also spot a remote control to allow for volume tuning and playback control from a distance.

There's a range of options for

connecting the speakers to your PC, tablet, phone or media player. There's a standard 3.5mm audio jack, as well as the ability to play your media via USB, SD card or MMC card, and there are equaliser buttons on the subwoofer and remote which let you choose different audio balances when playing audio via USB, SD or MMC. The X520 features Bluetooth support, so you can play your music wirelessly from a mobile device. There's also built-in FM radio, which is a nice touch.



## ▶ AOC G2460PQU 24" GAMING MONITOR

- 1 Supplier / Esquire Technologies
- 2 Website / [www.esquire.co.za](http://www.esquire.co.za)
- 3 RRP / R4,999

As AOC continues to expand their range of monitors, we're glad to see that they're taking the gaming side of things seriously. The G2460P represents a high-end option for anyone looking for a serious 24" gaming display.

The specs tell a good story: 144Hz refresh rate, 1ms response time, inputs including HDMI, DVI-D and D-SUB. It's got built-in speakers for those who need a quick sound solution, and the adjustable stand means you can set its height to suit your exact needs. It can even pivot 90 degrees for those looking for a multiple monitor setup.

All of these specs together with a matte finish for reflection-free gaming, a fast-charge USB port and highly-customisable OSD-based settings mean you really do have everything you could need at a completely reasonable price.

## ► BORDERLANDS CLAPTRAP AKA: CL4P-TP MODEL: GENTLEMAN CALLER

- Supplier / Cosmic Comics
- Website / [www.cosmiccomics.co.za](http://www.cosmiccomics.co.za)
- RRP / R349

What is 14cm tall and can't climb stairs? Why, Claptrap of course, and this version of him has a ridiculous backstory on the packaging which like all things Claptrap will get a laugh. You'll know this particular version of him more from the game, where he was introduced as a cashier in Marcus Bank featured in the *Mad Moxxi's Underdome Riot* DLC. The figurine ships with a stand and attachment, top

hat, monocle, moustache and all the trimmings of a formal tuxedo. It's a well-made and detailed model that will show the classier side of your gamer collection. Just remember to hide all your weirder "tentacle-based" anime figurines or you'll just ruin the effect.



## ► ASSASSIN'S CREED PIRATE HIDDEN BLADE

- Supplier / AWX
- Website / [www.awx.co.za](http://www.awx.co.za)
- RRP / R745

We can't decide if this is cool or ridiculous, it's certainly dangerous and not for anyone young and stupid. It's got 17+ on the box but this is really more for 30+, because as you know from watching videos on the Internet, young people like hurting themselves. The life-sized blade is spring-loaded and made out of plastic and thankfully has a safety lock, but it's that hard kind of plastic that will remove your eye at almost any angle or at any level of contact. The unit itself is well made but you're not going to want to bang it around too much or the trigger mechanism might fail over time. It's adjustable using Velcro straps and includes a soft plastic leather-looking gauntlet sleeve that helps the overall look you're going for. You also get a plastic belt buckle in the box. End of the day, if you're going to a party dressed as a pirate assassin then you may as well get the blade to go along with it, especially considering how well detailed it is.

## ► BLANK DIY POP! MALE AND FEMALE VINYL FIGURES

- Supplier / AWX
- Website / [www.awx.co.za](http://www.awx.co.za)
- RRP / R185 each

As we've already said in the past we're tired of talking about these little figurines. Yes, they're great, fun and nice to have but we've seen about a million of them and they fall into the camp of you love them or you hate them. But now something different has come along, a D.I.Y. version that you can paint yourself. One was done by Michael – using nothing more than a black marker, and the other was done by Chris and Geoff using proper paints and brushes and modelling clay for the hair. So there it is... great if you want to create a set of your own children for granny or just a voodoo doll of someone you don't like.



## ▶ KING OF TOKYO

- ▶ Supplier / AWX
- ▶ Website / [www.awx.co.za](http://www.awx.co.za)
- ▶ RRP / R535

Richard Garfield is a well-established name in the geekiest of gaming circles. As the creator of Magic: The Gathering, he's a guy who's got a lot of neat ideas about playing traditional games, and a lot of those ideas come through in King of Tokyo.

Before you write off this game as a product of Board Game Geektopia, you should know that, despite it being a very clever game, it's also incredibly accessible. Its rules fit on a double-sided two-page booklet and can be read and understood in about 15 minutes (and more importantly, explained to impatient friends in even less time). Then it's onto your duty of sending your chosen monster to stomp about the streets and rooftops of Tokyo in

the attempt to rule the city by strategy or straight-up violence.

Play is a mixture of dice- and card-based, with many rolls of the dice affecting your card usage, and vice-versa. Many of the cards are reminiscent of MtG, with life healing, direct damage and even the placing of counters on enemy players. Everything is of excellent quality, from the

stylishly illustrated playing pieces to the chunky dice, to the ludicrously simple game board. And everything is already packaged in zip-lock bags: there are no breakout pieces or little things likely to get lost.

If you've been looking for that game to bring your non-gaming friends into the fold, this might just be the ticket.



## ▶ ANIMAL MAN VOLUME 1: THE HUNT

- ▶ Supplier / Cosmic Comics
- ▶ Website / [www.cosmiccomics.co.za](http://www.cosmiccomics.co.za)
- ▶ RRP / R219

We're not all that familiar with Animal Man, but this reboot of the series does a good job of catching you up and explaining this hero's super-powers and a bit of history. Then it throws it all out the window and gets incredibly weird. Certainly good weird, but odd as hell, so this isn't really one for those who tend to buy mainstream comics for their accessibility and predictability — this is about as indie as you can get while still slapping a DC logo on the cover. All of this weirdness directed by the clearly demented mind of writer Jeff Lemire is backed up and then overtaken by Travel Foreman's art. Even when it's not trying to be creepy, it's creepy. Clever use of shading and a love of wobbly line art make for an unsettling production that suits the story perfectly.



## ▶ VELVET: BEFORE THE LIVING END

- ▶ Supplier / Cosmic Comics
- ▶ Website / [www.cosmiccomics.co.za](http://www.cosmiccomics.co.za)
- ▶ RRP / R169

Everyone enjoys a good spy story, and Velvet is exactly that. Intrigue abounds in this decades-spanning graphic novel about an espionage agency so secretive that not even the likes of MI5 knows it exists. The narrative is gritty and serious but comes with a good dose of humanity to keep it approachable, and the artwork is of exceptional quality. Action scenes are portrayed with the exact right amount of motion while dialogue scenes are kept visually interesting thanks to moody lighting and subtly expressive faces and body language.



## ▶ DIRECTORY

WHERE TO FIND ALL THE STUFF  
FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

Apex Interactive	011 796 5040
Astrum Peripherals	011 314 0400
AWX	011 789 8215
Corex	011 700 7188
Cosmic Comics	011 782 0819
Esquire Technologies	0861 700 000
Gamers Gadgets	078 212 1187
Megarom Interactive	011 361 4800
Rectron	011 203 1000
Sonic Informed	011 314 5800
Sterkinekor Games	011 445 7700
Titan Ice Computers	011 445 7700
TVR	011 807 1390

# GG

by Tarryn van der Byl

**The fruit salad:** Capable of being a healthy dessert or an unhealthy breakfast (unless combined with muesli and yoghurt, apparently), fruit salad might be loaded with sugar but it's still better for you than a bowl of Frosties.



## Far from the maddening crowd

The recent announcement at E3 of *Assassin's Creed: Unity's* new four-player co-op mode was met with almost instant (if also somewhat predictable) controversy because where were the female characters? In a series spanning over 20 games, only one has previously featured a protagonist that wasn't a man<sup>1</sup> – and besides, detractors argued, *Unity* is set in Paris during the French Revolution, and one of the era's most (in)famous assassins was, in fact, a woman. And besides *that*, even if there's some very important reason that our latest hero must be a dude, there are still three whole supporting roles available.

As a woman, a feminist, and an occasionally rather zealous advocate of increased diversity in games, I must confess that my only significant response to this dispute is that yay, *Assassin's Creed: Unity* has four-player co-op.

I mean, Ubisoft's excuse that "animating female characters is hard" was, you know, inexcusable<sup>2</sup>, but I wouldn't presume to make demands of other people's creativity, even if it's a bit, you know, uncreative. Besides, *Assassin's Creed: Unity* makes up

for it with four-player co-op.

Let's focus on stuff that matters right now.

And it's not that excluding female characters doesn't matter, but I think it's a discussion that should happen about games in general, and not necessarily in reaction to one of them. Instead of a coherent conversation, what we've got here is an all-out conflict with a lot of shouting and accusations and resentment on one side, and a lot of confused people who don't really understand what all the fuss is about on the other side. Which, ironically, is almost exactly how the French Revolution started, and I don't know about anybody else, but I'm not quite committed enough to the cause to drag Ubisoft Montreal's entire staff to the guillotine just yet. And not because I'm still holding out for *Far Cry: Blood Dragon 2*. Okay, not only. Okay, mostly, but principles are still principles.

I guess I'm also fed up with the relentless negativity and antagonism about almost everything in the gaming industry. It's like every big announcement generates excitement... about how much, how hard, and how fast x, y, and z are going to FAIL

BECAUSE REASONS THAT ARE TOTALLY SPECIFIC TO ME BUT AUTOMATICALLY ASSUMED TO APPLY TO EVERYBODY ELSE BECAUSE OBVIOUSLY. The distinction between constructive criticism and unadulterated hatred is apparently a very subtle one in 2014.

Me, I'd love to see another female protagonist in an *Assassin's Creed* game, but there's still plenty of opportunity to tell that story – and we know it's only a matter of time until the inevitable *Assassin's Creed: 1888*, when the Whitechapel assassins' sorority was (almost) entirely exterminated by the insidious Templar agent, Jack the Ripper. Ubisoft, call me.

In the meantime, though, I'll be playing four-player co-op in *Unity*. **NAG**

<sup>1</sup> That's *Assassin's Creed: Liberation*, in the crib notes version of the ongoing drama. *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag's* Aveline DLC add-on also starred the same lady killer, but that sort of supplementary narrative marginalisation is exactly what we're talking about, ranrantrant.

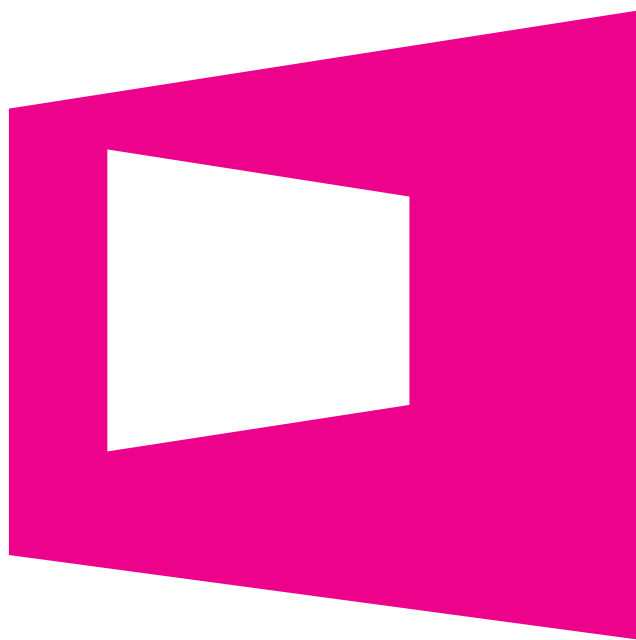
<sup>2</sup> Boob physics is another debate altogether.

## EXTRA LIFE

By Scott Johnson / ©2014 All rights reserved / [myextralife.com](http://myextralife.com)







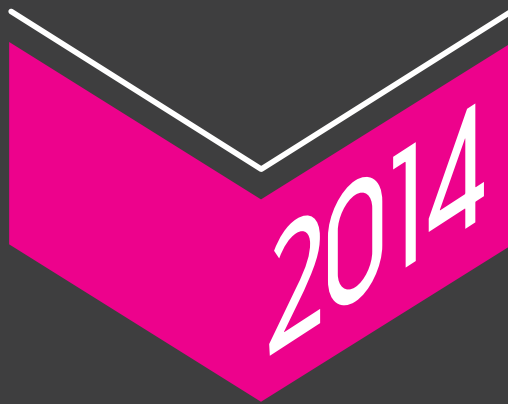
**COMPUTEX**  
TAIPEI  
2014

# COMPUTEX

# T A I P E I

“Technology is a journey, not a destination.”

*Renée J. James*, president of Intel Corporation

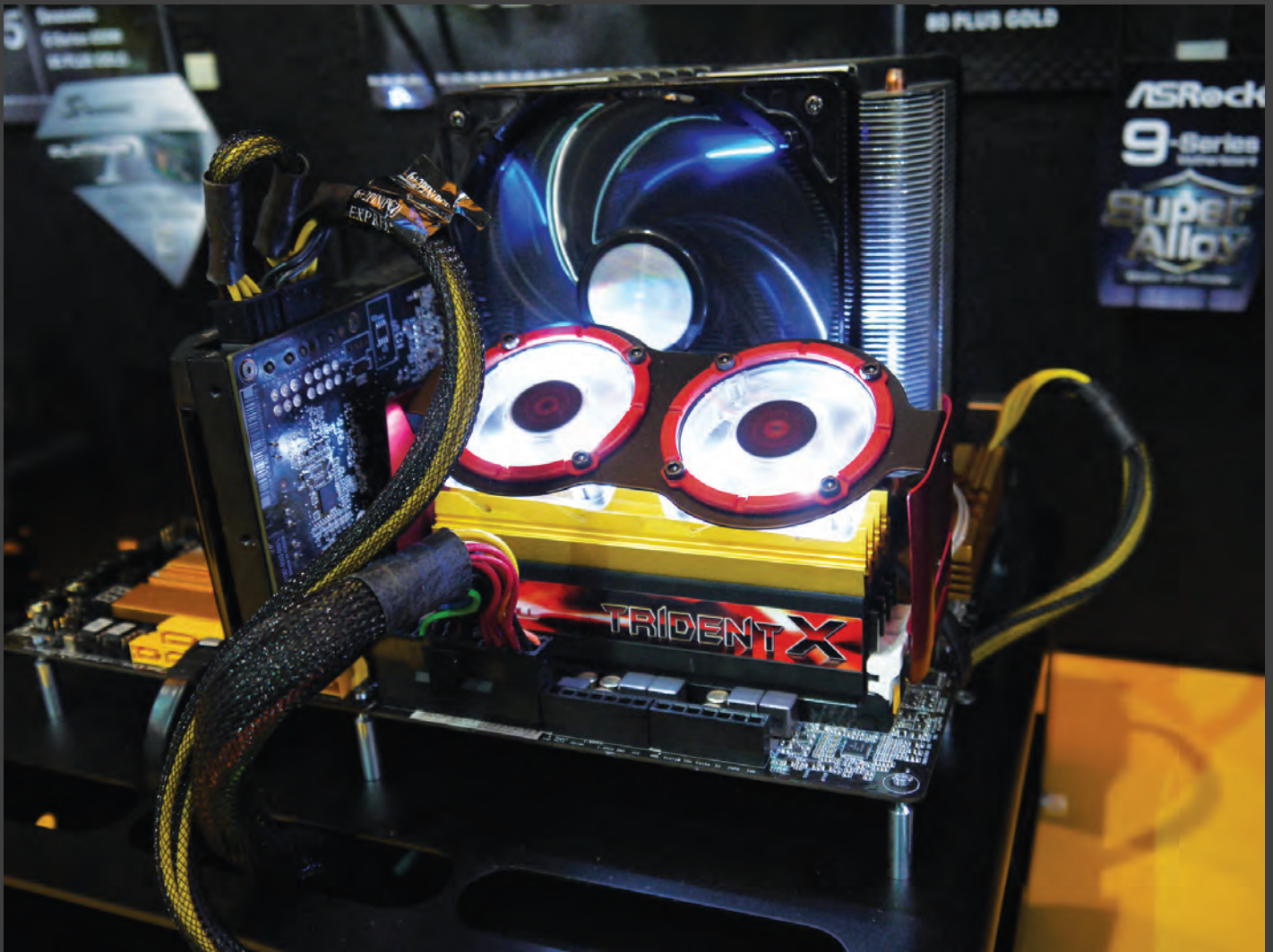


It's hard to believe that this time has rolled around again. It seems like just a few months ago that we were at COMPUTEX 2013, covering the latest and most cutting edge consumer and gaming technology on offer. Yet here we are again a full 12 months later, looking at pretty much the same vendors and the same companies re-inventing themselves and their products. Some didn't show up, but for every one that didn't there was a new name that came in ready to prove to the market just how determined they are to be the best in whatever chosen business they are in.

