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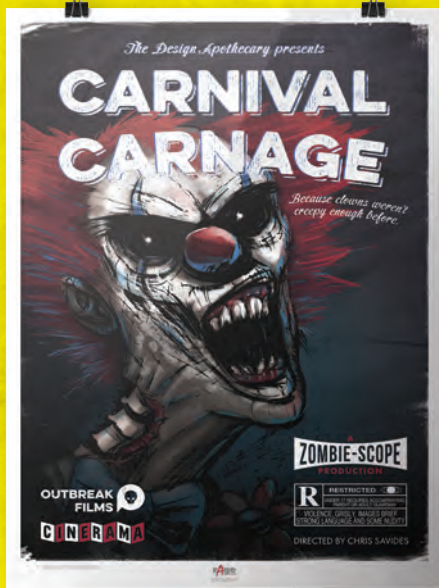
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www.zinio.com/nag
www.facebook.com/NAGMagazine
www.twitter.com/nagcoza

PRINTING

Impress Web Printers / 031 263 2755

DISTRIBUTION

On the Dot
Deven Pillay / 011 713 9185

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KID-PROOF GAMING

Children. Maybe you've got them. Maybe they occasionally walk in on you playing *GTA V*, and you're forced to awkwardly explain to them why you were doing such naughty things to those nice people. Maybe it's about time you encourage them to share in your favourite hobby. We'll help you with that.

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LEGO JURASSIC WORLD

Ian, FREEZE! Sure, it's got dinosaurs in it, but the best thing about *LEGO Jurassic World* is that it's given us an excuse to fill the magazine with *Jurassic Park* quotes. Excessive (and awesome) quotations aside, the game's looking quite lovely. Turn to page 52 to discover why.



Drivers

NVIDIA ForceWare 350.12 WHQL 32/64-bit

Extras

Cheatbook Database + updates
67 wallpapers

Videos

134 game trailers
2 GT Retrospectives
1 Pop Facts

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So you want to be a hero?



In this month's Reviews Intro question, I asked the team to name something from the gaming industry in the last three years that really stood out for them in a good way. While some of them found the question a bit challenging at first, I was chuffed with the variety of the answers. A few games, some big-picture concepts, gaming hardware, and even a simple moment. It helped me to remember that this industry, for all the headaches and controversy it attracts, is ultimately one that brings joy to its participants.

I remember the feeling of exhilaration that I felt when I first stepped outside of Midgar in *Final Fantasy VII*. I remember beating the Mage's Maze in *Quest for Glory*. I remember the thrill of taking my first Leap of Faith into a haystack in *Assassin's Creed*. Games are designed to reward their players, usually with happy feelings but sometimes with deep ones, or thought-provoking ideas. It's an incredible industry, really: despite big publishers being in this almost exclusively for the money, the end product – the goal of any game – is to make its players

"Perhaps not coincidentally, our cover feature this month is LEGO Jurassic World, which from everything we've seen is going to be tons of fun. I just hope that the film itself is as good as Chris Pratt's one-liners." “



feel enriched. It makes sense then why some games fail – they lose sight of that goal, they miss the point – and it makes sense why at times, some of the simplest games skyrocket to success. There are always other factors to take into account when these extremes happen, but at the end of the day, the most successful games are just that because, maybe just for a moment, they make their players feel like they're better off with the game than they were without it.

I'll masterfully segue that point to bring you right to our discussion of this copy of *NAG* in your hands, since this month's lifestyle feature is something a little different... getting your kids, younger siblings, or any young, nearby human into gaming. Now is the time! Strike while the iron is hot! Get those little sausage fingers of theirs bashing away at a gamepad, touchscreen, or keyboard, and before you know it, you might just have a new clan member.

Perhaps not coincidentally, our cover feature this month is *LEGO Jurassic World*, which from everything we've seen is going to be tons of fun. I just hope that the film itself is as good as Chris Pratt's one-liners.

In the reviews department, we have a number of big name games and a smattering of in-betweeners to keep things fresh and diverse. Obviously *Mortal Kombat X* is on everyone's minds (and after its showing at rAge last year, who can blame them?), and *Project Cars* looks like the game to play for anyone who enjoys motorsport simulation of all kinds, and even a few casual players. And of course there's our usual assortment of high-end hardware reviews for those tech-heads out there.

That's it from me for now, folks. I hope you enjoy this issue of *NAG* and, as always, please feel free to drop us a mail at letters@nag.co.za if there's anything on your mind.

Bye! **NAG**
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THIS MONTH'S PRIZE

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

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



Letter of the Month June 2015

FROM: BRANDON FOWLER
SUBJECT: WORLD OF GAMING

There are so many different kinds of game genres, you get your Shooters, Racers, Adventure/Exploration, but what I really want to see more of, especially on new gen, is Japanese Role Playing Games, you get your Final Fantasy games for sure but what about the one hit wonder ones? Such as Lost Odyssey, or Ni No Kuni, or even White Knight? These are such in depth games but we dont see them flying off the shelves each month with other new releases? Many of them are even unknown? I miss games with an average playthrough time of 30+hours without doing all the extras, lately gaming has just become about graphics and how fast it can run the frame rate, there is no where near as much work put in. Developers know their games will sell as long as it has the major Blockbuster title in it such as Need for Speed or Call of Duty. But there is no more originality, no more characters that you fall in love with and grow that bond with, no more waking up early on your day off just to play that one special game to see "what's gonna happen next" I

hope to see the world of gaming return to its former self. I'm not saying that gaming at present isnt enjoyably one hell of an experience but it loses its novelty when all you are looking for is the best graphics for the best bragging rights, why not make something that the player can dive into and play day after day like almost every JRPG on the market. If that could happen I believe that gaming would become much more enjoyable and worth the hefty price tag that comes along with the Hobby.

I disagree with the notion that today's games don't have a lot of work put into them. Heck, even poor Resident Evil 6 was made by over 600 people from across the globe. If they were doing nothing then I want one of those jobs. Or not, you know, because then I'd have Resi 6 under my belt. Either way: lots of work goes into making modern games, it just so happens that the vast majority of it is spent on visuals, engine-side operations, and making things pop when marketing people yell at programmers that they want things to pop! More particles! More bloom!

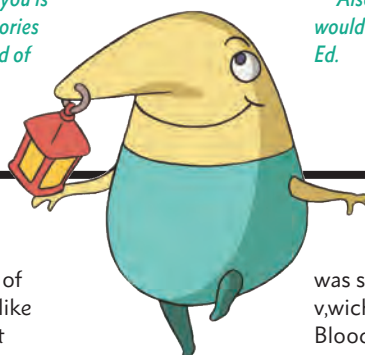
Where I whole-heartedly agree with you is with the idea that characters and the stories they tell are given the severely short end of

"... there is no more originality, no more characters that you fall in love with..."



the stick these days. It seems like every game out there is trying to sell the main character or a handful of main characters, without bothering to make the world in which they live feel real, with interesting supporting roles. Some of the most intriguing characters I've ever encountered in games have been on the side-line, because they were given their own story to tell, their own life and job and reason for getting up in the morning. That's the sort of story-telling you find in JRPGs, and I'm happy to see someone else who enjoys them for what they are.

Also, yes please, a sequel to Ni No Kuni would be the business. Let's make that happen! Ed.



FROM: Danie Wolmarans
SUBJECT: Bloodborne.The work of satan?

Before you think,dammit not this crap again.Im not saying Bloodborne is the work of satan.This is a cry for help.I usually dont play these types of games,but I decided to give Bloodborne a try.This weekend while I was playing, my old man(hope it means dad) decided to watch.After about an hour my he got angry and

started shouting,"Satan.The work of satan!"(Not really,but something like that.)I tried to explain that it's just a game,but he wouldn't listen.Im a Afrikaans Christian and I dont no if it is the same with english Christians,but Afrikaans people always take things out of context.I was also like that. Never playing such games,calling it the work of the devil.I was completely wrong.It is such a good game,how many games have I missed because I

was stupid?I believe a game like gta v,wich I also play,is much worse than Bloodborne.I mean you massacre virtual people for fun who do nothing to you and they swear like its going out of fashion.I dont know what to do.How can I convince my dad that its not that bad?What do you think I should do,what is your opinion on the matter?Should you look at games in a religious way or should you just play the game because its fun and forget



about its religious motives. Please reply, you don't have to publish the letter, just reply. I would really like to know what you think.

Oh but I do have to publish your letter. It's too good to pass up.

Step 1 for absolution: Learn how to use punctuation. It will serve you well.

Step 2: How old are you? That's not really a step, just me thinking out loud that you probably shouldn't be playing Bloodborne or GTA, but I guess we've all been there so I can't lecture.

Step 3: The actual step: Stop confusing religion and gaming. They're very different things. I don't think there are any proper games (maybe some weirdo ones) that promote any sort of religion, let alone Satanism. It's just not a thing.

This reminds me of the time when my geography teacher in grade 9 confiscated all of our Magic: The Gathering cards because she thought they were the work of the devil. I've gone through this stuff countless times, and it's always caused by ignorance.

To prove your dad wrong, do some research, put forward a case showing the differences between Bloodborne and the real teachings of Satanism. Your dad will be so shocked and appalled that this knowledge is so easily available that he'll soon forget all about the supposedly evil games that you play. Just don't blame us if you get sent off to some sort of camp for bad children. Ed.

FROM: Jarod Gratz

SUBJECT: DLC previews ?

Firstly sorry if I sent this to the wrong place I'm a new NAGer so its not my fault. Secondly, have you ever thought about doing a section on DLC previews/reviews. I only suggest this as some DLCs can add a whole new dimension to the game itself and its a shame these don't get their own column. I honestly love this magazine but at times I think that there could be a bit more meat to it, so to speak. PS: have you guys ever thought of your own callsign or whatever its called like 'NAGers assemble' or something, that would be pretty cool.

It's something that we've considered before, but I'm of the mind that I'd rather review full games, or at the very least episodic content, than dribs and drabs of DLC. Maybe this is something that we could incorporate in the future, though, like our mini reviews. Thanks for the nudge, we'll definitely think about it!

We've had many lengthy discussions on the idea of a warcry, or a callsign as you call it. Between the everyday concerns that we have running a company that comprises a magazine, expo, and multiple websites, the warcry has occupied at least 50% of our time. Currently the best bet that we've got is shouting out the

ON THE FORUMS

When times are tough, when your dog looks bored at you and your significant other rolls their eyes every time you tell them about pwning some noob in whatever, you know it's time to reach out to a community of like-minded, helpful, and spiritually fulfilled individuals. When you find them, let us know, but for now you should join us at www.nag.co.za/forums

Q What was the last game that you gave up on, and why?

Metro Last Light. I lost interest in the game because I started to find it really repetitive. - Sylar_dl

Assassins creed IV Black flag: I really hated those sea missions it just annoyed me - Infamous_Killer

Every Zelda game ever. Because we all know he's going to save the princess one way or the other. - Incognito

Wasteland 2. I can't proceed with the quests and I saved over my previous saves. ./ - Nferno

word "BANANA" at random times, usually accompanied with flinging real bananas at people. It's working for us for the most part, but it does bring on some odd looks. "NAGers assemble" has some potential; I'll bring it to the next board meeting and we'll toss it around for good measure. Thanks for the suggestion. Ed

FROM: Dillan Lawless

SUBJECT: Gaming schools

I just read a letter in the latest issue of NAG about someone asking about Game Design courses/degrees. Just thought I should add that you can take game design at Open Window in Irene (as a subject for 3 years as part of a degree or as a 1 year course) as well as the wits/UCT/learn 3D options. Also, at Open Window, subjects like animation can be taken as well. This may suit the people who don't feel like doing electrical engineering at wits (which I did last year and it was super difficult) or computer science at UCT but still want to learn how to make games in their entirety.

Thanks for letting us know, and to everyone else, please feel free to let us know about any similar courses that you learn about. Education being the key to your future and all that good stuff.

Good luck with your course! Ed.

FROM: Willem Truter

SUBJECT: Gaming guides...I need more

I'll first do the usual by saying your magazine is amazing, please keep up the good work?! Now coming to the reason for my letter - the exo zombies game guide in your May issue. I loved it very very very much....even though I have never played exo zombies before it got me excited to go and fire up the old black ops 2 zombie mode in all its terrifying glory. Being a New Age Gamer I never really experienced the joy of buying physical copies of guidebooks and I have to make use of (only as a very last resort) online FAQ's or game guides when I get stuck...but reading your guide with all the pretty pictures and hints and such is just so satisfying. To get to my point, could you please make this a monthly thing? With variations like secrets in RPG's or hidden facts only you glorious people at NAG know? Thanks for taking the time to read this.

Thanks, I'm glad that you enjoyed it! We did something similar aaaages ago for the original Call of Duty zombies mode, so this was long overdue.

Strategy guides are funny things, though, because they become outdated quite quickly.

Fan art

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.



▶ **PIETER DE LA REY,**
“Hey this is a picture that I drew to kill some time while waiting for the coming Star Wars game. Hope you guys enjoy it.”



This month's prize courtesy of Prima Interactive is *Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare* for Xbox One.



Heck, even now we're already playing the new map in Exo Zombies. But your suggestion is definitely worth noting, and I'll bear it in mind for the next game that's suitable for these sorts of things. Ed.

FROM: Darren Goosen
SUBJECT: PC vs Consoles

I just want to start my letter by saying, great mag and keep up the fantastic work. My letter is not another one of those silly arguments about which is better between PC's and consoles but rather just to say that many gamers I know (myself included) love both and could not imagine our lives without either of them. The fact that I can sit down for a few hours in front of my monitor pwning some sad noobs in Dota 2 and a few minutes later be logged in to Destiny on my playstation for a raid is the greatest feeling. So basically, stop the hate and game on!

Hey, watch your mouth, I'm probably one of those sad noobs that you've pwned without even batting an eye!

It's cool that you've found your balance in life, I can appreciate that. Some people are just going to lean one way or the other, though, whether it comes down to their upbringing or the feel of a gamepad or mouse in their hands. Different strokes and all that. It's the hating that's really quite silly, though – anyone who takes this “PC master race, console peasants” thing seriously needs a wakeup call.

So, right on, let's spread some love and unite all gamers. Ed.

FROM: gazryan69
SUBJECT: May 2015 NAG mag
Just spent 5 min on your latest edition of NAG. Not impressed. What was once a fine magazine is now only a pitiful excuse for a gaming magazine. Take a leaf out of the UK and USA gaming magazines. NAG has way too few game reviews. Not enough content. Raise your price and add decent reviews and screenshots. How about a NAG television production in future? Just saying. G.

Thanks for your well-constructed and poignant criticism. We always take such eloquent feedback into consideration. Sure, we'll try to replicate the UK and US-based magazines, which operate in completely different markets and under almost impossibly distinct circumstances, and see how that goes. Sadly, raising the price of the magazine to cover the printing costs that you're talking about is a sure way to shoot ourselves in the foot, I'm afraid. Not sure how many people would be willing to spend a hundred bucks (or more, who knows) for shinier paper. There's probably a balance out there somewhere, but for now, we'll keep scraping by with our pitiful excuse for a magazine.

Thanks for your interest, though; I know deep down that haters only hate because they care. Ed.

THE SHORTS

“Please proofread and spell-check your letters before sending them in. As you are polluting the minds of readers that the NAG team so diligently tries to keep clean”

- *Brian Akerman*

“I want the game and hardware developers and publishers to remember that gaming without the people actually playing the games is nothing”

- *Angelo Philippides*

“Those of us who are HAPPY and SUCCESSFUL at it above the age of 25 is actually a rare breed”

- *Chris Pit*

 **ON TWITTER**
@nagcoza

T-Man

Ending off my sunday night with @nagcoza :D

Brian Akerman

Can @nagcoza please add "Remember to spell-check and proof read" somewhere easily visible for those whom write in? >_<

Lushano

@nagcoza Thanks for the #Bioshock Big Sister poster! I've always wanted one.

The Techno Jedi's

@nagcoza You guys are the shizniz.. Amped for the next issue ;)

say 1st_JESUS

From next month I will embark on my new nerd journey of buying @nagcoza everytime till I die...lol, I just love games.

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EXPOSURE FOR SOUTH AFRICAN INDIE DEVELOPERS

BY RODAIN JOUBERT

When Rodain isn't writing about game development, he's doing it. With years of experience in the local community and the critically acclaimed *Desktop Dungeons* under his belt, he's at least 50% confident that he's not talking entirely out of his ass.



WHEN MAGIC ISN'T ENOUGH ...

Collectible card games (or CCGs) have always enjoyed prominence in gamer culture. If you don't play them yourself, you probably know someone who does, and this overlap of interests paves the way for successful CCGs in the digital realm, like with Blizzard's *Hearthstone*.

Digital card games are, in short, pretty damn great. It's hard to match the tactile satisfaction and personality of a real-life table-top confrontation, to be sure, but any veteran can tell you that the speed and convenience of playing on a digital device is phenomenal. Clumsy piles of tapped cards and 1/1 swarms are a thing of the past when all draws, calculations and updates can be handled instantly. You get to focus on game interactions and meaningful decisions instead of, well, constant chores.

And perhaps the most potent advantage of all is the ready supply of opponents it provides. Even if you live in the small hamlet of Effing Nowhere, where playing CCGs is considered a sinful indulgence (and punished by righteous bouts of reed-flogging in the Old Statue Square), you can still sneak in a few minutes at a time with your favourite device and find people from around the world interested in similarly depraved activities. It's like Tinder for card games.

The transition doesn't always feel perfect or natural, to be fair – games designed for play in the “real world” can feel a bit clunky when they move to PC, often because they'll come loaded

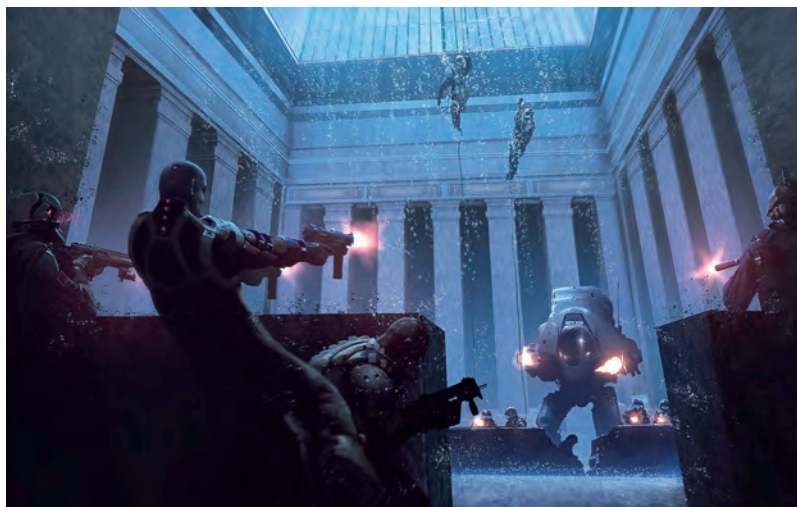
with some unnecessary interactions. These are extra tasks, design decisions or tokens that make the game possible to play without a digital game master, but can seem tedious to players who generally only experience video games (“All this finicky manual mana tapping? What for? Ugh.”).

In a more show-stopping way, moving the game to digital can even *limit* it, as special cases and exotic cards can break the system or require a great deal of attention and planning. If this is unsuccessful, the game becomes less spontaneous, more boring. And staying loyal to the portrayal of cards can mean extra restrictions on the UI if one is not careful.

So in many ways, a game like Alderac Entertainment Group's *Thunderstone* is still far more satisfying when you play it around a table with friends.

But then you get the sort of card games that are built for digital first – and things get a lot more exciting. Suddenly, you're allowed to design a game which tracks a lot of information “for free”: a vital part of combat in *Hearthstone*, for example, is the ability to keep track of minion injuries in a large army. While this is a relatively mundane idea for a computer-based game, classic CCG aficionados will instantly recognise how that would turn into a nightmare of -1 tokens and *mathematics* (shudder) if the same game were ever to be played in a physical space.

This realisation alone opens up a lot of design opportunities for people wanting to go somewhere new with the genre, and makes the play area of digital CCGs something that can genuinely be considered vital, fruitful and *absolutely unique*.





"It's the sort of experience that absolutely devours your time and lets you enjoy everything that's great about CCGs before you even start to think about human opponents."



And our local game developers are right on board with that.

Gareth Fouche is a Durban-based programmer working on *System Crash*, a digital cyberpunk CCG inspired by the likes of *Magic: The Gathering* and *Netrunner*. Nearly four years in development (with a full release coming soon), the game takes immediate and regular advantage of its own digital nature, pushing for something that's both familiar and different.

Having already sunk considerable time into one of the earlier builds, I've found it to be a clever design which produces elegant "deck personalities". Optimising, building and experimenting feels great too, which is of course vital in any self-respecting game of its genre. But the whole shebang also has a pretty heavy focus on story-telling, with deep single-player experiences full of campaign missions and plots featuring the characters in your card decks.

Fouche explains that this separates it from most CCG giants, which tend to go in hard with instant multiplayer action – adding maybe a handful of training bots as a side thought. With *System Crash*, one finds an incredibly satisfying single-player aspect coming forward instead, featuring lots of carefully tailored (and narrated) AI encounters.

It's the sort of experience that absolutely devours your time and lets you enjoy everything that's great about CCGs before you even start to think about human opponents. And it's also indicative of Fouche's love for RPGs and storytelling in general. As he puts it, "My main goal for myself is to build a career that lets me spend my days thinking about and building fictional worlds."

His pie-in-the-sky game dev dream would be something of a mix between *Deus Ex*, *Morrowind* and *Baldur's Gate II*.