There were two major things that were worth talking about at COMPUTEX this year: gaming and overclocking. Just about everything we covered was somehow tied to either of the two or both. Every vendor we visited, spoke to or whose event we attended reiterated just how big PC gaming has gotten and that it's growing at a phenomenal rate despite the generally weak computer market. The DIY industry is doing well and it is all spearheaded by these two hobbies.

From Acer to Zotac, they were all there ready to show off the best they have with many products not ready for the market and some unlikely to be with us until early 2015. It was a glimpse of our near future and one that is very bright if nothing else. Personally we'd love to have seen more VR related products and demos but then again, perhaps so many are weary of this technology given just how patchy it has been in the past - promising so much, yet delivering anything but a useful experience.

If you were not aware of what overclocking is, going into COMPUTEX this year you were certainly going to leave well versed about it. In 2014 the show had an unprecedented number of professional overclockers from all over the world, with every continent and region represented. This is understandable as for the first time ever, the combined prize money for all the overclocking events was just over R500,000 - from the Kingston Hyper X event to the G.Skill OC World Cup, and all other



competitions in between. If you include the Kingston *League of Legends* competition which took place in-tandem with the overclocking, the prize money for all the competitions was well over R1,000,000. A huge purse indeed and one that makes it very evident to us just how important these two facets of gaming culture have become. Overclocking may not be mainstream but one thing is for sure, it sells hardware in a market where it's not enough to just claim to be the best. Each vendor has to go out and prove it. Not in isolation either but in live competitions where lab environments are not there to help.

For the last year or two, Intel has been a massive proponent for overclocking and, as such, they have undertaken several projects in the background and in the mainstream which have culminated in desktop products that would have otherwise never have seen the light of day. For instance Intel XTU (Xtreme Tuning Utility) has been gaining steady momentum and it was one of several benchmarks used throughout the week long event in several competitions. More importantly is the release of the 20th anniversary Pentium CPU which coincided with the new enthusiast grade Core i7 4790K CPU, initially set to release with the Z97 chipset (or rather, the Z97 chipset was set to release at COMPUTEX 2014 initially). These two CPUs were promoted by the Intel desktop group emphatically and one of the highlight events of the show was the Intel OC Challenge. Teams comprised of some of the best overclockers competing today competed for the highest XTU score and the highest CPU frequency in front of a live audience to see which vendor and team could push furthest. This was the first time the new Devil's Canyon CPU (4790K) was shown in public and overclocked. The prize



**COMPUTEX TAIPEI** is Asia's # 1 ICT show and the world's second largest.



money was just under R250,000 if you exclude the R10,000 spot prizes for any overclocking record broken during the event. All the major motherboard vendors with high-end gaming and overclocking motherboards were present – ASRock, ASUS, EVGA, GIGABYTE, and MSI – each sporting their respective overclocking team of choice.

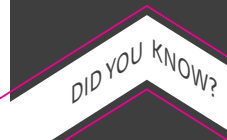
In the end MSI claimed top honours for the air- and water-cooled CPU frequency, with the ASUS team coming in second place. For the more extreme overclocking section, GIGABYTE's HiCookie and Sofos walked away with the highest CPU frequencies and the highest memory frequencies. Something that would come to be expected as the week went on where the memory frequency record was broken several times on the GIGABYTE Z97X SOC motherboards as speeds reached above 4,500MHz.

This was but one of the overclocking competitions and sessions throughout COMPUTEX and once again it was a great showing for all vendors involved as they drew in crowds with the spectacle of liquid nitrogen and audience participation exercises.

Where gaming was concerned, NVIDIA was first with a pre-COMPUTEX game day where for hours on end fans in the hundreds sat and watched live gaming competitions in *League of Legends* and other games. NVIDIA gave away several GTX TITAN Black Edition (reviewed in this issue) graphics cards. The grand prize draw at the end of the event was the GeForce TITAN-Z, a single graphics card costing well over R30,000.

4K gaming was big this year, with virtually every stand featuring one or several 4K displays. At SAPPHIRE's showroom, away from the main show floor, the company had a video wall on display powered from a single graphics card at an incredible 49.7MPixels, or roughly six times what is on offer with a regular 4K display. That was an extreme example, but it did serve to highlight just how big the push has been this year for UHD content and gaming. To that end, several gaming monitors were shown off as well at various events including some QHD monitors that offer 144Hz sync rates, 1ms response time and NVIDIA's variable GPU driven monitor timing solution known as G-Sync. One of the many technologies one has to see in the flesh to appreciate. How much will all these UHD screens cost? According to Intel at a briefing just prior to COMPUTEX, they – along with Samsung – have been working to bring 4K computing to the mainstream which is, according to the presentation, the sub \$399 mark. The speaker was adamant that by the end of this year a 4K 23.6" monitor could cost you as little as this, as opposed to the unspeakable prices we are presently seeing. How much this will translate into on our shores remains to be seen, but what is for sure is that this is a huge incentive for GPU vendors and their partners to re-issue "4K" ready components and products. Thus you're likely to see this as the new buzz word or term on many marketing materials including the introduction of several 4, 6 and 8GB graphics cards in the near future.

The peripheral market, always heavily contested, was even more so this year. The difference however was that there was



# COMPUTEX TAIPEI

## 2014 had 1,710 exhibitors and 5,069 booths.



### COMPUTEX TAIPEI 2014

#### attracted 38,662 international buyers from 166 countries.

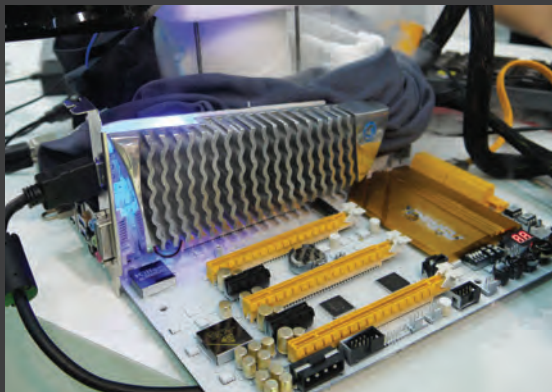
genuine ingenuity this time around with several vendors making some interesting design decisions, which at the very least offer variety and a different take on the traditional gaming keyboard and mouse. Gone are the days of merely adding macro keys to a standard keyboard. This year it was lights, switches, profiles, and programmability of just about everything you can think of. By and large quality was improved immensely even from new vendors such as GAMEDIAS which had some unique designs and advantages over the rest who stuck to a more traditional approach. Regardless of how you may feel about gaming peripherals, we are past the point of just having more choice, but have an industry that has matured to offer not only better but more meaningful choices in gaming peripherals.

Unfortunately there weren't any game developers that showed up at COMPUTEX this year, since it's largely a hardware product trade show. There has always been, and more so this year, a great opportunity to show off games developed for next generation platforms on the latest and greatest computers the market has to offer. Hopefully this will change in future and those studios that may not be able to make it to E3 can demo their smaller or indie works in a less competitive trade show.

Either way, this year's COMPUTEX didn't vary too much from previous shows, but it did present a leaner and more impactful lineup with fewer gimmicks and plenty of real innovation and true engineering advancements. What follows is a quick look at some of the vendors whose booths we were able to visit. As always with COMPUTEX, it takes place in at least three different locations throughout the city of Taipei, with some vendors choosing to show off their wares in the privacy of their buildings. Many of the products you see here, as mentioned earlier, will likely not be available by the time you read this but some may have already landed so be sure to check out your local retailer for these. ▶

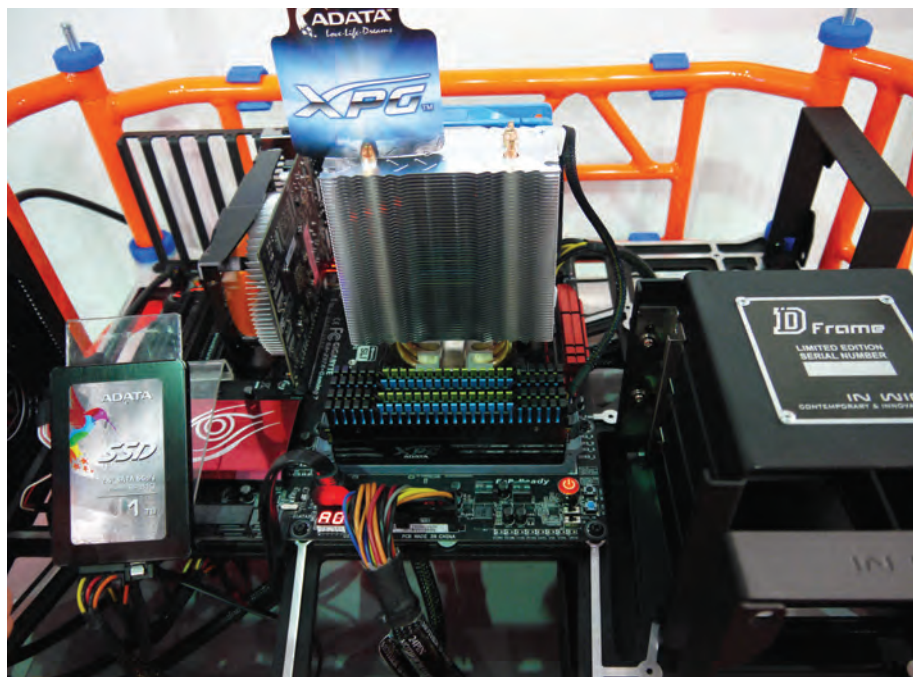
# ASROCK

We didn't spend too much time here, but we did go and check out the familiar faces of Nick Shih and John-Lam who, along with Splave, have become the go-to overclockers associated with ASRock. As usual it was memory and CPU overclocking on the latest and greatest Z97 motherboards.



# AVEXIR

Here's a relatively small company which seems to grow in leaps and bounds. They gave the nod to enthusiasts all over the world with their first outing and continue to do so. However they are focused more on the power users and gamers for now, it seems, at least until the next batch of high speed overclocking friendly DDR4 chips arrive. In the meantime we managed to get a sneak peak at the most pleasing DDR3 memory modules on the market. If AVEXIR knows how to do anything, it is in packaging their memory in the most creative and most appealing way we've seen to date. Be sure to look out for more of their DRAM reviews in upcoming issues.



# ASUS

No COMPUTEX is complete without a look inside the ASUS ROG booth. This year there was nothing resembling the ZEUS, but we did get a look at their entire Z97 range and their gaming PCs (which we must admit look incredible), hybrid cooling graphics cards, and cutting edge designs and components in their notebooks. This may not have been the most amazing year for ASUS, but as always it remains thoroughly impressive.

# ADATA

ADATA had a wonderful stand once again, with everything from USB flash drives to the latest M.2 solid state storage. We got to see their new enthusiast line of SSD drives and high performance DRAM modules, waterproof SSDs and all kinds of things that set ADATA apart from so many memory companies at the show. Their booth was always packed with people (for the booth babes or the products, we can't be sure), but they most certainly garnered plenty of attention.

DID YOU KNOW?

FUN OVERCLOCKING FACT

The 3DMark05 world record was broken by Sofos1990 using the GIGABYTE Z97X-SOC Force and G.Skill TridentX memory - **73,132 Marks**

2014

COMPUTEX  
TAIPEI



## COOLER MASTER

This year's booth for Cooler Master was a lot more spacious than in 2013. Same size, but they had far fewer products to show. This isn't a bad thing mind you, because their entire product line has been culled to just their best products, and we have to say they do have some really awesome gaming and enthusiast grade offerings. Take for instance the stylish CMStorm Resonar headphones, the Sirius-C gaming headset, the incredible V1200 Plus and as always, the ever impressive and stunning Cosmos II. These are just some of the products they had on show. We were also treated to a private VIP area where prototypes and upcoming products were shown. They were not in their final form but what we did see left an impression that suggested Cooler Master is aiming at even higher quality than ever before. Premium seems to be the name of the game and it shows. We certainly wish we could have taken a few photos in there, but it just wasn't possible. Rest assured though that when those products eventually see the light of day, we'll have full coverage on them.

With every generation of product, Cooler Master keeps improving and as we've always said, some of their products are under appreciated, however that may soon change once you get to see what Cooler Master has been cooking in their labs.

## BIT-FENIX

By all rights, the inventor of the full GPU-capable mini-ITX case (to most people), was back in grand fashion this year. Exquisite case designs were the order of the day. Many have to be seen in person to be appreciated. There was one particular case that was astounding as you could configure it as you desired. Want more traditional symmetrical design? Go ahead and make it so, or if you prefer to have your system in two distinct compartments with the PSU in one and the rest of the components in another, the choice is yours. As stated in the opening of this feature, innovation was plentiful at this year's COMPUTEX and Bit-Fenix were one of the stand-out vendors in the chassis department. Be sure to read the Bit-Fenix Flo headset review in this issue as well, as these were at the booth as well in all their glorious colours.

# GIGABYTE™



# I AM A GAMER I AM G1



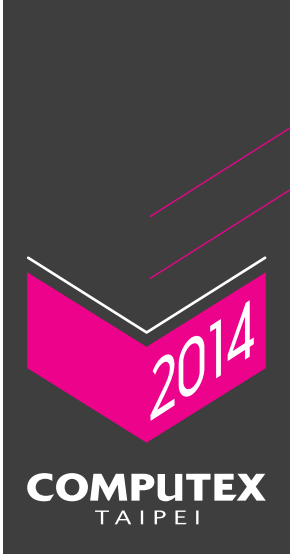
## GIGABYTE 9 SERIES G1™ GAMING MOTHERBOARDS

With the launch of the G1™ brand of gaming motherboards in 2010, GIGABYTE set out to define what it means to be a PC gamer and we made it our mission to create a line of motherboards that focused solely on the features that matter most to gamers. Whatever the game, whether playing First Person Shooters or Real-Time Strategies, GIGABYTE G1™ motherboards deliver top-notch features that can give gamers the winning edge and deliver a much more realistic and immersive gaming environment than even the latest game consoles.



**rectron**

NATIONAL SALES CALL CENTRE: 0860 582 835



DID YOU KNOW?

### FUN OVERCLOCKING FACT

The Unigine Heaven world record was broken by Vivi using the GIGABYTE Z97X-SOC Force and G.Skill TridentX memory - **5,572.9**



## CORSAIR

CORSAIR has been pushing heavily into the gaming market and this was very evident at their suite at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. Away from the bustling of NANGANG Exhibition Centre, CORSAIR showed off their new RGB range of keyboards, graphite cases, DDR4 samples and obviously the AX series PSUs. In addition to this showroom, CORSAIR hosted an exclusive event at a premium Club in the city centre, where they gave a brief talk about their new products, unveiled a new addition to the Hydro series and re-affirmed their commitment to the gaming community through continued product development and involvement. Done in a style that is unique to CORSAIR, almost every other vendor and media company they partner with was present at the event, including retailers, distributors, gamers and hardware enthusiasts. Be it they came for the open bar, the booth babes, the product introductions or all of the above, it was a great night and COMPUTEX showing for CORSAIR. Look to full coverage of all these products in the upcoming issues of NAG.



## ECS

ECS has a wonderful booth this year focusing on their new tiny lifestyle PC – the LIVA – which can actually be powered off a power bank. Along with that we saw the new line of L33T Z97 gaming motherboards, dressed in the now familiar black and gold theme that has become ECS's gaming signature.





# EVGA

EVGA, another vendor located at The Grand Hyatt Hotel, had a few surprising components to show us, not limited to their overclocking graphics cards and motherboards, but also their all-new TORQ series gaming mice. We managed to get a look at an announced gaming keyboard as well, which may or may not see the light of day, but we certainly hope it makes it to retail eventually. To start with we looked at an unassuming GeForce TITAN-Z which substitutes the impressive NVIDIA three slot cooler with a slimmer but more efficient double slot, dual fan cooler, similar in appearance to that which you find on the ACX series. You'd be hard pressed to believe that there's about R40,000 worth of computing power hidden by this cooler. This model is certainly the slimmest, most silent and perhaps even coolest running TITAN-Z on the market. With that we saw the Hydro Copper overclocked version of the TITAN-Z which should allow some monster overlocks and incredible 4K gaming performance.

We saw an upcoming version of the Precision X software, built completely by EVGA and not based on Unwinder's (of RivaTuner fame) work, featuring even more tuning capabilities than the previous versions. In line with this new version of Precision X was the similarly skinned companion software for the new TORQ and TORQ X10 gaming mouse. This was one of the more intriguing mice with some unique features that we will be sure to look at in future.