The development process has not been an easy one, however. Originally setting aside resources for a full-time project, Fouche believed his ambitions to be relatively well-measured at the beginning. Building a card game felt much more feasible than a fully-realised RPG. But even with his experience in software development, he underestimated the time and effort that it would take and eventually moved to working on it in his spare time instead. In the meantime, he earns income from game development contracts with Luma Animation.

A passionate indie at heart, he's not easily deterred by slow progress. Years of professional development have taught him to see things through to the end, and *System Crash* is no exception. He shares thoughts of expansions and work after release, even as he discusses the financial and emotional difficulties of seeing this project through. He doesn't expect the game to take the world by storm – what he does hope for, however, is a modest success within the niche he's carving out, resonating with groups of players that value the same experiences as he does.

A little under four years ago, when his work started, this idea may have been very far away for a South African developer. But in the time since then, the local scene has grown phenomenally and includes several success stories relating to physical card and board games – so maybe now is the right time to see something like *System Crash* firing up and hitting the market.

If you're interested in keeping track of the final development stages (and getting notified when the game comes out), you can swing by www.systemcrashgame.com for more information and – when it's ready – a polished public demo.

Early test versions have been a delight to play, so if you're interested in CCGs – or just any well-crafted narrative married with smooth game design, loads of content and a fertile playspace – you should definitely consider picking this one up. **NAG**

Devon has been in the gaming industry for over eight years, with his roots in South Africa, he was recently picked up as the Export PR manager at 2K games in the United Kingdom. He loves to LAN and be with like-minded gamers as well as being on stage shouting to a crowd. *[And using PowerPoint presentations to slowly kill members of the press. Ed].*



GUEST COLUMN

BY DEVON STANTON

PULL OUT YOUR MAP AND HAVE A LOOK AT THE BIGGER PICTURE

I sat down to watch a movie called *Video Games: The Movie* – it's a great documentary on the history of video games, where the industry came from, how it evolved, how it crashed, and where it could possibly go. It's great because it gives perspective on the video games industry that I feel often gets ignored or forgotten, and I highly recommend watching it.

I bring this up because there seems to be a lot of chatter/banter/ranting amongst gamers. We've all had that conversation, once all the pent-up anger and frustration is brought upon an announcement of a patch that needs to happen on day one. The immediate sentiment is "lazy developers" or "greedy publishers" or some other rather colourful phrases. We quickly turn to reminisce of the "good ol' days" to help alleviate all that argumentative stress and take a moment to applaud the past where "everything was just better". The blame often gets shoved in the direction of the development studios with an ignorant cry of "what's happened to the days when games were complete on-shelf?"

Maybe it's because my time spent in the industry has given me a seat behind the curtain, to meet the people behind some of the greatest games, but it boils my blood that gamers jump to these conclusions. It's ignorant and without understanding; it's a statement that's blinded by assumption and misdirected frustration. I get it, you're angry that you now have to download gigs of updates and patches, but really what did you expect? There isn't a single piece of software out there that doesn't require patching post launch, and it's worth considering that video games have far more to implement than just bytes of data. "But the size, Devon, it's enormous! (that's what she said) And it's going to take DAYS to get the patch to download!" It's at this point that I think, are we not blaming the wrong people?

Gaming is a medium that is growing in leaps and bounds and constantly pushing the boundaries of what's possible on systems these days. Game engines are evolving into something bigger and better, giving us more immersive gaming experiences that challenge our thinking and reflexes and providing an escape that's getting closer to reality each day. With all this fantastic development it's understandable that somewhere along the line there's going to be a bottleneck. South Africa's bottleneck? Why, our beloved Internet, and our location. That's an argument for another day, we can only hope that the infrastructure just gets better and starts to play catch up on what's happening in the gaming industry.

Take a step back, take note, and try to understand where we're going and what we need to get there. Here's another example of technology taking leaps and bounds and the world rejecting it. Microsoft introduces the Xbox One... and you know what? They did it right the first time they

announced it, yes I said it. They. Were. Right. Unfortunately it seems, the world wasn't ready for what they had on offer, or maybe it was more to do with the fact that the world didn't fully understand what Microsoft was delivering. Either way, a poor delivery and explanation is what really ended this once exciting and what I think could've been a revolutionary way to experience games.

"Change is the law of life. Those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future." - John F. Kennedy

Now it's up to you to take a step back and have a look at how incredible this industry has become, it's still young and growing. Mistakes will be made, but every mistake no matter how big a step back, is still a step forward. If you're thinking that it does not change the fact that the games shouldn't get patched on day of release, then you're not understanding my message. That day has come and gone, we're no longer held down by the shackles of a disconnected medium. Staying up to date gives us a more solid platform for future and for continued developments, a foundation for newer games with better structure.

Take a minute to think about how iterations of games are always being made slightly better with engines like Unreal, CryEngine, or Dunia. These are all engines that continuously undergo modification to create more streamlined data consumption to give you a better gaming experience. As developers continue to understand the hardware they can find better ways to manipulate the inner workings of it, and bring you updates so that you can have a better gaming experience.

So the next time you want to think about how great the old days were, and they certainly were fantastic old days but they're nothing more than good ol' memories and lessons of how we got here, remember that they are beyond comparison to what is available and what is demanded of studios by the fans. Maybe for now we need to figure a way to better our own circumstance to be more prepared for our future gaming experiences. **NAG**



Disney Infinity 3.0 revealed

And it's bringing Star Wars along with it



After months of rumours and two online retailer leaks, Disney Interactive has finally taken the wraps off *Disney Infinity 3.0*. Front and centre of the new game is the *Star Wars* franchise, which Walt Disney Studios acquired in full back in 2012. There will be three *Star Wars* Play Sets on offer, each tying in with the three trilogies in the series.

The *Disney Infinity 3.0* Starter Pack will ship with the *Twilight of the Republic* Play Set, which follows story missions set in the prequel trilogy of films. Figures of Anakin Skywalker and his padawan Ahsoka Tano will be included in the starter pack. With Ahsoka being included you can expect some tie-ins with the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* cartoon series. Additional characters (sold separately) for the prequel trilogy set are Obi-Wan, Yoda, and Darth Maul.

An original trilogy Play Set will also be made available alongside the game's launch. This *Rise Against the Empire* Play Set will include figures of Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia. Joining them will be Han Solo, Chewbacca, and Darth Vader.

A number of space ships and vehicles have been confirmed for the game, including the *Millennium Falcon*, X-wings, pod racers, and speeder bikes.

In addition to the *Star Wars* theme for *Disney Infinity 3.0*, collectible figures of Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Sam Flynn and Quorra from *Tron: Legacy*, *Mulan* and *Frozen's* Olaf have also been revealed.

The game will be hitting PC, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Wii U, Xbox 360, and Xbox One sometime in September to November here in South Africa.

“For years, I have wanted to continue exploring and refining this genre. Publishers of the world told me that gamers no longer care for this style of game. But I know they are wrong!”

- Koji Igarashi on his *Castlevania* spiritual successor, *Bloodstained*



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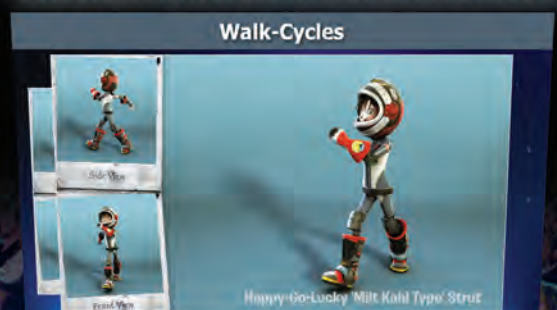
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Miklós once ate an entire wheel of cheese without telling anyone. He began in the morning with good intentions and a box of crackers, but by the end, there was nothing good left in him. Only cheese.



PIXEL FIX

BY MIKLÓS SZECSEI

JUST PLAY WHATEVER MAKES YOU HAPPY

When you're next online, try this experiment: head onto any video game website and browse the comments sections. Try to find articles on *Star Wars Battlefront*, *Batman: Arkham Knight*, or *The Witcher 3* (I'm writing this a mere week before *Witcher 3* launches, and currently every article is about the alleged "downgrading" of the game's visuals or how the Xbox One version doesn't run at a fixed 1080p). If you're feeling brave you could even head onto the gaming subreddits, but you're on your own with that one; abandon all hope etcetera etcetera. Do this experiment and you'll notice a trend: people are generally very unhappy about video games.

If we jumped back two years and browsed comments on the articles pertaining to leaked internal footage of the long-lost game *Star Wars: Battlefront III*, you'd be reading comments by people lamenting the fact that the game had been canned. There'd be comments *longing* for the title's revival; for ANY publisher to pick up the ball that Lucasarts had dropped. Now that we're finally getting a new *Star Wars Battlefront*, the gaming collective seems to be going through its normal routine: "We want this cancelled game SO BADLY! Hooray, we're getting this game! Oh emm gee DICE better not screw this up. We better not be getting a re-skinned *Battlefield*! How can they have dropped features XYZ?! Why aren't there fixed soldier classes and squads? Gah! This game will be awful and I hate you, EA."

I find it disconcerting how people moaned that *Star Wars Battlefront* was going to be a re-skinned *Battlefield*, and then when DICE went out of their way to ensure that the game wasn't a re-skinned *Battlefield*, people started moaning that they'd dropped features that would have made it... a re-skinned *Battlefield*.

There's this growing tendency to write off games before they've even launched. *Batman: Arkham Knight* went from being the poster child for "Anticipated Games" to being excommunicated garbage the moment a season pass was mentioned. Hey, you notice how CD Projekt RED got, like, zero uphill when they announced *their* season pass for *The Witcher 3*? Or how their day one patch was given a free pass? Maybe it has something to do with CD Projekt's wording on such things? *The Witcher 3* is getting an "Expansion Pass", and their day one patch wasn't "because we need it, but because we want it to be the best it can be when it reaches your hands". News flash: that's why any game gets a day one patch. Oh gaming industry, you capricious strumpet you.

Here's the thing: not everything is going to go your way when it comes to video games and this industry, but condemning games before they're even out is quintessential nose-to-spite-face stuff. You have a choice NOT to play games; if everything really is awful then just go back to whichever version of a game you think got things right, and just be happy. Just play whatever makes you happy. You might end up living longer.

Batman: Arkham Knight season pass detailed

The DLC this city deserves

WB Games has come under criticism recently after their announcement of DLC and season pass plans for *Batman: Arkham Knight*. Priced at \$40 (around R480), the season pass means that if you want to experience everything that *Arkham Knight* has to offer, be prepared to cough up \$100 (R1,200).

This staggeringly high price was met with some backlash, but WB were quick to reveal the contents of their pass. The most prominent so far being the playable debut of Batgirl, who will be the star of her own prequel story titled *Batgirl: A Matter of Family*. Set in a new location, the expansion will let you play as Batgirl an unspecified time before being crippled and becoming Oracle.