Leading the Z97 range was the Z97 Classified, followed by the FTW and the Mini-ITX Stinger motherboard. We were also treated to a sneak preview of a working Haswell-E X99 chipset motherboard. As always these will be tuning focused, but will also feature specific gaming orientated features. We will have to see in future how these hold up next to the competition's offerings along with the all new 2<sup>nd</sup> generation high-end PSUs.



# GALAXY

GALAXY was all about overclocking this year. With their team of elite overclockers, Mad 222, Little\_Boy, OC\_WindForce and Duck\_San, the team hammered away at benchmarks every day of the show showing off what the new GALAXY GeForce GTX 780Ti HOF V2 could do in the right hands. As far as build quality is concerned GALAXY has produced the goods, as the graphics cards ran for days on end under extremely strenuous conditions.

DID YOU KNOW?

*There were over 45 new product announcements made during the show this year.*



# G.SKILL

G.Skill hosted an overclocking "World Cup" of sorts with several overclockers competing for top spot in a competition worth over R100,000. The usual G.Skill overclockers were there, including SA's own ViVi. The final came down to Splave and 8Pack, with Splave just edging out 8Pack in the end to claim the top spot. This was a great competition between all involved and one that looked to be a hit with spectators as well.

Of course, many records were broken at this booth as G.Skill invited overclockers to represent the top four vendors, pushing G.Skill memory as far as possible along with 3D benchmarks and in just about every discipline imaginable. G.Skill made it very clear again that they are a company dedicated to DRAM and overclocking above all else, and it showed. This was where every overclocker who was in Taipei gathered at various times, much like it has always been at COMPUTEX. Look for more DRAM reviews from this vendor in future.

DID YOU KNOW?

FUN OVERCLOCKING FACT

The HWBOT Prime world record was broken by Sofos1990 using the GIGABYTE Z97X-SOC Force and G.Skill TridentX memory - **4,985.52pps**

2014

COMPUTEX  
TAIPEI



# GIGABYTE

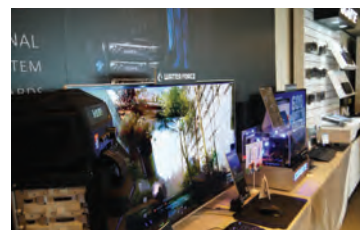
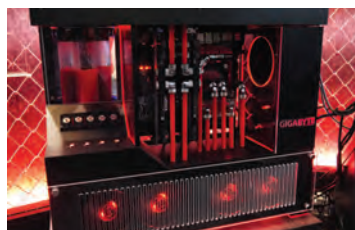
COMPUTEX 2014 was most certainly a great show for GIGABYTE as not only did they walk away with the honour of the most impressive Z97 motherboards at the show, but just about every product showed throughout the week was a hit with many journalists and should prove to be the same with end users. From graphics cards with the impressive 450 and 600 watt coolers, to the new gaming peripherals, notebooks and most certainly motherboards. With the launch of Intel's Devil's Canyon CPU, the GIGABYTE Z97 motherboards came out top of the charts, handily beating all the other vendors in overclocking with numerous records leading to the show and throughout all the events.

Of particular importance was the new SOC Force overclocking motherboards. Not only are these priced very aggressively, but they are as it stands the best when it comes to breaking records and competing at the highest level. They showed the LN2 model of the Z97X SOC, which doesn't feature any traditional methods of CPU cooling as it lacks mounting holes for any kind of cooler, it's simply made for placing the CPU cooling pot directly on the HIS and overclocking that way. This clean layout of the motherboard allows the most direct routing of memory to the CPU, and provides other benefits. How well this works may be up for debate, but having achieved well over 4,500MHz in memory overclocking, significantly higher than any other motherboard has come remotely close to, we are inclined to believe this design has its merits.

Not to be outdone, the gaming motherboards now boast the new eye insignia from their graphics card division. There was a heap of motherboards, from the highest end gaming products with the most advanced audio solution in the industry to the lower end ones which made use of the ALC1150 codec and nichicon gold capacitors. All of these were present and displayed in their full glory. The push for gaming motherboards was strong, more so than any other time before and we suspect that as the number one motherboard vendor, GIGABYTE will continue to gain market share in this space.

We also found ourselves presented with the new Black series, which essentially translates into motherboards that have passed server grade testing enduring over 160 hours of continuous high level strain testing. How useful this will be to end users remains to be seen, but it is great to see that GIGABYTE is as always determined to offer the best quality motherboards around, not only through component choice, manufacturing and design, but through rigorous testing as well.

Where graphics cards are concerned, we saw an all-new triple GPU water-cooled setup. While other vendors dare



to be different by manufacturing hybrid graphics cards, and ones that feature phenomenal electronic components, GIGABYTE has married all of that into a behemoth of a package with the Water Force. The package includes a monstrous all-in-one GPU cooler that has a built-in radiator, pump and reservoir, along with three full coverage water blocks mounted on three GeForce GTX 780 Ti graphics cards. You read that correctly: GIGABYTE will sell this as an entire package for those who want to buy once and be ready for 4K gaming now and in the years to come. The graphics cards are clocked just as high as the GHz Edition so for all intents and purposes, GIGABYTE has taken the GHz cards, water cooled them and provided you with an all-in-one solution, eliminating the hassle from your side. No pricing as yet, but it was said that it'd come to the market this year.

Not to be outdone, we also got a chance to glimpse the new AORUS X3 gaming notebook with the new GeForce 800 series GPU. In its diminutive size it packs a whole lot of punch, borrowing heavily from the X7 but without the bulk. This may be the baby of the family, but from initial impressions this is likely to be the model that sells everyone on the new AORUS brand as it just looked absolutely amazing. There was plenty more to be seen including updated versions of notebooks we've already covered in NAG featuring even better graphics processors than before. Look out for more of these reviews.



Distributed Exclusively by Apex Interactive. Tel: (011) 796 5040. Email: sales@apexinteractive.co.za

All rights and trademarks and logos are copyright of their respective owners. www.apexinteractive.co.za



EX-01

**EX-01**  
BLUETOOTH® HEADSET  
FOR PLAYSTATION 3™  
DISPONIBLE EXCLUSIVEMENT POUR COMMANDER EN FRANÇAIS  
DISPONIBILE EXCLUSIVEMENT POUR PS3™



EX-03

**EX-03**  
NEXT-GEN BLUETOOTH® HEADSET  
FOR PLAYSTATION 3™  
DISPONIBLE EXCLUSIVEMENT POUR COMMANDER EN FRANÇAIS  
DISPONIBILE EXCLUSIVEMENT POUR PS3™



AX1-A

**AX1-A**  
GAMING HEADSET  
FOR PLAYSTATION 3™  
DISPONIBLE EXCLUSIVEMENT POUR COMMANDER EN FRANÇAIS



UX-2 WIRED CONTROLLER

**UX-2**  
WIRED CONTROLLER  
FOR PLAYSTATION 3™ & PC  
ERGONOMIC CONTROLLER FOR PS3™ AND PC



UX-2 WIRELESS CONTROLLER

**UX-2**  
WIRELESS CONTROLLER  
FOR PLAYSTATION 3™ & PC  
ERGONOMIC CONTROLLER FOR PS3™ AND PC



AX1-A

**EX3-A**  
PULSE MESSENGER HEADSET  
FOR PLAYSTATION 3™  
DISPONIBLE EXCLUSIVEMENT POUR COMMANDER EN FRANÇAIS



XC-1

**XC-1**  
USB PLAY & CHARGE CABLE  
FOR PLAYSTATION 3™  
DISPONIBLE EXCLUSIVEMENT POUR COMMANDER EN FRANÇAIS  
CÂBLE USB PLAY & CHARGE XC-1



XC3-HQ

**XC3-HQ**  
HIGH SPEED HDMI® CABLE  
1,8 MÈTRE 1080P HIGH QUALITY TRANSPARENT  
CÂBLE HDMI HAUTE VITESSE XC3-HQ 1,8 MÈTRE 1 080P



DC-1

**DC-1**  
DUALSHOCK®4 CHARGING DOCK  
FOR PLAYSTATION 4™  
STATION DE CHARGE POUR MANETTE PS4 DUALSHOCK®4



XC3-HQ

**XC3-HQ**  
HIGH SPEED HDMI® CABLE  
1,8 MÈTRE 1080P HIGH QUALITY TRANSPARENT  
CÂBLE HDMI HAUTE VITESSE XC3-HQ 1,8 MÈTRE 1 080P



BP-2

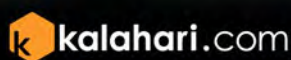
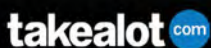
**BP-2**  
PLAY & CHARGE BATTERY KIT  
FOR PS4™  
BP-2 KIT BATTERIE DE CHARGE POUR PS4™ SEULEMENT



BP-1

**BP-1**  
BATTERY PACK  
EXTEND YOUR GAMEPLAY  
ON HBOX 360®  
RECHARGEABLE BATTERY PACK - Prolongez vos sessions de jeu sur Xbox 360

**gioteck**™  
COME GET SOME



DID YOU KNOW?

FUN OVERCLOCKING FACT

The DDR3 frequency world record was broken by HiCookie using the GIGABYTE Z97X-SOC Force and Kingston HyperX memory - **4,560MHz**

2014

COMPUTEX  
TAIPEI

# INTEL

No COMPUTEX would be complete without Intel and as usual they showed off so many other vendors' products which use their technology at their core. From the overclocking event to the mobile product presentations, Intel had so many of their people from their HQ in Folsom, CA. If you wanted to find out anything about Intel products, this was the place to be. The stand was the typical Intel affair, but the overclocking competition was where all the action was. This was also the first time that the new Devil's Canyon Intel Core i7 4790K (reviewed in this issue) was presented to the public for the first time. Initially meant to coincide with the launch of the Z97 chipset, this CPU was the perfect processor to show what the new Z97 based motherboards could achieve.

It was remarkable to see just how much commitment Intel continues to have in gaming and overclocking. A very interesting piece of information that was revealed to us, by a very senior Intel employee, was that Intel had spent about six months or at least set that as a time frame for their engineers to come up with a CPU SKU that would once again excite overclockers after the lukewarm reception that the original Haswell CPUs had (or at least the 4770K). To this end, a variety of changes had to be made to the CPU internally to ensure that this goal was met. In the end, we managed to find CPUs that were capable of overclocking as high as 5.4GHz using air cooling. Yes it was very cold air, but this was something previously unattainable from the previous CPUs. Not only that but Intel also introduced the Pentium K unlocked CPU for budget overclocking.

We witnessed plenty of these at the show along with some interesting information that we gathered about Haswell-E which unfortunately we are not able to share at present, however we will be ready with full coverage when the time comes.



# KINGSTON

When Kingston goes big, they go extremely big. Earlier in 2014 we witnessed the first HyperX OC Takeover competition (HOT). This time at COMPUTEX the best of the best were at it again, competing for over R100,000 in prize money at a grand and spectacular venue. At the same time, there was a live LoL competition with over R500,000 in prize money. Clearly the company had come to COMPUTEX to show everyone that they were serious about making inroads into the gaming and enthusiast markets. What we saw not only included their latest SSDs, but their new line of DDR3 modules, demos of DDR4, and the new line of HyperX gaming products, all of which will be covered in the near future in NAG.

Presentation wise, no other event was as well put together as the HyperX event; its grandeur and list of invitees was incredible with competitors showing up if only to see what they were up against. We were blown away by the quality of the show, the presentation and even the hype leading up to the event. If you came to COMPUTEX unsure about what Kingston had to offer, you walked away feeling overwhelmed by their commitment to each respective market, both in products and in financial investments. From the Ferraris that dotted the entrance to the showgirls, the lights and the cameras it was big budget and an incredible way of promoting products to an awe-inspired crowd where a lasting impression could be made. This new enthusiasm at Kingston had everyone, overclockers and gamers alike, excited for all the products that they were going to launch in future.



## MSI

Where to begin with MSI? Their booth was huge as usual, with just about every product the vendor makes on display. From graphics cards to all-in-one PCs to tablets, it was all there.

The overclocking series was present, both the motherboards and graphics cards. Pepi and Pt1t were there showing off the new Z97 motherboards and custom Lightning graphics cards. Decked out in the yellow and black, they looked good and the performance was there to boot. We got to see the Radeon 290X Lightning, but didn't see the 780 Ti Lightning as we know there's a long story behind that particular graphics card. Still, if you want cutting edge performance or are just getting into overclocking, MSI has almost everything you need to get started.

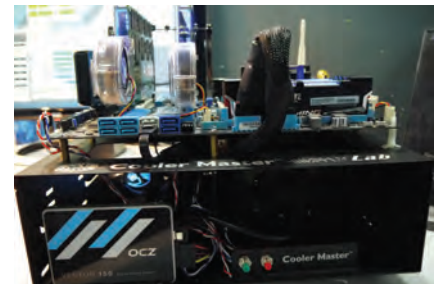
Gaming motherboards are arguably the strongest SKU for MSI as these boards have continued to get better very quickly, rivaling those of the top two vendors in many ways. Not only are these well priced, but they have great build quality and some wonderful gaming centered features, but best of all they are actually good overclocking boards. Add the occasional game bundle with it and you have the MSI gaming series being a real contender for the true gaming motherboards of the industry. We reviewed the best of the best GAMING-9 AC Z97 board as well in this issue, which was also on show at the booth, along with the other Z97 boards.

What really stole the show for us were the gaming notebooks. If MSI had to lay claim to anything at COMPUTEX it would have to be the notebooks, which come in all shapes and sizes, catering to just about every need there is. If you need a budget gaming notebook, MSI has you covered, or if you need a very high performance desktop replacement machine, the GT72 is there for you. For those of you who need even more than that MSI had a workstation notebook which featured an NVIDIA Quadro graphics card. We shudder to think how much that would cost, but if you have the money, MSI is ready to provide it for you.

As always we were focused on the high-end machine with the GTX 880M graphics card and the slim yet powerful GS60 Ghost, which remain our favorite MSI notebooks to date. With the sudden upsurge in demand for gaming notebooks, MSI is poised to take the lead across all price points. It would take something very special to post a threat to such a compelling lineup of notebooks. We will be looking at a variety of them in the upcoming issues of the magazine and we suspect they'll deliver nothing but pure gaming pleasure.

## OCZ

This year OCZ was away from the showroom floor in a suite presenting just three products. We saw the Vertex 460, the Vector 180 and the REVOdrive 350, each catering to different segments within the market. All of them had one thing in common though, and that is the SSDs were completely built in-house. From the controller to the NAND, save perhaps for the DRAM, they were all built around the new Toshiba NAND and superior controllers that OCZ always had. It's a leaner lineup but a more potent one which is only going to further put pressure on other vendors, because what OCZ has done is managed to offer class leading performance at prices that will be very hard to compete with. Only time will tell how things shape up, but right now, OCZ is looking very good.



DID YOU KNOW?

FUN OVERCLOCKING FACT

The 3DMark Vantage world record was broken by Young Pro using the ASUS Rampage IV Black Edition and G.Skill TridentX memory - **99,045 Marks**

2014

COMPUTEX  
TAIPEI

## PLEXTOR

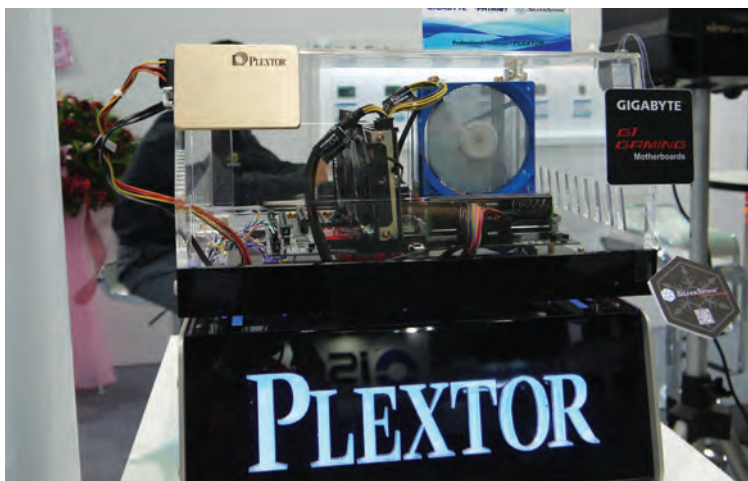
Plextor, another prominent vendor of storage solutions featured a vast new array of products in all form factors. From PCI Express to M.2, it was all there delivering blistering performance through a combination of smart software and some truly remarkable drive electronics. PCI Express storage is set to be cheaper as well and Plextor was the only vendor we visited that showed us a PCI Express drive that was remotely affordable for enthusiasts. This drive delivered speeds that rival those of SSD RAID setups, but costs a fraction of the price. Best of all, the drives were bootable offering a variety of configuration options for your PC which were previously unavailable (check out the 256GB M6e review in this issue). Last year, Plextor like many others found themselves limited to what they could offer because the SATA 6GBPs standard was limiting performance, but this year with M.2 and SATA Express, they have been able to unleash a slew of products at more cost effective prices, but even better performance.