Beyond Batgirl, the season pass was also announced to have new skins, story missions, classic designs for the Batmobile, additional story missions, and more challenge maps.

WB Games also announced that Batman would be joined by Robin, Nightwing, and Catwoman in the main game, and a feature called "Dual Play" will allow gamers to seamlessly switch between them to allow for some epic battles.

Batman: Arkham Knight is due for release on June 23rd for PC, PS4, and Xbox One, and the season pass content is expected to be released over the course of the next six months.



SEGA is doing some housecleaning with its mobile catalogue

SEGA has stated on their official blog that several of their mobile titles no longer meet their standard of approval and shall be removed from purchase in short order. These include games on Google Play and the iTunes store, as well as the Amazon and Samsung app stores. SEGA has remained somewhat vague on this one, not mentioning the exact criteria for their new approval system. They've also not yet stated which titles exactly will be falling under the axe, though they have promised that certain titles could one day return "in an updated form". The company has also assured players that any previously purchased titles will remain in their library regardless of removal, and will continue to be available for them even if they use a newer device. Unfortunately, removed titles will no longer receive any further updates, meaning they'll eventually be obsolete in future versions of mobile OSes.



Star Wars Battlefront will feature 12 multiplayer maps at launch



Well, we've pretty much said all we need to say in the headline, haven't we? One of those maps will be set on the volcanic planet Sullust, which is mentioned in the *Star Wars* films but never actually shown. Inspired by real-world Iceland (and members of the dev team actually travelled there for reference photos and inspiration), DICE's plans for the planet involve lots of sulphur, mining structures, sharp rocks, turquoise lakes, white smoke and HOT LAVA.

In addition to the 12 multiplayer maps, *Battlefront* will feature other locations as part of its "Battlefront Missions", which can be played solo or cooperatively, offline with bots or online with other humans. *Star Wars Battlefront* is due November 17th.

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By day a TV producer, by night a mom, a gamer, and a writer. In fact she does too many damn things for her own good.



THE GAME STALKER

BY PIPPA TSHABALALA

THE COLLECTOR

Everyone collects something. Perhaps it's sneakers. Perhaps it's comics. Perhaps it's ceramic cats. And perhaps it's really expensive collector's editions of video games. Sometimes ones that you already own.

I know people who collect things. Ok maybe not ceramic cats, but certainly I know people who collect sneakers and collector's editions. I have both of these things, and interestingly I own way more of the former than the latter, which considering the number of video games I own, is rather unusual when I think about it logically.

Honestly I don't own a huge number of collector's editions myself, because much like gaming tattoos, there are very few games that I love THAT much to want to spend quite so much money on.

And let's face it, when a game for a console costs almost a thousand rand on its own, the additional paraphernalia included in a collector's edition comes at quite a price.

So is it worth it? Of the very few collector's editions I own, I must admit that the quality more than justifies the cost. I don't generally make a habit of these because as any parent will know, when the game is the same price as your kid's monthly school fees then it seems somewhat extravagant. That said, in the spirit of my birthday month, and well, just because I love it so much, my latest purchase is the collector's edition of *The Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt* which in addition to the regular game contains the following:

- The soundtrack to the game (which I won't deny, I really love. I have the soundtrack to all three games and I often play them in the background when I'm working).
- The Witcher Universe Compendium (it's like a lore book with all the monsters, etc. How awesome?).
- The in-game world map (I love maps. I mean I really love maps).
- *Witcher* stickers (more awesomeness although I'll probably never stick them on anything and then they'll just be stored somewhere "safe").
- A protective sleeve (ok, in the spirit of honesty, I don't really care about that one. There has to be at least one dud in a CE).
- A giant statue of Geralt fighting a Griffin. (AMAZING! THE BEST PART OF THIS ENTIRE PACKAGE! I SAY THIS IN CAPS BECAUSE I'M THAT EXCITED!).
- A Witcher medallion (Shhh! I may just wear it under my shirt. And hope it vibrates when monsters are nearby. Let me live my fantasy. Shhh!).
- Steelbook (yeah it looks cool but ok don't really care about that either. They dent easily).
- 200 page art book. (SECOND BEST THING ABOUT THIS PACKAGE!).
- Huge *Witcher* Collector's Box. (I need somewhere to keep my stuff. Everyone needs a cool box. Don't judge me).

So back to quality versus cost. Most of the time, we're talked into buying gaming paraphernalia that we don't need. And sure, I don't need this to enrich my life. But I want it. To make me warm and fuzzy inside.

Finally! A new Descent game gets our hopes flying

Everyone's favourite six-degrees-of-freedom shooter is set to return next year



Descent. Now there's a name we've not heard in ages. Chances are, if you were a PC gamer in the mid-1990s, you had a copy of this seminal hybrid between a flight sim and a first-person shooter. Now, after a number of years lying dormant in the wake of some forgettable sequels and spin-offs, we're finally going to be treated to the next entry in the series called *Descent: Underground*. Beginning life as a spiritual successor to the first game, it wasn't long before it drew the attention of the original development team who decided to pick it up and make it official. The game has since been put on Kickstarter and its goals were reached, albeit just barely. The team is still asking for pledges on their official webpage, which will help ensure that the stretch goals are met. The game will include a single-player campaign, multiplayer support and even customisable ships. The screenshots currently available suggest a far gloomier and less claustrophobic setting than the previous games, invoking an almost gritty *Star Wars* feel. *Descent: Underground* will use Unreal Engine 4 and is scheduled to be released in March of 2016. The original series of games is still available on Steam, so we suggest you try 'em out in the meantime to see what all the fuss is about.

“I'm angry. I'm super angry. My wife is barely talking to me now, because she lost a million gold coins.”

- Peter Molyneux, co-founder of Bullfrog Productions

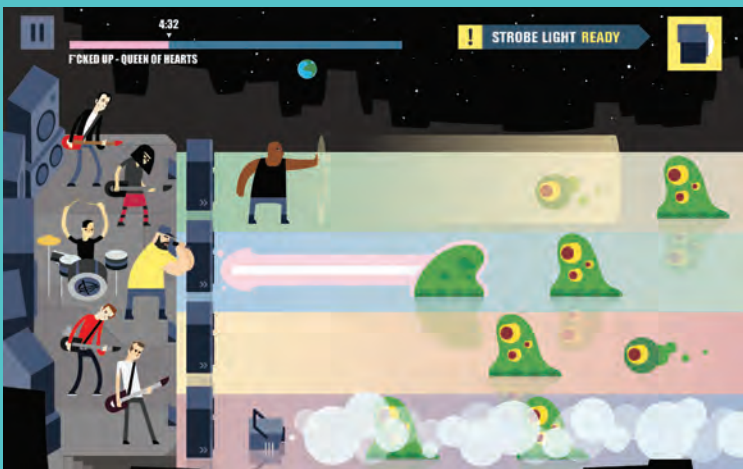


Nintendo ponders removing regional lockouts

Nintendo, notorious for the region-locking mechanisms that are integrally built into its consoles and handhelds, are considering relenting from the practice in its future devices. The statement was made by Nintendo president Satoru Iwata during an investor question and answer session following the company's latest earnings report. While Iwata claimed that removing locking from their current systems isn't an option (though he didn't elaborate as to the exact reasons why), he said that they're investigating the possibility for their upcoming system, which is currently codenamed the NX. It's also worth noting that, for the first time in four years, the company has announced that it has turned a profit, three-quarters of which is from outside of Japan. Thus, it's entirely possible that Iwata sees that abolishing region-locking makes sense both as a demand from loyalists and as a financial practice. We can hope, but as usual only time will tell.



Guitar Hero vs. Zombies



Loud on Planet X is a two-dimensional music/rhythm game which charges you with defending your stage from an onslaught of quirky aliens. It's a self-described mixture of *Plants vs. Zombies* and *Rock Band / Guitar Hero*, challenging you to play to the beat of the music and deploy an arsenal of musically charged weaponry and special attacks (like fog machines, strobe lights, bouncers and speakers) to keep your tunes flowing. The game's promising 24 tracks from 12 world-renowned indie performers (like Metric, Tegan & Sara, Cadence Weapon and July Talk), but more will be added if its Kickstarter campaign meets its stretch goals. There'll be 28 single-player levels and competitive leaderboards, and the game's expected to land on PSN (PS4 and Vita), Steam, iOS and Android later this year. Xbox and Wii U are on the cards as well, depending on the success of the Kickstarter.

Don't worry... we got this





Finally! Oculus Rift has a release date

Virtual reality company Oculus VR has finally announced that the consumer version of their VR headset, the Oculus Rift, will begin shipping within the first quarter of 2016. Pre-orders for the device will open towards the end of this year, but at time of writing no price had been specified. That being said, Oculus vice president of product, Nate Mitchell, has stated that the final unit will be “a little bit more expensive” than the Gear VR headset that Samsung and Oculus collaborated on. That mobile-powered headset retails for \$200. Our guess: expect around \$300, or about R3,600.

Portal is coming to LEGO Dimensions

Valve's *Portal* franchise is getting the LEGO treatment and will be appearing in upcoming toys-to-life game *LEGO Dimensions*. Originally appearing on a listing on Walmart's online store, the *Portal* add-on set was seen alongside numerous other franchises. A few days later an instruction manual from the *Back to the Future LEGO Dimensions* add-on set listed the same sets as those that appeared on Walmart's store. We now know that alongside *Portal 2*, *LEGO Dimensions* will see add-on packs featuring crossover IP deals with *The Simpsons*, *Dr. Who*, *Scooby Doo*, and *Jurassic World*.

Total War: Warhammer unveiled

SEGA and developer Creative Assembly have finally announced *Total War: Warhammer*. The game was rumoured to be coming for the last few months now thanks to a “leak” via an unintentional mentioning of the title in a *Total War* art book. The game will feature real-time battles as well as the traditional, *Total War* turn-based campaign map. A pre-rendered reveal trailer confirmed a number of *Warhammer* races (there are 12 in the table-top game as of the 8th edition) as making an appearance in the game: The Empire, Vampire Counts, Orcs and Goblins, and the Dwarfs. Chaos was also hinted at.

Black Ops III channels its inner Titanfall, Deus Ex

A barrage of info on the next Call of Duty



Call of Duty: *Black Ops III* is officially a thing to look forward to, and it seems to draw loads of inspiration from games like *Titanfall* for its movement model and *Deus Ex* for its cyborg-obsessed storyline. Its narrative takes place in the future of 2065, during a time when augmented supersoldiers are all the rage and the world's population is torn between those who support cybernetic enhancements and those who'll do anything to see humans retain their humanity. We've seen this storyline covered elsewhere, and it's definitely looking like a brasher, more action-packed vision of *Deus Ex* – but it looks like a ton of fun nonetheless. It'll also feature four-player co-op and customisable characters (in terms of gender, appearance and abilities), and it promises to be far less linear – although we'll believe that when we see it.