## POWERCOLOR

PowerColor wasn't on the main floor this year, which is a pity as they were showing their latest generation Devil 13 graphics card. The rest of their AMD GPU range was there, but it was very clear that this was their flagship product. Not necessarily for overclockers, but most certainly for gamers looking for 295X2 performance, but without the noise or heat. PowerColor's triple slot, triple fan cooler decked out in red and black looked incredible.

No pricing was revealed but given that it is essentially a \$1,500 USD Radeon 295X2, only without water cooling, you can expect the price to be similar if not more. This will of course be in limited quantities so if you want one, you'll probably want to get one sooner rather than later.

In addition to the Devil 13, PowerColor introduced a new Turbo Timer device. What this does is hook up to the back of any supporting PowerColor graphics card and act like a battery for the fan. When the system shuts down, the Turbo Timer, which is packed with large capacitors, keeps the fans running. This in turn supposedly extends the life of your GPU by moving heat away faster than it otherwise would.



# TURTLE BEACH.

HEAR EVERYTHING  
DEFEAT EVERYONE



EAR FORCE  
**X0 FOUR**



EAR FORCE  
**X0 SEVEN**



EAR FORCE  
**PX4**



EAR FORCE  
**P12**



EAR FORCE  
**PX22**



EAR FORCE  
**X12**



EAR FORCE  
**P11**



takealot.com

kalahari.com

BLG GAMES



DID YOU KNOW?

FUN OVERCLOCKING FACT

The 3DMark 2011 SE world record was broken by Sofos1990 using the GIGABYTE Z97X-SOC Force and G.Skill TridentX memory - **177,215 Marks**

2014

COMPUTEX  
TAIPEI



## ROCCAT

ROCCAT is as pure a gaming peripheral vendor as one can get. This year they were at NANGANG Exhibition Centre, away from the quiet of the Hyatt Hotel. With that, they had an entire lineup of products, some of which were not even in production yet. They had full rigs with games on them so you could try out their peripherals in real gaming sessions instead of just taking their word for it. We've not seen any vendor put this much effort into a mouse, but ROCCAT have and what they have formulated is sure to usher in a new generation of gaming mice that isn't focused on the number of buttons but how to maximise the button configuration that's already there. We also got to see the first mouse with an analogue rocker switch, which allows previously impossible maneuvers in games such as *Battlefield* to be pulled off naturally and easily. If you're an FPS fan and play games with vehicles, you'll want some of the upcoming products from ROCCAT.



## SAPPHIRE

Fantastic products at SAPHIRE as usual, driving the show's highest fidelity display from a single GPU. We saw a wide variety of products and got to spend some time talking with a couple of big-wigs from the company about technology and all kinds of interesting things. Innovation is what they are about and to date they probably still make the best AMD powered graphics cards around.



## ZOTAC

The Z-BOX has proved to be a huge success for ZOTAC and now several generations later, with the advent of smaller mobile GPUs and improved low power, low heat CPUs we have boxes that are 1080p game capable. Amongst the ever increasing lineup of products, we were treated to yet another OC demo of the ZOTAC GeForce TITAN Black under the capable hands of Argentina's number one overclocker Nacho Arroyo. Perhaps not as extravagant as other booths but it was very clear to see that ZOTAC was another vendor that is eyeing the gaming and enthusiast markets and are ready to do battle with the other vendors with quality products and keen pricing.



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE GREATEST SHOW IN GAMING

# NAG at E3

(And RedTide's trip to the Grand Canyon)



**megarom**  
interactive

**BL**  
GAMES



# PRE-ORDER

THE BEST UPCOMING GAMES OF 2014  
INCLUDES A GREAT PRE-ORDER OFFER!  
ORDER IN STORE OR ONLINE TODAY!



PC, PS3, XBOX 360, PS4 & XBOX ONE  
RELEASE DATE: 4 NOVEMBER



PS3, XBOX 360, PS4 & XBOX ONE  
RELEASE DATE: 9 SEPTEMBER



PC, PS3, XBOX 360, PS4 & XBOX ONE  
RELEASE DATE: 24 OCTOBER



PC, PS3, XBOX 360, PS4 & XBOX ONE  
RELEASE DATE: 18 NOVEMBER



PC  
RELEASE DATE: 5 SEPTEMBER



PC, PS4 & XBOX ONE  
RELEASE DATE: 28 OCTOBER



PC, PS3, XBOX 360, PS4,  
PS VITA, XBOX ONE, 3DS & WII  
RELEASE DATE: 26 SEPTEMBER



PC, PS3, XBOX 360, PS4 & XBOX ONE  
RELEASE DATE: 7 OCTOBER



XBOX 360 & XBOX ONE  
RELEASE DATE: 3 OCTOBER

RedTide went to Las Vegas after visiting E3. We haven't heard the end of it for weeks, here are some pictures.



Vegas baby!



Handsome Jack in the plastic.

## Flight of the Valkyries

Welcome to the E3 supplement that is now inside NAG (unlike in previous years when it's been a separate mini-mag). Reasons for this inclusion range all the way from cost-saving to the ecological dodge of "save the trees" to let's try something different because we're bored. But that's not important, what is important is telling you what a great time I had in America. E3 is always going to be the same: crowds of weird looking people (including me probably) all jostling and queuing and trying to survive the three day event. As media we have certain privileges like skipping the dumb lines or in many cases getting into the booths and behind the scenes where you can play games in peace and chat to developers. E3 is good as it sets the tone and framework for the rest of the year, highlights what's important (to the publishers), what games they're trying to push and catch a fleeting glimpse at what is coming in 2015 and sometimes beyond. Of course as many of you know nothing is set in stone and the gaming battlefields are littered with games that showed up one year at E3 and are never heard from again. Truly great games that will never be made and that will live on in our dreams, we mourn them happily because we'll never actually see any code and have all those fanciful ideas crushed under the reality of DLC, rubbish implementation and ridiculous design choices.

This 32-page feature details all the really good stuff from E3 so now I'm going to fill up the rest of this page with all the other stuff we really go to E3 for and some pictures to boot. Think of it as a visual diary in part. First up was watching the brilliant *Edge of Tomorrow* at the fabulous Chinese 3D IMAX cinema on Hollywood Boulevard – there's just something special about watching movies where

they get made. Next day was a trip to Universal Studios with the essential front of line pass and the incredible *Transformers* ride that was even better this year. Next year the plan is to go to the other theme park for some different rollercoasters because we've done Universal Studios to death over the years. Then I went shopping; I bought a Minecraft plush (creeper) and almost an expensive fossil tooth (worried about breakage). After all the food at fancy restaurants and other publisher bribery techniques E3 was over, off I went to Las Vegas (baby). I stayed at a ridiculously lavish hotel (The Venetian) in an equally lavish city. It's all the madness you think it is and more. Strippers on the streets, two girls in my hotel room for \$79 if I wanted. Bars on every corner, shops, gambling, shops, and more shops. I went to see David Copperfield who blew a few minds and had you wondering if it was all really a trick or is magic real. I was treated to an expensive steak for my birthday and even had my own special cake made from Carlo's Bakery in the hotel I stayed at – I know such cool people it's almost unfair. Saving the best for last was the helicopter trip into the Grand Canyon. Pictures don't really tell the full story so I've added a video to the DVD this month. It shows some of the flight where we landed for lunch so you can all see what I was doing while you were here freezing in winter. It's a magical place that defies the imagination. It's hot, barren and unforgiving and completely insanely perfect in every way.

Of course none of all this madness would be possible without the people at Megarom and BT Games – who made this bit of NAG possible. So make sure you love them back.

Until whatever we're doing in 2015.

- RedTide

PRE-ORDER NOW AND BOOST YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN



**GEAR UP. DAY ONE.**

**PRE-ORDER NOW** FOR EARLY ACCESS TO WEAPONS AND GEAR

**VANGUARD  
ARMOURY**

[www.destinythegame.com](http://www.destinythegame.com)



Halo is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Microsoft is not the publisher of Destiny. Activision has no affiliation with Halo.  
Early access to Vanguard Armoury exclusively available to those that pre-order by 09/09/14 only available at participating retailers in Europe and subject to availability. Access to Vanguard Armoury can also be attained through gameplay.  
Various elements and functionality of PS4, Xbox One and Xbox 360 Destiny Game require subscription to PlayStation Plus and Xbox Live Gold respectively, sold separately. Terms and conditions apply. Please see [www.destinythegame.com](http://www.destinythegame.com) for further details.  
© 2014 Bungie, Inc. All rights reserved. Destiny, the Destiny Logo, Bungie and the Bungie Logo are among the trademarks of Bungie, Inc. Published and distributed by Activision. Activision is a registered trademark of Activision Publishing, Inc.

EXCLUSIVE UPGRADED SPARROW



FROM THE CREATORS OF HALO

# DESTINY®



BECOME LEGEND

09.09.14



PRE-ORDER  
NOW FROM

**BL**  
GAMES®



BUNGE™ ACTIVISION®

"The Ethernet cables used at E3 could stretch from Los Angeles to Salt Lake City, from New York City to Chicago, from Denver to Dallas, or from Madrid to Paris. In total, these cables weigh more than two tons."

## Far Cry 4

**DEVELOPER** > Ubisoft Montreal

**PUBLISHER** > Ubisoft

**GENRE** > First-person shooter

**RELEASE DATE** > 18 November 2014

**PLATFORMS** > 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

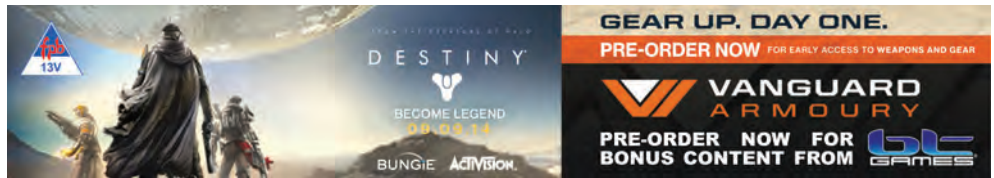
**F**ar Cry 4 proved to be a huge success for Ubisoft with the advancements it made on the gameplay from *Far Cry 3*, mixed with a heavy dose of just plain weird (and fascinating) content. It's a tough act to follow, but from everything we've seen so far from *Far Cry 4*, it looks like things are only going to get weirder.

The game takes place in the fictional country of Kyrat, which lies within the Himalayas and is inspired by Nepal and Bhutan. This exotic and mountainous location means you can expect plenty of verticality, both in terms of combat and exploration, and the devs have added a grappling hook to the equipment list along with a wingsuit that you'll now unlock earlier in the game than in *FC3*. In addition, a small personal helicopter can be acquired to let you scout and fire from the skies – the latter thanks to the inclusion of an ability to shoot one-handed weapons (which includes the grenade launcher, because why not?) from all vehicles.

The much-vaunted outposts make a return in the form of fortresses, which you can once-again "liberate" any way you choose. Prefer the stealthy approach? Sneak in through the hole in the wall and put that fancy new auto-crossbow to use. Wildlife fanatic? Throw some sticky C4 on an elephant and send it crashing through the front door while screaming "special delivery, motherf\*\*kers!" Or you could keep it real with the classic approach of gun-blazing, barrels-exploding and heads-rolling. Maybe open with the elephant idea. In fact, just do the elephant thing every time. Heck, you can even jump on and ride the poor beast while doing so.



And if you somehow manage to get bored with the open-world stuff, *Far Cry 4* will support up to four players in co-op. When someone jumps in to your game, your campaign progress pauses and gets tucked away safely, but everything else remains open: hunting animals, liberating fortresses, stopping convoys and the many other activities we're sure to see. When your mates eventually bugger off you can get back to the job of saving the locals from their self-appointed Pagan Min (voiced by the ubiquitous Troy Baker) and putting an end to a civil war that's ripped through the country. *Far Cry 3*'s Vaas was a fantastic bad guy, so we're eager to see just how evil and psychopathic Min will be. We're assuming it'll be safe to use the word "very" in any description of him.



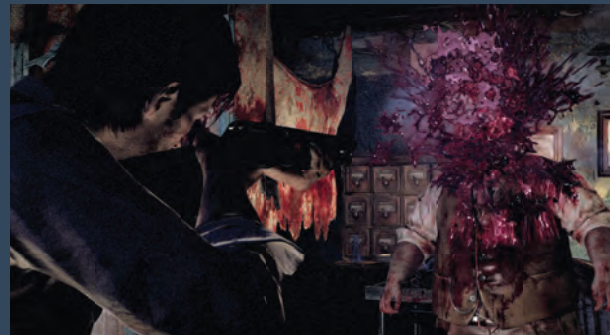
# Sid Meier's Civilization: Beyond Earth

**DEVELOPER** > Firaxis Games  
**PUBLISHER** > 2K Games  
**GENRE** > Turn-based strategy  
**RELEASE DATE** > Q3 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > PC

**S**id Meier's *Alpha Centauri* has a special place in the hearts of many strategy game players who have been dying for a sequel since its release in 1999, but despite sharing many common elements with it, *Beyond Earth* is not that sequel. Not entirely, at least. It's also not entirely a sequel to *Civilization V*, but it is a bit of both.

*Beyond Earth* will see humanity scattered through deep space in search of a new home. Earth is a done deal and we need another planet to ravage, and so you land on a randomly-generated alien world with a few settlers and a ship full of equipment and supplies. There are other human settlers there, as well as the local alien fauna and flora that don't take kindly to strangers.

As well as a host of new features like the Tech Web, branching quest lines and customisable units, *Beyond Earth* includes the concept of Affinities, which act as guides for your newfound civilisation. Supremacy is for those who like to conquer through the use of technology; Harmony is for those who want to live in peace with their new world, and will change themselves to do so; Purity means you'll attempt to change your new home to be much like Earth, through any means. These affinities are a central point for the development of your conquests, and will shape everything from your cities to your people to the natural resources that you will value most.



# The Evil Within

**DEVELOPER** > Tango Gameworks  
**PUBLISHER** > Bethesda Softworks  
**GENRE** > Survival horror  
**RELEASE DATE** > October 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

**W**hen it comes to survival horror fans there are usually two camps: those who prefer *Resident Evil* and those who prefer *Silent Hill*. In that regard, Shinji Mikami, the creator of *Resident Evil*, seems set to bring together these fans with *The Evil Within*. While it combines the puzzle and exploration elements of *Resident Evil*, *The Evil Within* aims to make the gameplay as terrifyingly challenging and psychologically scarring as that of *Silent Hill*.

You'll play as Detective Sebastian Castellanos, who's been sent to investigate a mass murder in an appropriately creepy setting. But it's not long after arriving that Castellanos is knocked unconscious by an unseen force. When he wakes up in a nightmare world (or possibly the real world – there's a mysterious duality at play here) filled with demons and zombies, he'll have to use more than just his combat abilities to stay alive and find out what the hell is going on.

While there will be a few weapons on offer, ammo is maddeningly scarce in *The Evil Within*: players will be wise to make use of alternate methods of survival such as running away like a child (high-pitched screaming optional but recommended) and hiding under beds or in closets. You can also engage in a bit of melee combat if you're feeling up to it, but it'd be wise to use the upgrade system to increase your damage output or life gauge before you get too cocky.

"E3 features more than 35,000 video monitors and more than 6,000 pieces of furniture."

## Assassin's Creed Unity

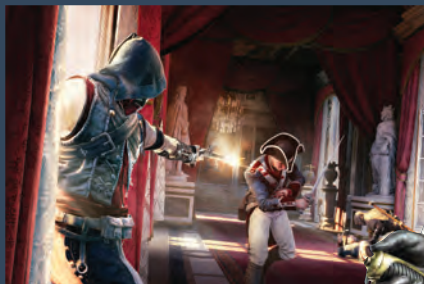
**DEVELOPER** > Ubisoft Montreal  
**PUBLISHER** > Ubisoft  
**GENRE** > Action adventure  
**RELEASE DATE** > 28 October 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

Grab a baguette and dust off your beret, because this year's *Assassin's Creed* title is heading into the French Revolution. *Assassin's Creed Unity* is the franchise's first entirely current-gen entry into the now seven-year-old series. With nothing but PC, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One to program for, Ubisoft Montreal has been layering on the eye-candy in *Unity*. 18th century Paris is looking amazingly detailed with cluttered streets and dense crowds gathering to watch public executions by guillotine. The late 18th century was one of France's bloodiest moments, but it would culminate in the death of the French monarchy and the advent of the notion of human rights.