The new movement mechanics are the main source of excitement. Expanding on the increased verticality of *Advanced Warfare*, *Black Ops III* features enhanced power-sliding, unlimited sprinting, wall-running and jetpacks that replace the exo-suits. The idea is to give you even more

freedom of movement than was already available in the previous game, letting you chain together movements and abilities to quickly traverse the map and dominate your opponents. *Black Ops III*'s Pick 10 perk system will return, and weapons this time promise an even greater variety of customisation options.

Multiplayer is also being changed up with the addition of Specialists, a pool of nine characters each with a unique backstory: players can commit to playing a specific specialist and using their abilities/weapons for the duration of a map, providing matches with a bit more personality. One of the Specialists is a robot called Reaper, for example, whose arm can transform into a mini-gun mid-battle. Outrider wields a bow with explosive arrows, and has an ability which lets her see through walls. The better you perform, the more often you'll be able to use these powerful abilities. As with the solo campaign, players can customise the looks of their soldiers, including the Specialists.

And in case you're wondering: yes, there will be a zombie mode.

Assassin's Creed Syndicate announced

Consider yourself part of the family



The next main entry in Ubisoft's action-adventure franchise, previously codenamed "Victory", has been officially announced and detailed.

Assassin's Creed Syndicate takes place in London during the Industrial Revolution, specifically 1868, and will follow the story of Evie and Jacob Frye as they attempt to rid the city of the Templar's control. The pair are siblings, and *Syndicate* marks the first playable female in a main *AC* game.

Gameplay will involve the Fryes running and growing their own street gang, battling other Templar-controlled gangs for territory, and engaging in brutal street wars. London is divided into six distinct boroughs, and each will need to be wrested from the Templar's control.

Both Jacob and Evie will be playable in *Syndicate*. In free-roam, players will be able to toggle between characters at will, but Jacob will be the playable character for 75% of the main story. Ubisoft has also confirmed that both characters have distinct play styles, with Jacob being more headstrong and brawly, and Evie playing more tactically. Ubisoft has also stressed that *Syndicate* will be entirely single-player.

New toys include grappling-hook launchers, hallucinogenic darts, sword-canes, badass Nepalesian kukris, revolvers, horse carriages, and magnificent top hats. This being the Industrial Revolution means that steam-engines and trains will also feature prominently. Another new feature are female enemies and gang leaders, a historical accuracy.

Early footage shows a very period-authentic London, right down to the Dickensian street urchins scampering about. Ubisoft has also claimed that *Syndicate*'s London will be 30 percent larger than *Unity*'s Paris.

DLC has already been confirmed in the form of *The Darwin and Dickens Conspiracy*, available as pre-order incentives, and three collector's editions are available online.

Assassin's Creed Syndicate will launch on October 23rd, 2015, for PC, PS4, and Xbox One.

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Marvel and Telltale Games assemble

Comics giant Marvel announced at a recent event that the company would be teaming up with Telltale Games to produce new video games. The details are still incredibly sparse, and beyond a launch window of 2017 it's unknown what properties will be used, and which consoles the game will launch on. Given that 2017 will see the release of the third *Avengers* movie, it's likely Earth's Mightiest Heroes will be involved somehow.

In an interview with Marvel's executive vice-president, Peter Phillips said that "Marvel is all about storytelling". Given Telltale's previous work on a number of graphic novel properties, and their games' emphasis on story, the partnership sounds highly logical.

In the mean time, start placing your bets on which property we will see adapted first.



2K Australia shuts down

Pour one out, because another gaming studio is closing. After reports from an anonymous source surfaced, a representative from mega-publisher 2K Games confirmed with the following: "We can confirm we have taken steps to begin the studio closure process for 2K Australia in order to better manage ongoing development costs while improving the working proximity of our creative teams. We are very grateful for the team's valuable contributions to numerous 2K projects, and are working with affected staff to explore reassignment opportunities where possible."

2K Australia's most recent game was the well-received *Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel*, and the company has worked on numerous other titles such as *SWAT 4* and the *BioShock* series.

Killzone: Shadow Fall resolution lawsuit thrown out of court

In the February 2015 edition of NAG (pg. 19), we wrote about a class-action lawsuit that had been filed against Sony. The lawsuit (filed by Douglas Ladore) alleged that Sony had falsely advertised the resolution of *Killzone: Shadow Fall*. The game was advertised as running in native 1080p, but the multiplayer portion instead used a clever up-scaling technique called "temporal reprojection". The single-player portion of the game did actually run in 1080p. Ladore filed the lawsuit in August 2014, and it was allowed to proceed in early 2015. Now, however, Judge Edward Chen of California has thrown the case out "with prejudice".

The "with prejudice" part is quite interesting because it basically means that Judge Chen found zero merit in Ladore's complaints. The dismissal is final, and there's no chance of an appeal or of having the case reopened at a later stage. What's more, all parties have to pay for their own legal fees.

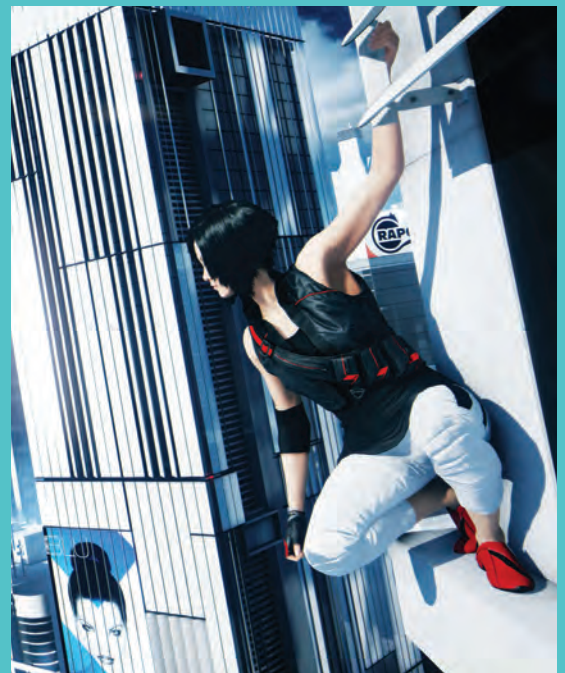
The case was being handled by law firm Edelson P.C. on behalf of Ladore. That firm has a history of tackling game publishers over numerous issues. They were behind the class-action lawsuit that saw Gearbox Software in court after the disastrous *Aliens: Colonial Marines*.



EA reveals release windows for hotly anticipated titles

Gather 'round kids! It's time for a barrage of release-date info relating to some keenly awaited Electronic Arts games, starting with recently announced, mech-tastic sequel *Titanfall 2*. Assuming we actually officially see it land on our shores at all (yes, we're still a tad bitter about the lack of a local release of the original *Titanfall*), it'll be out sometime between April 2016 and March 2017. The game will likely be available on PS4, XBO and PC, and unlike the first game there's a chance it might feature a traditional single-player campaign.

EA's also announced that there'll be a new *Need for Speed* this year (which EA has previously promised will be "highly innovative"), as well as a new *Plants vs. Zombies* game in early 2016. The company says that the new *PvZ* will be a "bigger and bolder new console experience". Finally, DICE's *Mirror's Edge 2* will apparently be available in the first few months of 2016 for PC, XBO and PS4, and aims to reboot the franchise for the next generation. Considering we've been anxiously waiting for a new *Mirror's Edge* since 2009, Q1 2016 can't come fast enough.



Starfighter Inc. is X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter for a modern audience



If *Star Citizen* and *Elite: Dangerous* haven't managed to grab you and reel you back into the world of hardcore space simulation, then maybe *Starfighter Inc.* is just the game you're looking for. It's backed by an all-star cast of developers, whose collective experience includes everything from *Star Wars: X-Wing* to *Saints Row*, *Crysis* to *The Sims*. The Kickstarter campaign for the game describes it as being all about "hardcore PvP multiplayer space warfare focused on pure, unadulterated tactical simulation combat", which tickles us in all the right places. They liken it to "World of Tanks meets Counter-Strike in space".

It's promising ultra-realistic space combat, large-scale battles on dedicated servers, persistent ship customisation (paid for by doing jobs and earning credits, with paint jobs, powertrains and the cockpit all being customisable), component damage (losing your thrusters will affect your ship's manoeuvrability, for example), player-run corporations and support for VR headsets. If the game's Kickstarter performs exceptionally well, the multiplayer will be enhanced by AI-controlled carriers that resupply your ship in the field, multi-seat ships which let you fly with friends, and troop transports that allow you to board enemy ships. If all goes according to plan it should be out in August 2016.

Rockstar is totally fine with GTA V's PC mods

As you're no doubt aware, *Grand Theft Auto V* was recently released on PC. As with its predecessor *GTA IV*, the modding community quickly rallied around Rockstar's latest game, resulting in an onslaught of mods that alter the game in various ways – despite the fact that the game doesn't even feature modding support out the box. Following some slight confusion when updates to the game broke a few mods (leading to a significant outcry from upset modders), Rockstar reassured the community by stating that the mods were

broken "unintentionally", and that they've "always appreciated the creative efforts of the PC modding community".

Rockstar also stated that they do carefully monitor modifications, but only to ensure that there are no mods out there that provide an unfair advantage in *GTA Online*, the game's multiplayer mode. In other *GTA V* news, the XBO and PS4 versions of the game will soon be updated with video-editing capabilities similar to that of the PC version.



Yooka-Laylee fully funded

Fans of bright, 3D, Rare-style platformers rejoice! A spiritual successor to the *Banjo-Kazooie* games recently appeared on Kickstarter and has rapidly been fully funded.

Titled *Yooka-Laylee* (I see what you did there), the game is in development at Playtonic Games, a team formed of many industry veterans with credits for games like *Banjo-Kazooie*, and *Perfect Dark*.

The project broke Kickstarter records by being the fastest video game campaign to receive \$1 million in pledges, meeting its goal four times over.

Yooka-Laylee is expected to launch sometime in October 2016, and has confirmed that popular YouTuber Jon Jafari will be providing some voice work.



Koji Igarashi's Kickstarter project is bloody popular

Koji Igarashi, former producer of the *Castlevania* games, has taken to Kickstarter in order to fund his new project called *Bloodstained: Ritual of the Night*, a 2.5D spiritual successor to the vampire-slaying games of old. It'll feature a new character called Miriam, who has magical crystals infused in her skin which can cast spells and summon demons. Throughout the course of the game, new crystals will be available to upgrade our heroine's abilities. The Kickstarter managed to raise over one million dollars in a matter of hours, more than double the initial goal. The title will be available for PS4, Xbox One, PC, Mac, and Linux using Unreal Engine 4.



Phil Spencer talks about new intellectual property

Phil Spencer, head of Xbox, has tweeted that a brand-new IP will be shown at this year's E3 as part of Microsoft's new line-up. Last October he said that Microsoft's development house is working on something new that isn't "another military space marine game" or a racer, referencing the *Halo*, *Gears of War* and *Forza* franchises which have been among the Xbox's most successful titles. Other details are a bit sketchy at this point and the Internet is abuzz with all sorts of rumours, but we'll just have to wait until later this year to see what he's on about.



Dreamcast classic RPG Grandia 2 will return

Classic Dreamcast RPG *Grandia 2* is set to make a comeback, this time in HD for the PC. The game is considered one of the greatest titles for SEGA's final console and an underrated classic of the JRPG genre. Sadly, the Dreamcast's financial failures kept the game from reaching a wider audience. This wasn't helped by dreadfully buggy ports for the PC and PlayStation 2. Publisher GungHo Online Entertainment America sent out a user survey earlier this year concerning the game's legacy and the feedback was highly positive. Fans were eager to see it in HD and released on Steam and many spoke fondly of the original game's visuals, story and combat system.

Ouya is allegedly in trouble and looking for a bail-out buyer fast



The Android-powered Ouya micro-console has a lot going for it – something that more than 60,000 people could see when they Kickstarted the living hell out of the project to the tune of \$8.5 million. The device has been out in the wild since December 2012 and has seen a number of triumphs and missteps. Unfortunately it looks like not everything is going as well as it should be with the company.

Website Fortune managed to acquire an internal memo from Ouya CEO Julie Uhrman, in which she discusses the company's failure to satisfy its staggering amount of debt. Shortly after the Kickstarter campaign closed, Ouya got sizable cash injections from a number of external investors. One of those investors' conditions has not been met, and a renegotiation of the terms of that debt has been unsuccessful according to Uhrman's memo. This means that the company is currently looking for somebody to buy them out. According to Uhrman's memo (if it's legit) that buyout needs to happen almost immediately.

At time of writing there has been no word from Ouya regarding this rumour.

CAPTION OF THE MONTH



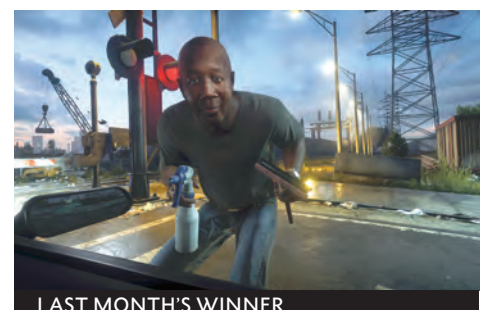
Every month we'll choose a screenshot from a random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better one.

The winner will get a copy of *Farming Simulator 15* for PS4 from Apex Interactive. Send your captions to letters@nag.co.za with the subject line "June caption".



NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT AT HUMOUR

▶ "I'm pretty sure that's not how you head-bang."



LAST MONTH'S WINNER

▶ "So you take a left, right? Then you cross two intersections, right?" - Sakkie Bekker

Please note: the winner of the April Caption of the Month was incorrectly stated last month. It's actually Kyle Tiley. Congratulations!



SUPPORT LINES

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

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2K Games Rockstar / Ubisoft /
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Bandai / Disney**
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Publishers / Microsoft Xbox
Telephone / 0800 991 550

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

Roxy hunt

FIND ROXY HIDDEN SOMEWHERE IN THE MAGAZINE, AND WIN!

Send your Roxy sighting to letters@nag.co.za with the subject line "**June Roxy**" and your contact details, and you could win a prize.



May winner
Dawid Opperman, page 29



This month's prize

Marvel Dice Masters, sponsored by Skycastle Games. (You only get one box, calm down).



SKYCASTLE

Tony Hawk returns

Following a series of rumours, speculations, and semi-revealing Tweets, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 5* has finally been officially announced.

Currently in development at Robomodo and Disruptive Games, the game marks the return of the *Pro Skater* franchise which hasn't seen a new game in 13 years, not counting a recent HD remaster.

The developers have so far promised that gameplay will feel like classic *Pro Skater*, so it's reasonable to expect free-roaming environments, NPCs who give out quests, and the letters S-K-A-T-E mysteriously floating around. Also confirmed are the inclusions of power-ups and the use of projectiles in some missions.

Another interesting feature is the ability to create and share a custom skate park. Online multiplayer was also confirmed, but there's been no word yet regarding local multiplayer.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 5 is set to launch on PS4 and Xbox One later this year, and on PS3 and 360 an unspecified time after that. Given publisher Activision's usual presence at press conferences, it's likely that we'll see more details emerge at the upcoming E3 expo this month.

Silent Hills cancelled!

Last month we reported on the controversy and mystery surrounding legendary game director Hideo Kojima's departure from Konami. Now it seems that the departure has claimed its first victim, and the eagerly anticipated *Silent Hills* has been cancelled.

In a recent statement, the company said: "Konami is committed to new *Silent Hill* titles, however the embryonic *Silent Hills* project developed with Guillermo del Toro and featuring the likeness of Norman Reedus will not be continued."

Since the announcement, Konami has also pulled the iconic *P.T.* (Playable Teaser) from the PlayStation Store. *P.T.* marked the start of a now-famous marketing campaign, and completing it rewarded gamers with the announcement of *Silent Hills. P.T.* has now been fully scrubbed from PSN, and is not even available for re-download.

Naturally, several gamers rushed to eBay to attempt to sell *P.T.* loaded PS4s at exorbitant prices, so at least this tragic story has a funny punchline.

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Start your SMS with TAMRIELIMPERIAL, followed by your name, surname, postal address and email address. Do not use any punctuation.

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- Winners will be notified by SMS
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Kid-Proof Gaming

Start 'em early



We're willing to bet that many gamers have kids in their lives. Maybe you've got younger siblings, or perhaps you belong to the rapidly expanding demographic of "gaming parents"? Kids are wily little things, so the chances are high that your children or younger siblings have begun paying attention to the games you play. That's not a good thing when you're playing *GTA V* or *The Witcher 3*, but shooing them from the screen isn't going to foster any desire for them to want to play games as well. Luckily, there is a bevy of kid-friendly titles just begging for you to introduce gaming to the children in your life.

No kid-friendly genre is quite as popular as the toys-to-life genre is right now. We're talking about *Skylanders*, *Disney Infinity*, and the upcoming *LEGO Dimensions*. Even Nintendo's amiibo toys could technically fall into this category despite some fundamental nuances.

There's something rather lovely about watching a child's face light up as a plastic toy

gets "magically teleported" into a TV screen. It is, however, a plastic-toy-riddled [and expensive! Ed] minefield out there, so let's break it down for you to find the kids' game that'll provide the perfect means to plant that gaming seed in those fertile little minds.

IT ALL STARTED WITH SKYLANDERS

The series that kicked off a new genre – Activision's franchise prints money for one reason: it's excellent.

There are four titles in the series so far: *Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure*, *Skylanders: Giants*, *Skylanders: Swap Force*, and the current *Skylanders: Trap Team*. Each game follows the adventures of a group of warriors known as Skylanders; each character has its own special abilities and physical toy to collect. A host of supporting characters and a recurring, endearingly inept antagonist called Kaos combine to create a Saturday morning cartoon feel that



"It's perfect for getting younger kids into gaming thanks to its subtle accessibility."

exudes polish and care. Voice-acting is also superb, world detail abounds, and pun-tastic humour crops up all over.

The NFC-enabled toys are good quality and robust enough to withstand unfettered handling by a two-year-old. With each subsequent release in the series, Activision has added new features

but has made sure that toys from older games are compatible with newer versions of the IP.

Skylanders: Trap Team is a superbly competent action adventure. It's perfect for getting younger kids into gaming thanks to its subtle accessibility. For example: characters move rather slowly, which may be frustrating

to you, but for a child still getting to grips with a controller layout, having their character handle a little slower is helpful. Furthermore, the hub world in *Trap Team* features numerous mini games and secret areas that cover a range of gaming genres. There are side-scrolling platformers, tower

defence areas, puzzles, and even a collectible card battling game. Basically *Trap Team* provides a smorgasbord for young kids to sample a range of genres, and it gets two enthusiastic thumbs-up from us.

TO INFINITY, AND BEYOND: DISNEY INFINITY

You'd think that a toys-to-life game backed by Disney and Pixar's endless selection of kid-friendly IPs would be a no-brainer, but this one kind of caters to all sorts of age groups. It's a little different to *Skylanders* in that there isn't one game with a single storyline to play through. Instead, you purchase Play Sets that come with two characters and a Play Set piece. That Play Set then unlocks a series of franchise-specific levels on the game disc. For example: *Disney Infinity 2.0* (the current version) has a Marvel Super Heroes themed Starter Pack that comes with figurines of Thor, Iron Man, and Black Widow. *The Avengers* Play Set in the Starter Pack follows a series of story missions involving Loki and Frost Giants.



While the Starter Pack ships with only the three mentioned *Avengers*, you can buy the rest of the team separately. You can also buy Play Sets for *Guardians of the Galaxy* and *Spider-Man*.

Disney Infinity has an additional feature up its sleeve: the Toy Box mode. This mode presents players with a blank area and access to loads of Disney props, buildings, vehicles etc. You're also given a set of tools to construct things using whatever items you've unlocked in the Toy Box. The tools are robust enough to construct entire mini-games and in that regard it's great for getting kids to start thinking about how games are put together. The caveat, however, is that the Toy Box tools are quite tricky to get the hang of, so younger kids will likely get frustrated and bored too quickly. Older kids, around the eight years old mark, could get a kick out of designing their own mini-games to share online. Everything that's uploaded is curated by Disney so there's no need to worry about what user-generated content your kids can access online.

AN AMIIB-WHAT? AN AMIIBO

The amiibo figures are Nintendo's stab at NFC-powered toys that provide in-game bonuses in specific Wii U and New Nintendo 3DS games. They have proven ludicrously popular since launch, and have played a significant role in Nintendo posting a quarterly profit for the first time in four years. The thing with amiibos is that they don't work with just one game – Nintendo has numerous titles that numerous amiibos can interact with: *Super Smash Bros.*, *Mario Party 10*, *Mario Kart 8* etc. To be honest, though, Nintendo's amiibo figures are kind of aimed at long-time Nintendo fans. You know, people in their late twenties and early thirties. We're not judging – we love the hell out of these too.

LOOKING AHEAD

The toys-to-life genre is showing no signs of slowing down anytime soon. On the horizon we already have *Disney Infinity 3.0* gearing up for a fourth quarter release. This upcoming version will bring *Star Wars* Play Sets and characters to the game, including content from the prequel trilogy, and the original trilogy. What's more, once the new *Star Wars: Episode VII* film releases, a *Force Awakens* Play Set will be made available.

Perhaps more exciting, however, is the introduction of a third toys-to-life franchise: *LEGO Dimensions*. The game is being developed by Traveller's Tales: the development team behind the plethora of existing *LEGO* video games.

Furthermore, publisher Warner Bros. will have access to the myriad franchise deals that *LEGO* already has in place: think *The Lord of the Rings*, *The LEGO Movie*, DC Comics, *Back to the Future*, *The Simpsons*... even Valve's *Portal*.

KID-FRIENDLY HARDWARE?