During this backdrop of historical upheaval, players will take on the role of a new assassin called Arno Dorian. Much like we did with Ezio in *Assassin's Creed II*, we will experience Arno's childhood and growth until he eventually becomes initiated into the Assassin order. With the Assassins falling on the side of freedom and equality, you can probably hazard a guess as to which side of the French Revolution Arno will align himself with.

E3 2014 was Ubisoft's first public showing of *Assassin's Creed Unity*. During presentations the development team showed off a number of new gameplay mechanics coming to *Unity*. One of the more notable additions is that of a new, downwards parkour system. This new means of getting down from high perches means you're not always going to be looking for haystacks and Leap of Faith points; it also makes the whole parkour and free-running system feel much more natural... if scaling twelve-storey buildings in less than a minute can be considered "natural".

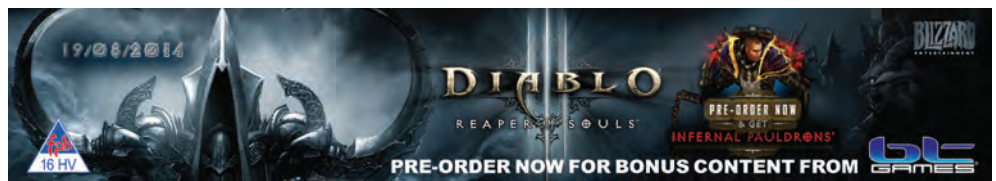
Possibly the best addition to gameplay comes with the introduction of a dedicated stealth mode. Judging by E3 gameplay, you'll be able to put Arno into a proper stealth stance, which will allow you to slink from cover to cover in order to bypass enemies and reach your target without triggering a massive confrontation. This is something the series has desperately needed for years; the closest we've come to this was the "low profile" mode from the



original 2007 *Assassin's Creed*.

This year, Ubisoft has eschewed the competitive multiplayer aspect that has been a part of the franchise since *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*. In its place they're introducing a seamless co-operative multiplayer mode that will play out during the single-player story campaign. You and up to three other friends will be able to take on assassination contracts together, and an example of this was shown off during E3. Four players infiltrated a palace to assassinate a particularly rotten baron. The four assassins worked together to silence guards and wind their way to a high enough vantage point before dropping in on their unsuspecting target. In a way, it's all very reminiscent of summoning brotherhood companions to aid you, only this time the brotherhood assassins are not AI controlled – they're your friends. Whether or not co-op is the multiplayer shot-in-the-arm the franchise has needed is still debatable; we'll find out in October when the game releases.





## Forza Horizon 2

**DEVELOPER** > Playground Games / Turn 10 Studios / Sumo Digital  
**PUBLISHER** > Microsoft Game Studios  
**GENRE** > Racing  
**RELEASE DATE** > September 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > 360 / XBO

**F**orza Horizon made quite a splash when it launched on Xbox 360 in 2012, delivering a solid mix of arcade racing designed around the hardcore *Forza Motorsport* simulation approach, and *Forza Horizon 2* aims to up the ante in every regard.

Playground Games again takes the lead development role, but they've been working closely with Forza Motorsport devs Turn 10 Studios to ensure that all the tech that runs *Motorsport 5* is put to good use in *Horizon 2*. This includes a full physics simulation system that's been tuned to accommodate the arcade-like racing that works so well with Horizon. The open world concept from the first game makes a return, and *Horizon 2*'s playable space is larger and more open than before, now that those pesky invisible barriers have been tossed to encourage exploration and a more organic approach to taking shortcuts. The scenery has also been given an overhaul, taking the game world to Southern Europe including France and Italy. The player is free to explore wine country, twisting mountain passes in the Alps, narrow streets and broad boulevards, and there are guaranteed to be hidden gems and challenges scattered around the game world for you crazy completionists out there.

*Forza* is always about the cars and the thrill of racing, and *Horizon 2* is no shrimp when it comes to its roster of driveable vehicles. Included in the list is the Corvette Stingray, Nissan GT-R Black Edition, Lamborghini Huracán, Mercedes AMG SLS, Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster, McLaren P1 and Ferrari 458 Italia. Since it shares an engine with *Forza Motorsport 5*, we imagine the roster is going to be constantly bolstered with additional DLC.



## No Man's Sky

**DEVELOPER** > Hello Games  
**PUBLISHER** > Hello Games  
**GENRE** > Space sim  
**RELEASE DATE** > TBA  
**PLATFORMS** > PS4 / TBA

**P**rocedurally-generated, infinitely expansive game worlds are fast becoming the go-to canvas for indie games that don't involve slaughtering zombies and running around with no pants on, but *No Man's Sky* takes the concept to a whole new level. Its game world is made up of an infinite number of planets filled with procedurally generated plants and animals existing in a simulated ecology. You're given a space ship and told to go explore.

*No Man's Sky* is part MMO (albeit a bit of an antisocial one): everyone plays together in the same galaxy and begins on their own planet in the outer rim. It's suggested that you attempt to travel to the centre of the galaxy, but really it's entirely up to you. Doing so is no easy task, however: you'll need to upgrade your spaceship, your weapons and your suit to enable you to survive in harsh conditions. Space and the worlds within it are filled with hazards: pirates, military, wild beasts and of course other players attempting to write their own story must all exist together.

The idea for *No Man's Sky* comes from classic sci-fi books, and it shows. From the dreamlike colour palette to the simple idea of perpetually being on the frontier of discovery, it's a game that will encourage you to get lost in its worlds.



"The meeting rooms and exhibit spaces at E3 could fill nearly eight U.S. football fields, approximately 34 Olympic-sized swimming pools, or more than seven White Houses."

## Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare

**DEVELOPER** > Sledgehammer Games

**PUBLISHER** > Activision

**GENRE** > First-person shooter

**RELEASE DATE** > 4 November 2014

**PLATFORMS** > 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

Forget being *Modern*, it's time to go *Advanced*. The next generation of *Call of Duty* requires next-generation warfare. It's 2054 and the world's most powerful armies aren't held by governments but private military corporations (PMCs). One such corporation, Atlas, is run by Jonathan Irons (played by a very intense Academy Award-winning Kevin Spacey), who believes that America has failed to bring democracy to the world. It's unclear what Irons' true motivations are, but he's pretty passionate about them. Players will be working for Irons as former U.S. Marine Mitchell (played by Troy Baker), going on clandestine operations around the world for the highest bidder.

The battleground has changed, with technology and tactics having dramatically altered how soldiers fight. Thanks to how well-funded PMCs can be, compared to conventional militaries that outfit their soldiers with lowest-bidder ordinance, the soldiers that fight for a PMC are equipped with powerful exoskeletons for increased lethality. Players will enjoy enhanced movement and much more vertical gameplay thanks to boost jumps, grappling, and cloaking. Your boost pack also allows for rapid side-to-side movement, great for quickly flanking enemies behind deployed shields.

For the first time in the series, instead



of a conventional heads-up display stuck to your screen, all important information is shown via an augmented reality system. Your ammo count is drawn over the back of your rifle, projected like a hologram inside the game world, along with little virtual bullets showing how many are in the magazine. This extends to all important information like troop positions, objectives, and additional tactical overlays based on situation. You have access to an environment scanning laser grenade that, once thrown, will show holograms of all enemy units in the area, based on where you threw the grenade.

It's still early, but trailers have shown hoverbikes, giant spider tanks, and massive drone swarms that look straight out of *The Matrix*. Even though the exosuit does make the player look a bit like an extra from *Crysis*, *Advanced Warfare* will still play like

a *Call of Duty*. The game's main focus will still be true to the series' bombastic nature, giving players a rollercoaster ride through explosions and epic set pieces. There has been no information released yet about the multiplayer, but we're hoping it'll stay true to the series' 60 frames-per-second roots. What has been confirmed however, is that female soldiers in multiplayer will feature once more, following the precedent set in *Call of Duty: Ghosts*.

Sledgehammer Games is very focused on visuals, claiming that the game uses a new facial animation system powered by technology also used in James Cameron's upcoming *Avatar* sequel. While Sledgehammer Games is developing the next-gen and PC versions, High Moon Studios (*Transformers: War for Cybertron, Deadpool*) is in charge of porting it down to PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360.



# Batman: Arkham Knight

**DEVELOPER** > Rocksteady Studios  
**PUBLISHER** > Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment  
**GENRE** > Action adventure  
**RELEASE DATE** > 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

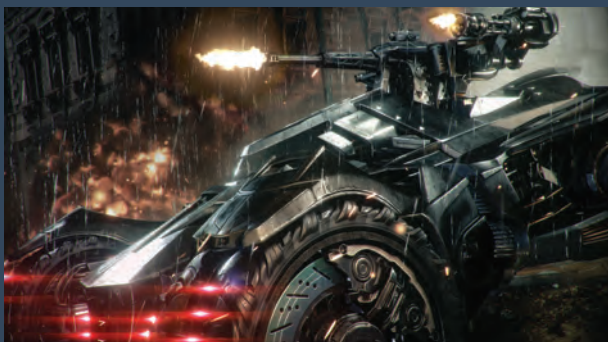
This is the final instalment in the long-running *Arkham* series, and Rocksteady's first push into current-gen hardware.

We already know that Bats will be taking on a brand new villain called Arkham Knight. We know the game takes place in a massive, open-world Gotham City. For E3, Rocksteady chose to showcase the biggest addition to the series: the Batmobile.

Batman's ride is able to transform between a racing mode and an artillery mode; the latter allows for more precise strafing movements and makes guns and canons pop out from behind heavy armour. This is Batman's most powerful weapon and you'll be able to switch between the Batmobile and Batman in the middle of combat. Think of it as a second character on-screen; a character that you can take control of whenever you want.

You can also remotely control the Batmobile, which opens things up to some puzzle solving elements using the vehicle. For example, you might remotely manoeuvre the Batmobile and get it to grapple onto a lift compartment that Batman is currently inside of. The Batmobile would then be able to raise and lower the lift so that Bats can access new locations.

"For the conclusion of our trilogy, we really wanted to give gamers that full Batman experience," said Guy Perkins, the game marketing manager for Rocksteady, "and the Batmobile is this legendary vehicle that everyone knows about. It works in conjunction with Batman. It's not just a thing that you use to get from A to B. It helps you solve problems."



# The Crew

**DEVELOPER** > Ivory Tower / Ubisoft Reflections  
**PUBLISHER** > Ubisoft  
**GENRE** > Racing  
**RELEASE DATE** > 11 November 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

Shared world is all the rage at the moment (just ask Bungie!) and so Ubisoft is taking a stab at it as well; only they're taking a stab at it within the racing genre. *The Crew* is pretty much billed as an MMO racer, but there are no subscription fees and you'll only ever be around another seven online players at any given instant (that was implemented so as to avoid literal in-game traffic jams when the servers fill up).

In *The Crew* you can expect a persistent world, player levels, fellow crew members and lots of cars. You should also expect miles and miles of open road as the game is set in North America, and Ubisoft has gone to great lengths to try and capture the variety of terrains and iconic cities of the US. You'll be driving the streets of New York, Miami, and Los Angeles to name a few. Your travels across the continent will take you through a range of archetypal American environments like Monument Valley deserts, wooded New England regions and the Rockies.

While there is a story mode (comprising of 70 story "missions") Ubisoft is emphasising that it's a light affair. You can reach the character level cap by completely ignoring the story mode and simply participating in the 60 PVP races or numerous challenges. For those with time to kill, you can even take on a faction mission, some of which will take four hours to complete - yowzers.

"Truss and hoists at E3 – used to suspend lighting and hanging decorations – weigh the equivalent of 26 African elephants, 54 mid-sized SUVs, or more than seven F-18 fighter jets."

## The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

**DEVELOPER** > CD Projekt RED  
**PUBLISHER** > Bandai Namco  
**GENRE** > Action RPG  
**RELEASE DATE** > 24 February 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

From time to time, Geralt of Rivia must think that witching isn't quite what it looked like in the brochure. "Travel the world", it said. "Slay monsters and lay maidens," it said. "Retire to a condo on the beach with a nice pension," it said. But here he is, knees-deep in some festering bog in the provinces, murky stains on his pants the only reminder of... whatever happened last night, and not even a weekend's vacation to look forward to. And now this.

Geralt should have stayed dead when he had the chance.

The third and final (for Geralt, anyway) game in the series based on Andrzej Sapkowski's fantasy novels, *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* starts up where *The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings* left the plot dangling precariously from the edge of a precipitous drop – the Nifigaard Empire is marching to war with the Northern Kingdoms (again), and the creepy equestrian cult elves of The Wild Hunt remain at large. What happens next is mostly a matter of speculation for the moment, but it'll take you approximately 100 hours to find out how it all ends and definitely involves dismemberment.

In the developer's own words, "We've created a story that flows naturally, cinematically, rendered it in amazing sound and visuals, while preserving full freedom of choice – all for you."

*Wild Hunt* introduces mounted combat to the series, although whether or not that "full freedom of choice" includes dismembering your pony instead and wearing his hooves as earrings to intimidate your enemies has not yet been confirmed. Maybe that's why the game's launch was delayed, but maybe we might also be a bit too obsessed with dismemberment.

Built with CD Projekt's new REDengine 3, the game will apparently feature "a living open world larger than any other in modern RPG history", and more than 30-35 times bigger than previous games, with no loading times while adventuring. According to a recent design document leak, the island of Ard Skellig is 64 square kilometres on its own, and only one of several areas included in the game.

There's also a dynamic weather and day/night cycle, a contextual economy determined by local supply and demand, an improved character development system, meaningful moral decisions and consequences leading up to a possible 36 or more different endings, and did we already mention dismemberment? Because we can't say that too many times. Dismemberment.





## Dragon Age: Inquisition

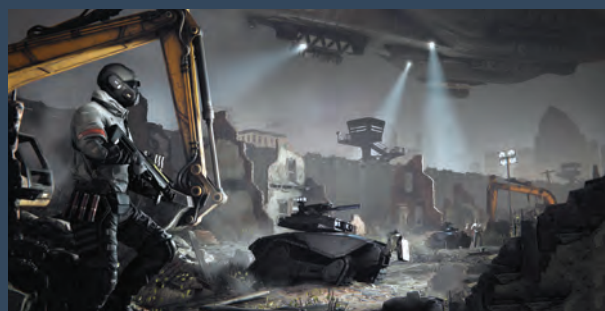
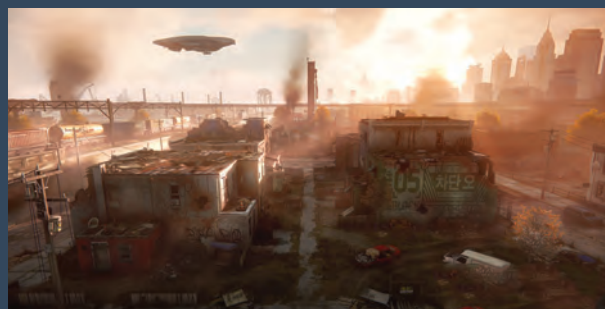
**DEVELOPER** > BioWare  
**PUBLISHER** > Electronic Arts  
**GENRE** > Role-playing game  
**RELEASE DATE** > 7 October 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

**D**ragon Age: Inquisition is moving the franchise into an open world. Since Bethesda wowed fantasy RPG fans with *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, other developers have been left in a position where the fantasy RPG genre practically requires an open world in order to be noticed. We're not complaining, especially considering that the Frostbite 3 engine is powering this particular outing. And with BioWare promising that we'll be able to climb every mountain and ford every stream in a world that's at least five times the size of *Dragon Age: Origins*, there's ample reason to be excited about this one.

Your journey starts as you being the sole survivor of a cataclysmic event. That event is caused by a rift in the Veil: the layer that separates the incorporeal world of the Fade from the physical world of Thedas. As the only survivor, the people of Thedas either treat you as a saviour or somebody to be wary of. As the player, you'll get to play-up either of those perceptions in your dealings with other characters.

As for plot decisions, BioWare is moving away from simple good and evil options and is rather presenting players with moral dilemmas. Your choices will combine to form one of 40 possible endings.