It's one thing wanting to get kids into gaming, but it's another thing to start teaching them about hardware nuances and looking after their own technology. LeapFrog Enterprises has this area covered.

LeapFrog started in 1994 and has grown large enough to become a publicly listed company on the New York stock exchange. They have an extensive range of kid-friendly hardware backed up by teacher-approved learning games and apps that incorporate a multitude of recognisable IPs. There are franchise licences with Marvel, Walt Disney, Hello Kitty, and Nickelodeon, so pretty much every single recognisable kids character



"Disney Infinity has an additional feature up its sleeve: the Toy Box mode."





"The amiibo figures are Nintendo's stab at NFC-powered toys that provide in-game bonuses in specific Wii U and New Nintendo 3DS games."



is available in some game found across the company's hardware.

Currently LeapFrog's two flagship hardware designs are the LeapTV console system, and the LeapPad XDi Ultra tablet. Both pieces of hardware have been completely designed for children first and foremost: the LeapTV's motion controller is little, and easy for tiny hands to hold; the LeapPad tablet is a chunky thing that forgoes sleek design for a bombproof exterior.

The LeapTV console includes a cartridge slot for its extensive library of educational games. The console has built-in 16GB of storage to download digital games if you'd prefer not to risk the rather diminutive game cartridges getting lost. Luckily the games themselves take up hardly any hard drive space.

The LeapTV includes a rudimentary motion-sensing camera (there's no fancy specs sheet here), and a number of games make use of full-body motion similar to what the earlier Kinect games required. The actual controller can be used just like any normal console controller, but it folds out to act as a pointer for some motion-controlled games.

LeapTV's games are educational in nature, but there are a few that are there purely for

entertainment value. What is great is that a number of the educational games feature pure entertainment sections almost as an incentive for getting through the educational bits. *Kart Racing Supercharged!* for example gets kids to prepare their racing kart prior to each race by answering a series of mathematical questions. Depending on the age of the child, the math questions scale accordingly. Answering the questions correctly then preps the kart and issues the player with power-ups for the race. The races play out similar to a stripped down *Mario Kart* or *Wacky Wheels*, with the child only required to steer the kart and activate power-ups when needed.

The LeapFrog range certainly has its appeal if you want your child or younger sibling to get to grips with their own hardware. In most instances the hardware is robust and responsive, but we did find some minor frustrations with loading times in certain apps on the LeapPad XDi Ultra, and some inaccuracies with the motion-control pointers on the LeapTV. Neither was a deal-breaker, but don't expect iPad and Xbox One levels of responsiveness. Then again, don't expect iPad and Xbox One prices either, so there's that. **NAG**

Mikit0707

RELEASE DATE > TBA
 PLATFORMS > PS4
 GENRE > Adventure platformer
 DEVELOPER > Tequila Works
 WEBSITE > us.playstation.com/ps4/games/rime-ps4.html
 PUBLISHER > Sony Computer Entertainment



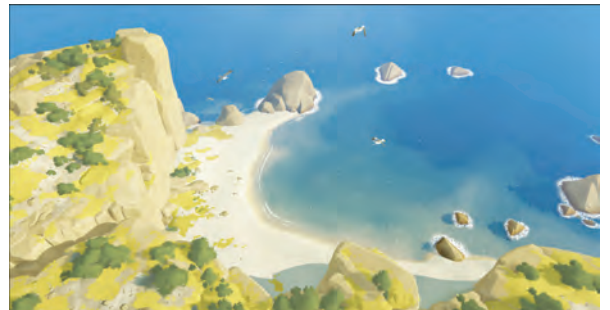
Rime

Alone on an island of time...

Tequila Works is very upfront about what inspired the look and feel of *Rime*. Games such as *Ico* heavily influence the way the lead protagonist – an unnamed bright-eyed boy – moves around the mysterious island he is stranded on. The cel-shaded art direction invokes memories of *Journey*, *Wind Waker* as well as movies such as *Princess Mononoke* and *Spirited Away*. The vibe, the adventurous spirit, pulls from *Jason and the Argonauts*.

The unnamed boy must escape the island – and a curse – by solving puzzles scattered around the environment. You can explore freely, though presumably some areas will be locked off until you gain a tool or ability that lets you access that space. The island itself is a puzzle, influenced by the time of day. The location of the sun in the sky triggers strange machinery, bridges appear or disappear, and more. As part of the time-based puzzling, the boy has an item that can manipulate the environment, and time itself, in specific ways or at set points.

Plot points will be revealed via a spoken narrative, though it's unclear if the narration is from the boy, or an unknown third party. Tequila Works is keeping much of the game under wraps so as to not spoil too much. The scant trailers released thus far show the boy climbing, swimming, running, playing with a torch by swinging it around, while local wildlife scampers away. There are giant towers with keyholes, weather effects like heavy rain that drench entire areas of the island, and at one point, the passing



shadow of what looked like a dragon. The boy comes across statues of people locked in expressions of terror, that disintegrate when touched.

There is a very *The Mysterious Cities of Gold* (1982) vibe to the game's look and feel, especially during one trailer where the boy is riding atop giant spherical machines with long legs, striding over the ocean. It's not yet known if there will be any serious combat, but the use of fire does suggest at least some kind of defensive mechanics against unknown foes. Even with its simplistic-looking cel-shaded art style, there is incredible detail to the environments and how the boy moves through them.

"For us, it's not just about technology (although that's important too!)," creative director Raúl Rubio Munárriz wrote on the PlayStation Blog. "It's about how you create an experience – how you breathe life into your creation and set it free. *Rime* is a very personal project and, together with Sony, we have high hopes for our offspring!"

"We are happy. We create things with gusto." **NAG**
Miktar

Originally *Rime* was titled *Echoes of the Siren*, had hunting and combat, and was for Xbox LIVE Arcade.



"Tequila Works is keeping much of the game under wraps so as to not spoil too much."



The game's art style takes inspiration from the neo classical or neo-Baroque style of Giorgio de Chirico.

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≡ B85-PRO GAMER



≡ H81-GAMER

≡ H97-PRO GAMER

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RELEASE DATE > Q3 2015
 PLATFORMS > PC / PS4 / XBO
 GENRE > Interactive fiction
 DEVELOPER > Three One Zero
 WEBSITE > threeonezero.com
 PUBLISHER > 505 Games



Adrift

Might want to hold your breath...

You wake up inside a severely damaged space suit, with no memory as to how you got there. Or why the space station around you is completely destroyed, leaving you in hard vacuum. You appear to be the only survivor of whatever happened, your oxygen levels dwindling fast.

Director Adam Orth claims the concept of *Adrift* comes from his own experiences on Twitter. Space, social media: the two are totally comparable, yeah. Orth used to be a creative director at Microsoft Studios, but after some unfortunate statements by him on Twitter in 2013 after the Xbox One was announced, he resigned from the company. He compares the game's setting of being in the middle of a disaster and having to "do the hard work to put things together" to the upheaval in his life as a result of his comments on Twitter. In case you missed it: when Microsoft announced the Xbox One would have always-online mandatory digital rights management, Orth bluntly told people to "deal with it" and then mocked the idea that he'd ever live in an area with unreliable Internet. Clearly, Orth never visited South Africa.

Regardless, *Adrift* is an interesting enough premise on its own, without Orth's transparent bid at redemption. First-person and with no combat, you can float and move in any direction in the



zero gravity environment. There is an oxygen limit, so your movement has to keep in mind nearby oxygen tanks or outlets. There will be five areas to explore, as well as puzzles to solve and audio logs to collect. These logs let you unravel the events leading up to the incident. There are also the personal effects of the dead crew to collect, which you can decide if

It's actually written as "ADRIFT" because... reasons?

you want to bring back with you to Earth – presuming you make it back. There are only two real objectives in *Adrift*: survive, and return home. It is designed to be a three hour long experience (and will hopefully be priced with that in mind). Oculus Rift support is planned, and the game's soundtrack is mostly being composed by Orth, with contributions from the US-based band Weezer.

"I'm very happy to be partnering with 505 Games for *Adrift*" said Orth. "From the very beginning, Ian Howe and his team have passionately understood the game Omar and I are trying to make. They have empowered us with the freedom to explore and create something special with *Adrift*, both traditionally and with VR technology. It's clear from games like *Payday 2*, *Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons* and some of their upcoming titles that 505 is not afraid to take chances and give gamers something fresh and new. That's important to us. That's what we're all about. We're excited to be part of that."

NAG

Miktar



"It is designed to be a three hour long experience (and will hopefully be priced with that in mind)."



The developer claims *Adrift* was designed before the movie *Gravity* came out.



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9, 10, 11 OCT 2015

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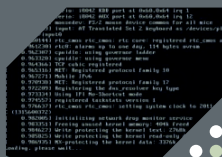
FRI 10:00-18:00
SAT 09:00-18:00
SUN 10:00-16:00

rAge
expo

Reviews INTRO

There comes a time in every gamer's life where they have to look back and ask themselves "why do I play games?" Thankfully such moments of clarity are easily diffused by *Heroes of the Storm* or whatever the next crack-like addiction is. We might have a problem. Send help! ... After this game. **Meet your reviewers...**

Q What's the best thing in gaming you've seen/played/held/secretly fondled in the last three years?

 <p>Dane "Barkskin" Remendes <i>Wolfenstein: The New Order.</i> In addition to just being a great game, it proved that even when all you're really doing is shooting Nazis in the face, you can still have an unexpectedly thoughtful, memorable narrative.</p> <p>CURRENTLY PLAYING <i>Heroes of the Storm, Enslaved: Odyssey to the West</i> (again)</p>	 <p>Delano "Delano" Cuzzucoli The explosion of public interest in retro-gaming and retro-style games. It's been steadily building for a number of years, but now more than ever people are approaching the classics with an open mind.</p> <p>CURRENTLY PLAYING <i>Paranautical Activity, Ori and the Blind Forest</i></p>	 <p>Geoff "GeometriX" Burrows The rise of crowd-funding. Despite some problems resulting from poor planning, there's no denying the power that Kickstarter and the like brings to indie game developers. I hope we've only just begun to see what comes out of crowd-funding.</p> <p>CURRENTLY PLAYING <i>Heroes of the Storm, Mortal Kombat X, Gone Home</i></p>	 <p>Matt "SandStorm" Fick The overwhelming success of the PS4. Seeing what Sony did to basically reinvent their console strategy, and seeing the public's reaction to it, still amazes me. #fanboy.</p> <p>CURRENTLY PLAYING <i>Kingdom Hearts 2.5</i>, and I'm still playing <i>Bloodborne</i></p>	 <p>Michael "RedTide" James The rebirth of the space flight combat simulator trading game thing. Long live <i>Elite</i>!</p> <p>CURRENTLY PLAYING <i>Black Ops II: Zombies, Terraria, Diablo III, Elite: Dangerous</i></p>
 <p>Miklós "Mikit0707" Szecsei The Oculus Rift. Without a doubt the best gaming experience I've had in my life, never mind "last three years".</p> <p>CURRENTLY PLAYING <i>Elite: Dangerous, Wolfenstein: The New Order, Mortal Kombat X</i></p>	 <p>Miktar "Miktar" Dracon The photo of two small kids standing next to Miyamoto at E3, laughing in delight at what he's showing them, their excitement and anticipation at wanting to play it too tangibly visible.</p> <p>CURRENTLY PLAYING <i>Xenoblade Chronicles 3D, StreetPass Fishing, StreetPass Zombies, Heroes of the Storm</i></p>	 <p>Sarah "Bellum" Browne The New 3DS. Finally, a handheld console I can give a fairly sizable whatsit about.</p> <p>CURRENTLY PLAYING <i>Mario Kart 7, Far Cry 4</i></p>	 <p>Tarryn "Azimuth" van der Byl More and more co-op content. Everything is better with friends! Except going to the toilet, unless you're into that. Sometimes my cats like to watch. Cats are weird like that.</p> <p>CURRENTLY PLAYING The <i>Legendary Encounters</i> board game. It's SO rad.</p>	 <p>Wesley "CataclysmZA" Fick The introduction of SteamOS and how far Valve is willing to go to make sure that gaming on Linux has a future. Integrating the Vulkan API into Source 2 is a major step for them.</p> <p>CURRENTLY PLAYING <i>DiRT Rally, Project Cars, Grand Theft Auto V</i></p>



HEARD AT THE NAG OFFICE

“Is this the best quote we have?”