For the first time in the series you'll be able to craft your own items and alter attributes of items that you've already found. To that end, you'll be collecting resources and hunting animals in order to obtain the ingredients for the new crafting system.



## Homefront: The Revolution

**DEVELOPER** > Crytek UK  
**PUBLISHER** > Deep Silver / Crytek  
**GENRE** > First-person shooter  
**RELEASE DATE** > 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

In 2011, then publisher THQ released the first *Homefront* game; it received mediocre reviews and was considered a flop. Following its release, developer Kaos Studio was shut down. THQ, however, had invested too much in the creation of the IP, so they licensed Crytek to develop a sequel. Shortly after THQ liquidated, Crytek acquired the rights to the franchise. Now we're presented with *Homefront: The Revolution*, a decidedly Crytek-ey feeling, open world shooter. A new home and reboot might be what the IP needs to make an impact in the heavily saturated FPS genre.

Set four years after the first *Homefront*, players take on the role of a resistance fighter. It's now 2029 and the KPA (Korean People's Army) has set up their HQ in Philadelphia, which we're told is a "significant statement of intent because of all of the historical significance of [it] being the birthplace of US independence".

The game was properly revealed at E3, and there's no denying that it's very reminiscent of *Crysis* in its open world setting and free-form approach to tackling mission objectives. As a resistance fighter you're almost always outgunned by the KPA, so you'll need to scavenge for parts and hidden caches, craft IEDs, and utilise your smart phone to gain the upper hand. The essence of this game's combat is guerrilla warfare: you'll need to get in, hit them when and where they don't expect it, and get out before backup arrives. Your main goal: to ignite a revolution on the streets of Philadelphia. Colour us intrigued!



"The amount of bandwidth required for three days at E3 is more than most U.S. cities require in a year."

## Elite: Dangerous

**DEVELOPER** > Frontier Developments  
**PUBLISHER** > Frontier Developments  
**GENRE** > Space sim  
**RELEASE DATE** > 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > PC

The granddaddy of space trading, combat, and exploration returns with a big bang. *Elite: Dangerous* aims to continue the series that inspired games like *Wing Commander* and *Freelancer*, by giving players incredible freedom in how they want to survive the galaxy. You can trade for profit, form alliances to take on multiplayer missions, enact planetary raids to topple their economics, or just explore to find hidden wonders in a massive universe. No matter what you decide to be – bounty hunter, pirate, trader, assassin or roamer – your actions will have consequence.

After release, development is expected to continue on *Elite: Dangerous*, adding in the ability for players to walk around inside their ships and space stations, space-walk to manually repair the outside of ships, boarding enemy vessels and exploring planets on foot. *Dangerous* features a massively multiplayer, persistent universe, but it's entirely optional if you want to engage with the wider playerbase, just friends, or keep flying solo. For those lucky enough to get their hands on an Oculus Rift VR headset, *Dangerous* will fully support being played in an immersive virtual reality mode, letting you look around the cockpit of your ship and check behind you for missiles.

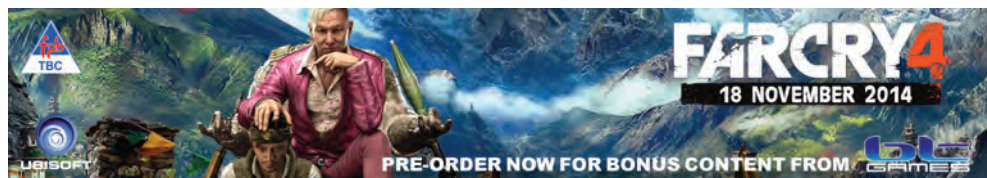


## The Order: 1886

**DEVELOPER** > Ready at Dawn  
**PUBLISHER** > Sony Computer Entertainment  
**GENRE** > Third-person shooter  
**RELEASE DATE** > 20 February 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > PS4

Set in an alternate history London, humanity is losing the fight against half-breed monsters: part animal, part man. This war has been raging for centuries and forms the unique backdrop that defines the unconventional mythology of the world. Actual history is fused with twists on familiar myths and legends. The year is now 1886, and humanity might finally stand a chance thanks to an industrial revolution. Technologies, far ahead of their time, aid in the fight: thermal imaging, wireless communication, fragmentation grenades, zeppelins, and high-tech weaponry that spew molten metal.

*The Order* is a third-person cover-based shooter not unlike *Gears of War*, but with far more moustache action. Playing as Sir Galahad, a member of an elite order of knights, you follow a four-person squad through the Victorian-Era neo-London fighting not only monsters, but proletariat rebels who've become discontent at the upper class. You'll also have access to special powers thanks to a mysterious liquid known as Blackwater. Knights can drink Blackwater to enter a heightened state, slowing times so you can rapidly switch between targets, pulling off impressive superhuman gunplay. During cut-scenes, and quick-time events will keep you on your toes, as you'll have to manually dodge enemy attacks.



## Tom Clancy's The Division

**DEVELOPER** > Ubisoft Massive  
**PUBLISHER** > Ubisoft  
**GENRE** > Third-person shooter  
**RELEASE DATE** > 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

Inspired by real-world bio-terrorist attack simulations that revealed how vulnerable modern society has become, *The Division* takes place in a world where a man-made disease outbreak causes the United States to collapse into anarchy in just five days. You play as part of a group called the "Strategic Homeland Division", or "The Division" for short. Established by the president of the United States to "save whatever remains" of the U.S., *The Division* pits players against AI-controlled opponents and other players.

The game takes place in New York City, which contains a population of nearly 8.5 million people. They are starving, they are upset, and when a city that produces 18 tons of garbage every 24 hours suddenly stops trucking the filth out of the city, it brings problems. Even though the game is primarily an online, open world role-playing experience, there will be a single-player campaign. But the mean of the game is in co-op, where you seamlessly engage in player vs. player combat and trading, trying to survive the dynamic scenarios the game generates. As the contagion spreads, players will need to find a new base of operations, and manage security, morale and raids by other players or AI looters.



## Bayonetta 2

**DEVELOPER** > Platinum Games  
**PUBLISHER** > Nintendo  
**GENRE** > Action  
**RELEASE DATE** > October 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > Wii U

Thanks to funding from Nintendo, Platinum Games was allowed to make a direct sequel to *Bayonetta*, one of the finest "stylish action fighting" games on the market. Taking place a few months after the events of the first game, Bayonetta and Jeanne are fending off a group of angels when suddenly Jeanne's soul gets claimed by Hell. Bayonetta, not okay with this at all, decides to go to Hell and teach them a thing or two. Weapon customization returns, letting you equip different weapons on both hands and feet, while a new Umbran Climax system lets you trigger extra Wicked Weaves and Infernal Demon summonings for a short while. The action will get even crazier than before, with over-the-top jaw-dropping set pieces, alongside a finely tuned combat system for beginners and masters alike.

A complete port of the first *Bayonetta* will be included with *Bayonetta 2* for free. This port has received frame rate improvements and a new costume system that lets you dress up as Link from *Zelda*, Princess Peach from *Mario Bros* or Samus from *Metroid*. Each costume brings with it little aesthetic adjustments, like *Zelda* sounds if you're dressed as Link, or the Wicked Weave fists looking like Bowser's hands if you're playing as Princess Peach.

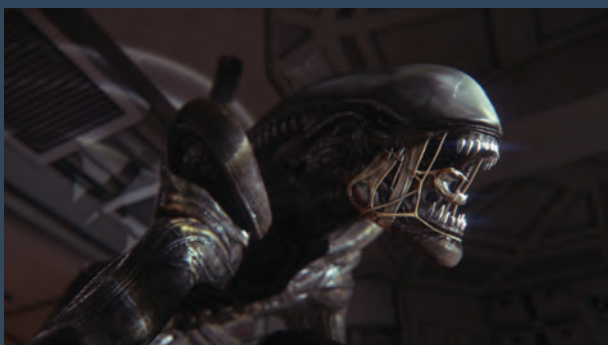
"E3 employs more than 3,000 people during the course of producing the show, including an army of 45 network engineers who work to complete the on-site Internet/Ethernet installation in the three weeks leading up to the big event."

## Alien: Isolation

**DEVELOPER** > The Creative Assembly  
**PUBLISHER** > SEGA  
**GENRE** > First-person horror  
**RELEASE DATE** > October 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

**D**rawing inspiration from Ridley Scott's *Alien* rather than James Cameron's *Aliens*, *Alien: Isolation* aims to be a far more subtle, less action-packed horror experience than we've grown accustomed to in other games bearing the weight of this iconic franchise. Set 15 years after the events of *Alien*, the game casts players as Amanda Ripley, daughter of Ellen Ripley, who's searching for her mother following her disappearance. You're sent to the space station *Sevastopol* to find the *Nostromo*'s flight recorder. Naturally, you won't be alone as you explore the station for clues.

In *Isolation*, there'll be a single xenomorph with which to contend, just as it was in *Alien*. The game's primary focus is on survival horror rather than action, and you'll have to use careful stealth in order to survive. The alien's AI is specifically designed to allow it to hunt the player exactly how you'd expect it to, using a combination of sight, sound and smell to track you down. It'll learn different hunting tactics as it goes, using previous encounters with the player to evolve its approach to be more effective. In order to evade the alien, you'll have to use cover, hide in lockers, dive under tables, and other such things. The motion tracker will be available to help you locate the alien, but the noise it makes could inadvertently alert the alien to your presence. Combat with other humans and androids on the station will be scarce. You'll be able to craft various weapons and tools, and hack into computer terminals to achieve various goals.



## Kingdom Come: Deliverance

**DEVELOPER** > Warhorse Studios  
**PUBLISHER** > Warhorse Studios  
**GENRE** > Role-playing game  
**RELEASE DATE** > Q4 2015 (PC) / TBA (other platforms)  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

**L**ooking an awful lot like an *Elder Scrolls* game but with an unyielding focus on historical accuracy and realism, *Kingdom Come: Deliverance* is an RPG set in Central Europe at the start of the 15th century, during a time characterised by violent unrest. It's a solo experience, casting the player as a young blacksmith who's lost all he holds dear to the war surrounding him. Utilising a classless role-playing system, the game lets you choose your place in the world based on your actions (as well as decisions made during dialogue), allowing players to slowly develop themselves as bards, warriors, rogues and more.

Your choices in the game's world will have consequences, and you'll develop a reputation that'll follow you throughout your travels. There'll be both ranged and melee weaponry, and the physics-based combat system is looking to make close-quarters brawls as realistic as possible. There's an extensive inventory system that allows for multiple layers of armour to be worn where applicable. Your equipment will degrade over time, becoming visibly dirty and worn through extended use. Players will have to eat and sleep to maintain their strength, and horses can be used to carry extra loot if needed, on top of being useful in combat. Your horse also gains experience levels and has equipment slots of its own. The game will feature large-scale battles and castle sieges, as well as non-combat abilities like crafting, cooking, medicine making, mining and weapon/armour repair.





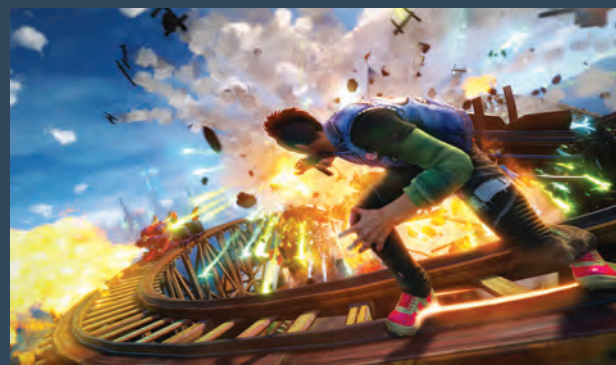
## Mirror's Edge 2

**DEVELOPER** > EA DICE  
**PUBLISHER** > Electronic Arts  
**GENRE** > First-person action  
**RELEASE DATE** > Q2 2016  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

**M**irror's Edge 2 is still a bit of an enigma, but at least we know that it's definitely happening, and we have more details to go on this year than we did at last year's E3 reveal. Built using the powerful Frostbite 3 engine and described as an "open-world action adventure game" by its creators, *Mirror's Edge 2* once again casts players as free-runner Faith. It's a prequel, one that aims to reveal the story of how Faith came to be the woman we met in the original game.

The developers are working with various parkour artists to expand on Faith's repertoire of graceful movements from the first game, and the goal is to present players with myriad options when it comes to traversing the game's purposefully plain, but cleverly designed environments. Close-quarters combat (as well as the optional use of firearms) will return, but DICE has promised to devote more time to refining the combat to make it a more natural, worthwhile fit with the game.

Focus is being placed on making the skirmishes and platforming equally satisfying to both veteran *Mirror's Edge* players and newcomers to the series. There's promise of more varied gameplay, while the clean visual style that allows for intuitive visual cues is very clearly making a return. Rhianna Pratchett, writer of the first game's story, will not return for the sequel.



## Sunset Overdrive

**DEVELOPER** > Insomniac Games  
**PUBLISHER** > Microsoft Studios  
**GENRE** > Third-person action adventure  
**RELEASE DATE** > October 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > XBO

**S**et amidst the brilliantly ostentatious backdrop of Sunset City, Insomniac Games' newest title looks like the sort of sandbox action-fest that begs to be played by anyone with even the slightest bit of appreciation for the wonderfully wacky and weird. A dodgy energy drink has transformed the city's inhabitants into vicious mutants, and while most would see this as a sign to maybe vacate the premises, many survivors have chosen to embrace the chaos and turn Sunset City into their own manic playground. You are one of those survivors.

As you'd expect from Insomniac, you'll have an eccentric mix of methods with which to dispose of the various types of mutants plaguing the city. On top of useful, parkour-style movement options like wall-running, rail-grinding and zip-lining, there'll be an arsenal of eccentric weaponry like The Dude (which fires bouncing bowling balls), the TNTeddy (a wondrous mix of teddy bears and dynamite) and Turret Copters (model helicopters affixed with gun turrets). Other weapons shown include one that freezes groups of enemies and fireworks launchers. There'll be various factions to meet and interact with, like the Fargarths – live-action role players who've embraced the Sunset City situation as though it were tailor-made for them. There'll be "Amps" to equip that let you augment your abilities, allowing you to do things like summon tornadoes and zap foes with lightning. It all looks impressively fun and chaotic, and the colourful visual style is mighty inviting.



"If the total data moved over the Internet at E3 was printed on size 8.5x11 paper and stacked vertically, it would be taller than the Empire State Building".

## Evolve

**DEVELOPER** > Turtle Rock Studios  
**PUBLISHER** > 2K Games  
**GENRE** > First-person shooter  
**RELEASE DATE** > October 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

Left 4 Dead creators Turtle Rock Studios are no stranger to asymmetrical multiplayer, and they're taking that concept even further with *Evolve's* 4V1 multiplayer modes.

Four hunters, one monster. The hunters are chosen from a roster based on their class (assault, trapper, medic and support), and the monster is chosen from their own pool. Then the chaos begins. The hunters will attempt to track down the monster before it evolves, and at this stage it's the monster's job to stay hidden or throw the hunters off the track. As the monster gains evolution levels it becomes more powerful, until eventually the balance shifts and all hell breaks loose. Be

prepared for matches that have you on the edge of your seat for just a few minutes or as long as half an hour.



## Grey Goo

**DEVELOPER** > Petroglyph Games  
**PUBLISHER** > Greybox  
**GENRE** > Real-time strategy  
**RELEASE DATE** > Q4 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > PC

*Grey Goo* is an apocalypse scenario in which hordes of self-replicating nanobots flood the Earth and destroy everything in their wake. A fitting title, then, for a game in which you can play as said hordes of self-replicating nanobots, as well as two other factions in this intriguing asymmetrical strategy title.

With Petroglyph running the show, you can be sure that there's a solid strategic model at play here, and indeed the focus on *Grey Goo* is less on base-building and macromanagement, and more on the moment-to-moment tactics used on the frontline. Each of the three factions has distinct pros and cons, and it'll be up to you to take advantage of them. The Goo themselves, for example, tend to use a lot

of amorphous blobs that can traverse all terrain and take a lot of punishment, but move very slowly and can be outmanoeuvred by quicker opponents.



## Grand Theft Auto V (re-release)

**DEVELOPER** > Rockstar North  
**PUBLISHER** > Rockstar North  
**GENRE** > Action adventure  
**RELEASE DATE** > Late 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

*GTA V* proved to be the game that everyone was waiting for, but without a launch on PC and next-gen consoles, it was always going to be less than what it could've been. And so the rumours began, then they were confirmed, and now we've had a chance to see this next-gen re-release in all its glory. And it looks fantastic.

Not only will this updated version include all the things you'd expect - increased draw distances, higher-res textures, and increased traffic and pedestrian density - but you can also look forward to new wildlife and plant types, as well as improved weather effects. The PC version will include a built-in video editor for sharing those special "GTA moments" with the world.

As an added bonus, all *GTA Online* content that's been released

to date will also be included, and you'll be able to carry over your progress from 360 and PS3 to their younger siblings if you choose to buy the game again on a next-gen platform.



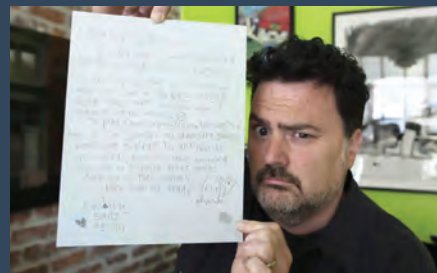
## Grim Fandango Remastered

**DEVELOPER** > Double Fine Productions  
**PUBLISHER** > TBA  
**GENRE** > Adventure  
**RELEASE DATE** > TBA  
**PLATFORMS** > PS4 / PSV

Perhaps one of the most surprising (but so welcome) features of Sony's E3 press conference was when it was announced that a remake of *Grim Fandango* is headed to PS4 and PS Vita. You could practically hear the crowd from the other side of the planet. The Sony guy who announced it was so clearly excited he actually called him "Tim motherfu\*mumble\*ing Schafer". We'd do the same thing, don't worry.

The remake is first headed to Sony's consoles but Schafer has confirmed he's keen to spread the love everywhere he can. The game will feature updated visuals and a console-friendly control scheme, so very soon there'll be absolutely no excuse

to say "*Grim Fandango*? I've never played it. Hey... why are you physically attacking me?"

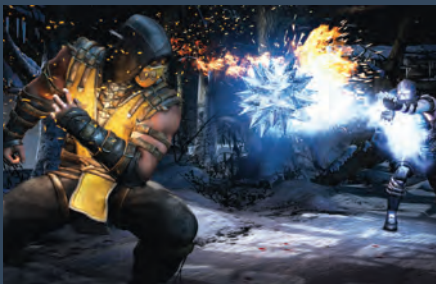




## Mortal Kombat X

**DEVELOPER** > NetherRealm Studios  
**PUBLISHER** > Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment  
**GENRE** > Fighting  
**RELEASE DATE** > TBA 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

**M**ortal Kombat's tenth iteration is almost upon us. Just let that sink in for a minute. Are you done reminiscing? Great, now get over here. There are a few changes in store for this major step in the MK series, a couple of which will be familiar to anyone who's had the pleasure of bloodying their knuckles with NetherRealm's excellent *Injustice: Gods Among Us*. World objects now have a greater role in the game, meaning you can pick up items to use as weapons in battle, and each fighter will have three stances (and move variations) to suit your particular play style. MK X's roster is set to expand by at least four characters: the dual characters of Ferra and Torr, the insectoid D'vorah, Cassie Cage (daughter of Johnny Cage and Sonya Blade), and the demigod



Kotal Khan. It's also been mentioned that the campaign will feature a non-linear story that begins at the end of the previous game and spans some 25 years.

## Splatoon

**DEVELOPER** > Nintendo EAD Group No. 2  
**PUBLISHER** > Nintendo  
**GENRE** > Third-person shooter  
**RELEASE DATE** > Q1/Q2 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > Wii U

It's not every day that Nintendo announces a new IP, so when they do, you know it's at least worth a look. *Splatoon* seems like an interesting concept, as well as a departure for the company, what with this being an arena-style, team-based multiplayer game and all.

This four-versus-four shooter sees both teams attack each other and attempt to cover the arena in colour-coded ink, using either their squirt guns or ink grenades. Players move slower when walking through enemy ink, and must "dive" into their own (transforming into a squid-like creature as they do so) to replenish their ink ammo reserves and reach remote places. Players have no attacking and reduced defensive capabilities while in this form, but can move quickly and even travel along walls coated in friendly colours.

*Splatoon* looks weird but super fun. This is Nintendo finally waking up to the idea of action-oriented team shooters like *PvZ: Garden Warfare*, and we're glad that they're having a go at it.



## The Sims 4

**DEVELOPER** > Maxis / The Sims Studio  
**PUBLISHER** > Electronic Arts  
**GENRE** > Life simulation  
**RELEASE DATE** > September 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > PC

It's hard to believe that *The Sims 3* is over five years old already, and now seems like as good a time as any to start it all over again with a new, very capable engine.

*The Sims 4* is set to include loads of new features, including some very impressive building tools like adjustable wall heights, auto-room decoration, adjustable room sizes (even after the room has been built), fancy roof technology, support for round walls, and instant basements thanks to tweakable foundation heights. There's also the expected range of new features to make for more believable Sims that laugh, cry and do all those weird Sims things in a slightly more

believable way than before. Oh, and *Sims* can now die of laughter. That's a real thing, by the way.



## Uncharted 4: A Thief's End

**DEVELOPER** > Naughty Dog  
**PUBLISHER** > Sony Computer Entertainment  
**GENRE** > Action adventure  
**RELEASE DATE** > TBA 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > PS4

Naughty Dog's next cinematic epic now has a name, and with that name we can assume (but hey, anything goes) that this will be Nathan Drake's last outing. From the brief glimpse of the game we got to see during Sony's conference, it certainly looks like Drake is having a bad time, which we can only imagine is par for the course when you go chasing after things that don't belong to you in the heart of Africa.

Details are still light at this stage but we'll go out on a limb here and say it's safe to expect gunplay, clambering about on unstable ledges and a couple more close calls than the average human's heart could normally sustain.



"More than 55 miles of fiber optic cable is used at E3, enough to reach the mesopause – the coldest part of Earth's upper atmosphere."

## Bloodborne

**DEVELOPER** > From Software / SCE Japan Studios  
**PUBLISHER** > Sony Computer Entertainment  
**GENRE** > Action role-playing game  
**RELEASE DATE** > 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > PS4

Prior to E3, this was called "Project Beast". Now that E3 has come and gone, *Dark Souls* developer From Software has shown a little more of their new IP. This PlayStation 4 exclusive is very reminiscent of *Demon's Souls* and both *Dark Souls* games, but that's unsurprising considering the massive success of those three titles, and that Hidetaka Miyazaki is again at the helm.

Not much is known about the plot other than you're a take-no-crap demon murderer who travels to a dark and gothic city that was once known for its medicine. Now it's full of grotesque corpses and horrific enemies that need putting down. While *Bloodborne* has its roots in *Dark Souls*, the combat looks to be a little more offensive in style. Instead of defending with a shield,



you'll be using a shotgun to stagger opponents. Once that's knocked them, you can finish them off with your switchblade bonesaw... thing.

## Deep Down

**DEVELOPER** > Capcom / SCE Japan Studios  
**PUBLISHER** > Capcom  
**GENRE** > Role-playing game  
**RELEASE DATE** > TBA 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > PS4

We're still not a 100% certain as to what's going on in this game; we're also not 100% certain we'll ever get to play it as there's been no announcement of a release outside of Japan. Considering Capcom is billing *Deep Down* as a free-to-play "service", it's likely we'll never see a Western release. The fact that the game wasn't shown off during Sony's E3 Press Conference (which even had a free-to-play segment) is also not a good sign.

Anyway, when *Deep Down* debuted alongside the PlayStation 4 in February 2013, it looked to be a game in the vein of *Dark Souls*. Now, however, we've got a dark, medieval role-playing game that also takes place in a futuristic New York City. Capcom released an E3 trailer,



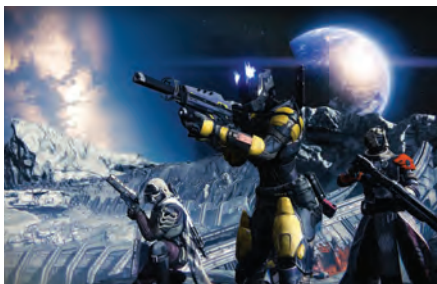
but it still leaves the title wide open for speculation. It's a good thing *Bloodborne* was revealed; that should scratch your current-gen *Dark Souls* itch.

## Destiny

**DEVELOPER** > Bungie  
**PUBLISHER** > Activision  
**GENRE** > First-person shooter  
**RELEASE DATE** > 9 September 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > 360 / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

At E3, Bungie showcased the competitive side of *Destiny*. This portion of the game is in strong contrast to the overall premise of teaming up with friends and other online Guardians to battle through the game's campaign. However, when you grow tired of saving humanity, you can head over to the Crucible to help thin its ranks instead.

You'll be taking your persistent *Destiny* character into the Crucible as well, which means matchmaking will play a role in placing you in a team of similarly levelled characters. What's more, there are certain gear items that can only be obtained via Crucible matches, so it's worth checking out even if competitive multiplayer isn't your thing.



One game mode found in the Crucible is called Control and will be instantly familiar to those who have played Hardpoint Domination in *Titanfall* or just Domination in *Call of Duty*.

## Halo: The Master Chief Collection

**DEVELOPER** > 343 Industries / Bungie  
**PUBLISHER** > Microsoft Game Studios  
**GENRE** > First-person shooter  
**RELEASE DATE** > 14 November 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > XBO

You weren't hoping for a new *Halo* game this year, were you? For 2014, Microsoft will be releasing a bundled repackaging of all four of Master Chief's outings so far. That means this collection will include *Halo: Combat Evolved*, *Halo 2*, *Halo 3* and *Halo 4*. It's not a simple repackaging, however: considering the fact that 2014 marks the tenth anniversary of *Halo 2*, that game will be getting a high definition remastering much like the recent *Halo: Combat Evolved Anniversary Edition*.

All four of the *Halo* games will run at 60fps in full 1080p on Xbox One. All of the multiplayer levels and their expansions are included as well. One of the best features, however, is the package's user interface, which curates every mission across the



four games into a playlist. Basically, the entire four-game experience is open to you from the get-go to experience in any mission order you want.



## Hyrule Warriors

**DEVELOPER** > Omega Force / Team Ninja  
**PUBLISHER** > Nintendo  
**GENRE** > Action  
**RELEASE DATE** > 19 September 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > Wii U

**D**ynasty Warriors and *The Legend of Zelda* got really drunk one night, hooked up, forgot to use protection, and now we have a game called *Hyrule Warriors*. Imagine the expansive battlegrounds of *Dynasty Warriors* with their wave upon wave of cannon fodder enemies waiting to be obliterated by your single, all-powerful warrior. Now imagine that set in the *Zelda* kingdom of Hyrule, and swap out Chinese warriors with numerous familiar characters from the *Zelda* franchise. That's *Hyrule Warriors*.

Of course, there will be multiple playable characters to choose from in *Hyrule Warriors*. It's also being considered a spin-off, which means the developers are free to have some fun with the game's story without having to worry about upsetting *Zelda* canon. So, for example, Princess Zelda is actually Queen Zelda in *Hyrule Warriors*. She also controls an army and kicks some serious butt. As for Link, well he's just a trainee in Queen Zelda's army to begin with, but we're sure that'll change as the story progresses.



## Lara Croft and the Temple of Osiris

**DEVELOPER** > Crystal Dynamics  
**PUBLISHER** > Square Enix  
**GENRE** > Square Enix  
**RELEASE DATE** > TBA  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

**F**our years ago, Crystal Dynamics released *Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light* – an isometric, arcade-style action game for one to two players. The game was met with both critic and fan acclaim so it's great to see that a second adventure in the *Lara Croft* spin-off series is on the way. In *Temple of Osiris*, Ms. Croft is joined by a rival archaeologist called Carter. The two infiltrate an Egyptian tomb but in doing so become cursed by Osiris. Luckily two Egyptian demigods, Isis and Horus, decide to lend a hand. Cue lots of shooting, looting, and puzzle solving in order to break the curse. The more astute among you will have worked out that there are four characters here: Lara, Carter, Isis and Horus, and that that means four-player co-op. Throw in

some light competitive elements and we're looking at a solid four-player game. Keep an eye on this one.



## LittleBigPlanet 3

**DEVELOPER** > Sumo Digital  
**PUBLISHER** > Sony Computer Entertainment  
**GENRE** > Platformer  
**RELEASE DATE** > November 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > PS4

**U**ndoubtedly one of the biggest surprises at this year's Sony press conference was the unveiling of *LittleBigPlanet 3*, which will be heading exclusively to the PlayStation 4. The arts-and-crafts-ey handmade world is back, only this time Sackboy is bringing three new friends. Toggle is a new character who can instantly switch between a strong, lumbering form and a scurrying, diminutive form; very useful for bashing through objects and then squeezing into tiny areas. Oddsock is a four-legged, dog-like creature who moves much faster than any other character. Finally, Swoop is a bird-like creature who will be able to fly as well as carry other characters and objects.

Creativity continues to be at the heart of *LittleBigPlanet*, and the creation tools have been tweaked somewhat to accommodate the new 16 levels of depth to each stage. You'll also be able to make levels that play to the strengths of each of the new characters.

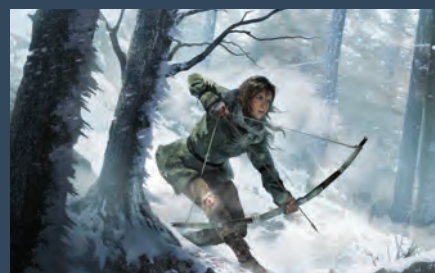


## Rise of the Tomb Raider

**DEVELOPER** > Crystal Dynamics  
**PUBLISHER** > Square Enix  
**GENRE** > Action adventure  
**RELEASE DATE** > Q4 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO

**T**his wasn't exactly unexpected, but it was certainly a welcomed reveal at this year's E3. The sequel to 2013's outstanding *Tomb Raider* reboot has been revealed; it's called *Rise of the Tomb Raider*. At this point very little is known, and Square Enix opted to show a CG trailer with no gameplay at all. That trailer, however, did manage to set the scene somewhat.

*Rise of the Tomb Raider* is set soon after the events of 2013's *Tomb Raider*. Lara is understandably victim to some post-traumatic stress disorder and as such is in therapy. The trailer simply showed Lara speaking to a psychologist, which was interspersed with footage of Lara continuing to find herself in dangerous situations on her own. It's clear that the adventure bug has bitten our favourite heroine and that she's struggling to come to terms with metamorphosis from bookish student to pistol-packing adventurer.



"The LACC's electricians used nearly 16km of extension cords at E3 and nearly 8km of duct-tape to secure cords to the floor. The show also installs approximately 8km of carpet throughout the LACC."

## Crackdown

**DEVELOPER** > TBA  
**PUBLISHER** > Microsoft Studios  
**GENRE** > Action  
**RELEASE DATE** > TBA  
**PLATFORMS** > XBO

Announced at the Microsoft press conference as an Xbox One exclusive, *Crackdown 3* (just called *Crackdown*) is set in the future of the first game but as an alternate take on events from *Crackdown 2*. According to Microsoft, *Crackdown* will have "unrivaled verticality, cooperative mayhem and destruction." The open-world smash-'em-up sandbox will have a single-player campaign that can be played cooperatively over the Internet, and an "all new competitive experience." Microsoft is not ready to reveal much else yet, and it's unlikely we'll be playing it this year. End of 2015 at the earliest, we think.



## Inside

**DEVELOPER** > Playdead  
**PUBLISHER** > Playdead  
**GENRE** > Puzzle platformer  
**RELEASE DATE** > 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > XBO

From the creators of the creepy (yet overly short) indie darling *Limbo* comes a new puzzle platformer with very distinct visuals. The trailer showcased at the Microsoft press conference showed a child running through a 2D environment with a lot of industrial activity in the background. The environments are fully 3D, and lush with a kind of simplistic detail. One part of the trailer shows the child walking in lock-step with other people so as to avoid detection, while another part has him falling into a lake, swimming up only to find the hole he entered in iced over.



## Kingdom Hearts III

**DEVELOPER** > Square Enix 1st Production Department  
**PUBLISHER** > Square Enix  
**GENRE** > Action role-playing  
**RELEASE DATE** > TBA  
**PLATFORMS** > PS4 / XBO

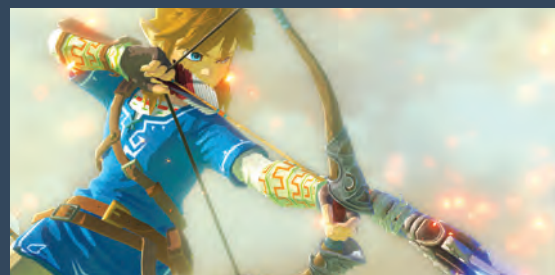
The eighth instalment in the *Kingdom Hearts* series and the first to appear on a Microsoft platform, *Kingdom Hearts III* features Sora, Donald and Goofy in their attempt to search for the seven guardians of light. They need the "Key to Return Hearts". The plot of the game picks up directly after the events in *Dream Drop Distance*. Keyblades can now transform, each in different ways, like becoming dual pistols for new attack types. New Disney World attraction based super-moves have been added to the game, like Pirate Ship and Big Magic Mountain, some of which can only be used against boss characters. It's not been revealed yet which Disney-license worlds will feature in the game.



## The Legend of Zelda (working title)

**DEVELOPER** > Nintendo EAD Group No. 3  
**PUBLISHER** > Nintendo  
**GENRE** > Action adventure  
**RELEASE DATE** > 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > Wii U

The reveal of the new *Legend of Zelda* for Wii U was very quick. It showed a massive world, lush green fields full of life, like goats, their herder, and far in the distance the peak of Mount Doom. The new *Zelda* will be open world, you can ride your horse to reach any place you can see in the distance. There will be puzzles to solve in the world itself, but unlike those found in previous *Zelda* games. While dungeons will contain traditional puzzle-solving using Link's arsenal of tools, just reaching the dungeons will now involve figuring out how to get there, how to reach that mountain, how to climb up these structures, and so on.





## Mario Maker

**DEVELOPER** > Nintendo  
**PUBLISHER** > Nintendo  
**GENRE** > Platformer  
**RELEASE DATE** > 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > Wii U

For the first time, anyone will be able to (legitimately) create their own 2D *Mario* levels. By using the Wii U GamePad players can drag and drop elements into their levels, place pipes, blocks, lifts and enemies anywhere. You can combine elements in strange ways, like making a tower of Goombas, or making a Piranha Plant fly by giving it wings. These levels can then be playtested instantly, edited on the fly, and then shared with other Wii U owners via Miiiverse. There are two visual styles to choose from, classic 8-bit *Super Mario Bros*, or the HD look of



*New Super Mario Bros. U*. Levels can be bundled into their own campaign and shared online.

## Sonic Boom: Rise of Lyric

**DEVELOPER** > Big Red Button Entertainment  
**PUBLISHER** > Sega  
**GENRE** > Action adventure  
**RELEASE DATE** > November 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > Wii U

In development by former Naughty Dog heavyweights, *Sonic Boom* is a new side-franchise for the blue blur, taking him in a very different direction. Using CryEngine 3, *Sonic Boom* is an action adventure game that focuses on exploration and combat, instead of racing along linear levels. There are four playable characters: Sonic, Tails, Knuckles and Amy, and the game supports local co-operative multiplayer for up to two players for the campaign, four for other modes. Each character has their own unique abilities. This new *Sonic Boom* universe includes a separate game for the 3DS, *Sonic Boom: Shattered Crystal*, and a new CGI-animated television series.



*Sonic Team* is still in charge of making a new core *Sonic* game.

## Pokémon Omega Ruby and Alpha Sapphire

**DEVELOPER** > Game Freak  
**PUBLISHER** > Nintendo  
**GENRE** > Role-playing  
**RELEASE DATE** > 28 November 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > 3DS

Remakes of the popular *Pokémon Ruby* and *Pokémon Sapphire* for Game Boy Advance from 2003, these new *Omega* and *Alpha* versions bring the same graphical upgrade featured in *Pokémon X* and *Pokémon Y*, along with other improvements like a more robust online system. There will be new Mega Evolutions not found in *X* and *Y*, as well as “Primal Reversions” that send the Legendary Pokémon from *Ruby* and *Sapphire* back to their primal state. The *Omega* and *Alpha* versions will have a slightly different story from their original versions, and of course you can bring all your Pokémon from *X* and *Y* over via the Pokémon Bank.



## Xenoblade Chronicles X

**DEVELOPER** > Monolith Soft  
**PUBLISHER** > Nintendo  
**GENRE** > Action role-playing game  
**RELEASE DATE** > 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > Wii U

Spiritual successor to the incredible *Xenoblade Chronicles* on Wii, *Xenoblade Chronicles X* is an open-world role-playing game where you can travel around on foot or in large humanoid robots that can fly. Some of these robots, called “Dolls”, can transform into vehicles like bikes or tanks. The battle system is similar to *Xenoblade Chronicles* but refined: a real-time action-based battle system with skill cooldowns, where you can chain attacks with your AI controlled team-mates. It’s unknown if the “Visions” system from *Chronicles*, which let you see dangerous moves that will happen in the future, will return. This time, you’ll be able to create the



main character and define the gender, shape, height, skin, voice and other customisation options.

"For the first time, millions of gamers from around the world were able to experience E3 by tuning in to Twitch.tv's live stream of the expo floor."

## Below

**DEVELOPER** > Capybara Games  
**PUBLISHER** > Capybara Games  
**GENRE** > Action adventure  
**RELEASE DATE** > TBA  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / XBO

From the creators of *Superbrothers: Sword & Sworcery EP* and *Super Time Force* comes a roguelike with a stark, captivating sense of style and atmosphere. In essence it's a dungeon crawler, putting you in control of a tiny adventurer making your way through expansive environments, using a variety of attacks and weapons to defeat increasingly tough foes. The world is perilous, full of deadly traps that'll instantly kill you, with many wondrous rewards awaiting those who are careful enough to survive.

Capybara Games are aiming to make the game brutally challenging but at the same time totally fair, forcing players to adapt and hone their abilities as they uncover more of the game's

mechanisms and secrets. Citing *Dark Souls* as an obvious gameplay influence, the game's zoomed-out view gives things a foreboding sense of scale. *Below* is absolutely one to keep both eyes on.



## Dead Island 2

**DEVELOPER** > Yager Development  
**PUBLISHER** > Deep Silver  
**GENRE** > First-person action role-playing game  
**RELEASE DATE** > Q2 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4 / XBO

Trading the sun-kissed beaches of the island of Banoi for the sun-kissed beaches of California, *Dead Island 2* aims to adopt a less serious approach to zombie culling than its predecessor did. It's in development at *Spec Ops: The Line* creators Yager Development, and the team is cramming in a number of iconic locations across California in which to mow down hordes of the undead.

There'll still be a focus on melee weapons, with firearms and the like very hard to come by. Combat will emphasise hilarious spectacle instead of realism. Scavenging for parts scattered around the game will let you craft increasingly insane weaponry. Motorised weaponry like hedge trimmers and chainsaws will appear (the noise from which

will attract zombies when used), as will dual-wielding of weapons. There will be four character classes in the game, each catering to a different play style and boasting an extensive skill tree.



## Costume Quest 2

**DEVELOPER** > Double Fine Productions  
**PUBLISHER** > Double Fine Productions  
**GENRE** > Role-playing game  
**RELEASE DATE** > Q4 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / Wii U / XBO

*Costume Quest 2* marks the first time Tim Schafer's studio Double Fine (creators of *Psychonauts* and *Broken Age*) has ever developed a sequel, and their formula for creating it is quite simple: give fans of the original *Costume Quest* exactly what they've been asking for. And what they've been asking for is more of the same trick-or-treating role playing that they fell in love with in the first game.

You'll once again assume the role of the twins Reynold and Wren, who wear Halloween costumes that grant them superpowers as they fight off evil Grubbins in Louisiana. Double Fine hopes to make the sequel's turn-based battles less repetitive with the addition of combos and timed button presses that'll allow for follow-up attacks, all in aid

of keeping players actively engaged. Expect to see new costumes (like the much-requested, totally useless Candy Corn) and a number of interesting new gameplay mechanics.



## Fable Legends

**DEVELOPER** > Lionhead Studios  
**PUBLISHER** > Microsoft Studios  
**GENRE** > Role-playing game  
**RELEASE DATE** > TBA  
**PLATFORMS** > XBO

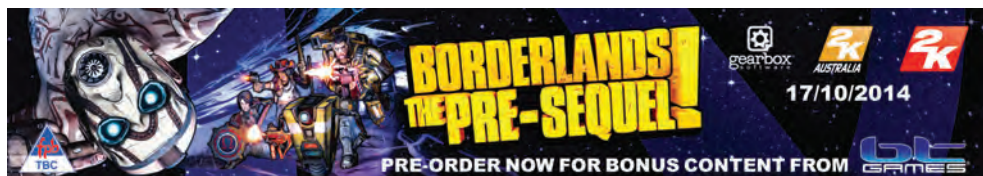
Described as a sort of *Dungeon Keeper*/*Fable* hybrid with a focus on cleverly combining cooperative and competitive multiplayer, *Fable Legends* puts more of an emphasis on tightly focused dungeon crawling rather than freely exploring a sprawling open world. There'll still be a hub city in which to toy around, but the meat of the game is in sets of self-contained quests, best enjoyed with five players. Four of those players control the sort of customisable heroes you'd expect from *Fable*, while the fifth controls the game's villain.

Villainous players will be able to set traps, command monsters, spawn bosses and generally just be an endless thorn in the sides of the adventurers. For players who'd prefer to play *Legends* solo,

the game's AI will fill the open roles. The reward for all your heroic efforts will be mountains of loot as you find new weapons and armour with which to equip your characters.







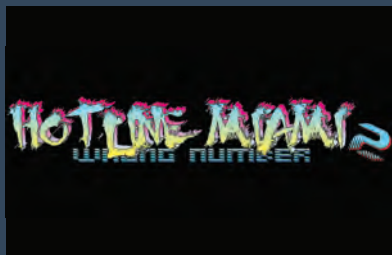
## Hotline Miami 2: Wrong Number

**DEVELOPER** > Dennaton Games  
**PUBLISHER** > Devolver Digital  
**GENRE** > Top-down action  
**RELEASE DATE** > Q3 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS3 / PS4 / PSV

Promising more of the same ferociously unforgiving, viciously violent top-down action that made its forebear such a runaway hit, *Hotline Miami 2: Wrong Number*'s story is told from the perspective of a number of different factions, each with their own story and different timelines. There'll be more of everything: more weapons, more enemy types, more ways to kill people and somehow even more of that trademark grotesque, neon gore. And there'll be more characters to play.

Each character in the game will have a different ability, much like how the wearable masks in the first game allowed for different play styles. One character can enter levels through any window you'd like, making for interesting tactical choice as to where to

start your rampage. Another unleashes rapid-fire punches, but can't use firearms. There's promise of another amazing soundtrack, and the scoring and combo system will return.



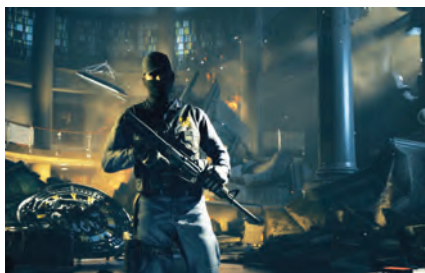
## Quantum Break

**DEVELOPER** > Remedy Entertainment  
**PUBLISHER** > Microsoft Studios  
**GENRE** > Third-person shooter  
**RELEASE DATE** > 2015  
**PLATFORMS** > XBO

Aiming to present a unique blend of action-packed third-person shooting with elements of time manipulation and the cinematic stylings of modern live-action TV shows, *Quantum Break* is looking like pretty much exactly what you'd expect from *Alan Wake* and *Max Payne* creators Remedy Entertainment.

When a time travel experiment at the fictional Riverport University in the US goes terribly wrong, *Quantum Break*'s three main characters – Jack Joyce (as whom you'll be playing), Paul Serene and Beth Wilder – are each imbued with powerful time-warping capabilities. Paul Serene, for example, is able to see into the future to alter the present.

Not much is known about the game at present, but teaser footage shown so far reveals slick cover shooter-style mechanics, along with enemies and objects frozen in time while you're able to carry on at normal speed. Expect more details to arise from Gamescom 2014.



## Magicka 2

**DEVELOPER** > Pieces Interactive  
**PUBLISHER** > Paradox Interactive  
**GENRE** > Action RPG  
**RELEASE DATE** > TBA  
**PLATFORMS** > PC / PS4

*Magicka 2* will once again offer up the chance to use the game's brilliantly chaotic dynamic spellcasting system to unleash all manner of magical mayhem. It'll once again have a strong focus on cooperative play across all of its game modes, with up to four players traversing the hilariously unbalanced world of Midgård in order to vanquish evil. And maybe shoot each other in the face once or twice. With fireballs. Totally accidentally, of course.

You'll be able to combine up to five elements in order to discover thousands of spell combinations, and there'll be loads of robes, weapons and more to collect as you vanquish foes and zap friends with wayward friendly fire. New to the franchise are Artifacts, which

will allow players to customise the game's mechanics and add replayability.



## Skylanders: Trap Team

**DEVELOPER** > Toys for Bob  
**PUBLISHER** > Activision  
**GENRE** > Action  
**RELEASE DATE** > October 2014  
**PLATFORMS** > 360 / 3DS / PS3 / PS4 / Wii / Wii U / XBO

Parents: HIDE YOUR WALLETS. There's a new *Skylanders* arriving this year, subtitled *Trap Team*, and as you'd expect it's bringing with it a whole heap of new toys (there'll be 60 new figures to collect) and assorted doohickies at which to throw all your money. The biggest new feature in the game is the ability to capture *Skylanders* villains and trap them in new crystals that can be attached to the new Traptanium Portal that ships with the game's starter pack.

Each bad guy is associated with one of ten different elements. In order to trap a certain bad guy, you'll have to collect (i.e. spend money on) the crystal tied to the element with which they're associated. Once a villain is successfully trapped, you'll be able to play as that villain. In

addition, there are all new *Skylanders* to collect called Trap Masters. All *Skylanders* from the previous games will work with the new Traptanium Portal.





# GIGABYTE™

OWN THE **TECH.**  
**CONTROL**  
THE CITY.

GET *WATCH\_DOGS™* WHEN YOU  
PURCHASE GEFORCE® GTX™ 660 AND ABOVE.

NVIDIA  
GEFORCE®  
GTX



# WATCH DOGS

## GIGABYTE GTX TITAN BLACK

- POWERED BY NVIDIA GEFORCE GTX TITAN BLACK GPU
- INTEGRATED WITH INDUSTRY'S BEST 6GB GDDR5 MEMORY
- FEATURES DUAL-LINK DVI-I / DVI-D / HDMI / DISPLAYPORT
- BASE:889MHZ / BOOST:980 MHZ
- SYSTEM POWER SUPPLY REQUIREMENT: 600W



The easiest way to update your drivers, optimise your games, and share your victories. [www.geforce.com/geforce-experience](http://www.geforce.com/geforce-experience)



**rectron**

NATIONAL SALES CALL CENTRE: 0860 582 835

Alienware recommends Windows.

**ALIENWARE**  
GAME VICTORIOUS™



# UNCOMPROMISING PERFORMANCE.

(Adrenaline not included.)



## ALIENWARE X51

**R18,990** 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 HDD
- NVIDIA GeForce GTX 660 with 1.5GB GDDR5 Graphics
- Internal High-Definition 7.1 Performance Audio
- Alienware Multimedia Keyboard
- Alienware Optical Mouse
- 3 Year On-site Hardware Support
- Display Not Included



## ALIENWARE 14

**R25,999** 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" WLED FHD (1920 x 1080) Anti-Glare Display
- 16GB (1600MHz) Dual Channel DDR3L Memory
- 750GB (7,200RPM) SATA HDD + 64GB mSATA SSD
- NVIDIA GeForce GTX 765M with 2GB GDDR5 Graphics
- 5G WiFi Broadcom 4352 802.11n/ac & Bluetooth
- Full HD Camera
- Dual Layer Blu-ray Reader
- 3 Year On-site Hardware Support



## ALIENWARE 17

**R28,999** Each  
Incl. VAT

- 4th Gen Intel® Core™ i7-4700MQ Processor (6MB Cache, up to 3.4GHz w/ Turbo Boost Technology)
- Windows 8 Pro (64BIT)
- 17.3" WLED HD+ (1600 x 900) Anti-Glare Display
- 8GB (1600MHz) Dual Channel DDR3L Memory
- TTB (5400RPM) SATA HDD + 80GB mSATA SSD
- NVIDIA GeForce GTX 860M with 2GB GDDR5 Graphics
- 5G WiFi Broadcom 4352 802.11n/ac & Bluetooth
- Full HD Camera
- Slot-Loading 8x SuperMulti Drive (DVDR/RW)
- 3 Year On-site Hardware Support

6338051/ANWS/14G



AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [WWW.ALIENWARE.CO.ZA](http://WWW.ALIENWARE.CO.ZA)

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.