Lauren "Guardien" Das Neves



MINI REVIEWS



King of Thieves (mobile)

King of Thieves seems like a good idea, it really does. The basic premise is that your character, a thief, must climb the ranks to become the titular King by raiding and defending loot.

Raiding hideouts is the game's strongest suit, and is performed by some rudimentary and tight platforming. It's addictive and could be a game on its own. The game offers many single-player raids, but the main draw is raiding loot from other players, and that's always wickedly satisfying.

Good platforming aside, this game fails on several levels. Customising a hideout should be fun, but it's limited by the pre-selected traps, and you'll never feel like you can be creative. Raiding hideouts consumes lockpicks, and depleting all of them means you must either watch an ad, wait an hour, or pony up some cash. Story progress is determined by your rank in a league, and climbing the league is done by crafting new gems to raise your rank. But the league resets every few days, and the only way to actually progress is to spend currency to speed up the crafting. Playing free is possible, but the game is built to make this an active detriment. **NAG**

Sand_Storm

SCORE



50 *Cute visuals and an interesting premise can't save this from being everything wrong with mobile games.*



Alchemilla (mod)

The cancellation of *Silent Hills* disappointed many long-time fans of the series, as well as devoted horror hounds. It's not an easy hole to fill, but a free Source mod named *Alchemilla* comes pretty darn close to recapturing the spirit of *Silent Hill*.

Alchemilla is essentially *Silent Hill* reimagined in the Source engine, but it's not a direct remake of any particular game or scenario. Rather, think of it as the game equivalent of fan-fiction – set in the same universe, but with an original character and plot, with familiar settings and events, and an emphasis on the infamous hospital from which this mod draws its name.

Be warned though: this is not an action-adventure experience. There is no combat or tangible enemies. It functions on a purely atmospheric and cerebral level, asking players to be lost in the grim melancholy of it all while exploring, solving puzzles and maintaining your character's sanity. Certain sections are empty and pointless, but thankfully there's enough nightmare material here to keep you coming back for more. Even without monsters and weapons, it still feels like an authentic *Silent Hill* game.

The mod requires Steam and an installation of the Source SDK 2013, which you can find in your Steam library under "Tools". There are Windows and Mac versions available, with a Linux port in the foreseeable future. **NAG**

Delano

SCORE



89 *If you can forgive the lack of combat, there's a wonderfully mesmerising experience to be had here.*



Mortal Kombat X

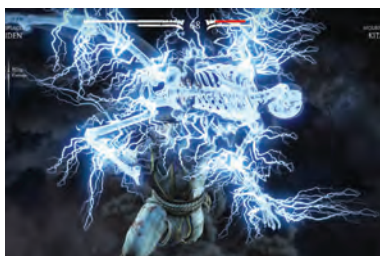
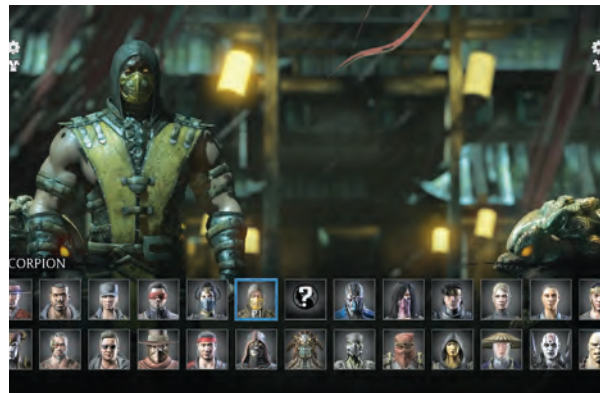
Get over here!


2011's *Mortal Kombat* reboot did everything it could to change the world's impression of this brutal franchise, and for many modern gamers was considered the most worthwhile entry point into the series in years. This year's release, the aptly-named *Mortal Kombat X*, continues the story of *MK* by spanning 25 years of combat, dark plots, and a few unsurprising romances.

For those who care enough about the lore and characters of *Mortal Kombat*, the story mode that's on offer is entertaining, and a great way to get exposure to the game's characters to see how they all fit together into the world. And with eight new combatants, four of whom are offspring of existing fighters, there's quite a bit to figure out. Bouts of combat are strung together by lengthy cinematics sometimes dotted with quick-time events. Thankfully everything can be skipped if that's not your bag, but don't expect some of the fights to make much sense then. There's a lot of "I need to prove myself to you by punching you in the face and breaking your spine".

Suspension of belief is critical, and once you give in to the oddly light-hearted nature of the most gory *MK* to date, you'll find the story mode to be enjoyable, if excessively silly at times.

But *Mortal Kombat* isn't about the story mode, and it's in 1v1 combat that you'll spend most of your time. Fights can be configured in a number of ways, including simple 1- or 2-player combat, practice sessions, and the returning Towers. Towers include the usual progression of increasingly-challenging opponents, as well as the new Living Towers, which are developer-designed challenges that rotate on a regular basis. Online play is also available, but that's not something that I spent much time with, although reports around town tell of sometimes dodgy netcode. There's also the Test Your Might and Test Your Luck combat modes that add some interesting flavour to battle, as well as a Krypt mode to unlock concept art, character skins, and finishing moves by spending gold earned



 **RIGHT** / Goro is a playable character, but you'll have to cough up extra for him.



REDTIDE'S OPINION

So *Mortal Kombat X* plays like all the others, I can never remember what the button combinations are, how to block or how to shoot those fireballs or ice shards or whatever long range trick a fighter has. I'm the ultimate casual player in the *MK* universe but because it always plays so well and feels good under button I persevere and relearn all the basics pretty quick. This growth from relentless button masher to kind-of-can-win-a-fight-now is always fun which is a long way of saying *MKX* is accessible to anyone. The best way to play it (after a Sunday Braai), is with random fighter and level selection and then whoever wins stays to play the next challenger. This way you get to sample everyone's fighting techniques and see all the fatalities and issue a few beatings. The game is brutal and violent and glorious, perhaps a little too violent for some but then what would a *Mortal Kombat* game be without some X-Ray bone shattering, head bursting, eyeball squishing chest exploding fun. It's a great addition to the series and somehow improves on the previous one, pure mindless fun that will dig deep into your chest cavity and tear out your squirting heart.

86



just have more varied characters without the need for distinct lines to be drawn.

Once you're into a fight, things seem more familiar, although everything has been tightened to deliver one hell of a smooth fighting experience. Every character moves like it has weight, especially the lumbering Ferra & Torr, and you'll be surprised by the diversity of movement styles between characters. There really is something for everyone, and the variations admittedly come to the aid of this idea even further. The fighting arenas go even further to show off the diversity of gameplay, and look gorgeous while doing it. Heck, everything looks phenomenal in this game, but the arenas really are some of the most well-crafted we've seen in the series yet. They're interactive as well, to a point. Occasionally you can pick up and throw an item from the environment at your opponent, or jump off something to gain unique positioning. This concept adds some flair to the game but ultimately doesn't get in the way. I suppose purists will appreciate such limited intrusions, but I'd like to see these things taken even further.

It wouldn't be a *Mortal Kombat* review without discussing the gore, and *MKX* goes far beyond anything we've seen before. But it's important to take everything in context, and *MKX* is a silly game – slapstick, even. With the combat being as tight and serious as it is, this over-the-top violence serves to further the dichotomy on display, which I think makes the whole experience more enjoyable. Now if only there was some variety to the X-Ray moves – there's only so many times I can see someone's skull cave in before it loses appeal. **NAG**

GeometriX

during regular play. The Krypt is played as a first-person, grid-based adventure; it's a fun addition that ultimately comes down to guesswork and luck to see what you unlock, but it's dressed up well enough to not feel like a chore.

All the fluff piled on top of the core game is fun to mess with, but it's in combat and combatants that *Mortal Kombat* should be judged. The roster at launch, without any extra purchases, spans 24 characters. All of the favourites like Scorpion, Sub-Zero, Kano, Sonya, Mileena, and Johnny Cage make a return, of course, and the new combatants go a long way to make this one of the most impressive selections of characters we've seen yet. On top of the large selection, each fighter has three variations to choose from before you fight. While each fighter has the same base of moves,

ABOVE / "Dammit Takeda, get down from there and fight me like a man!"

their variations add a few power moves and visual touches to differentiate them from one another. This is great if you're a high-level player and know what you want out of every fight, as variations can substantially affect combos or the extra little puffs of damage that you inflict, but it does mean you'll simply have more moves to learn. For new players, variations seem like an unnecessary complication; you've already chosen your character, and now there's the fear that you're missing out on some key moves because you chose the "wrong" variation. I was once asked by a casual player "which Raiden must I choose to do the ABALABALAAAAOOO move?"; and I realised that someone in the design team has missed the point here. In reality, the variations feel like they neither add nor detract all that much. Personally, I'd rather

SCORE



83 *Mortal Kombat X might not make the same splash that its predecessor achieved, but it builds on the new generation of MK and manages to deliver an excellent overall fighting experience.*

- +** Solid combat experience / Plenty of extra content / Interesting new characters
- Story is pretty silly / Variations add clutter / Lack of variety in X-Ray moves

PLATFORMS / 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO 
 REVIEWED ON / PS4 
 GENRE / Racing
 DEVELOPER / Milestone S.r.l
 PUBLISHER / Milestone S.r.l
 DISTRIBUTOR / Ster Kinekor Entertainment
 WEBSITE / www.ridevideogame.com

Ride

Feel the rhythm, feel the ride

Petrolheads love anything and everything that comes with an internal combustion engine, a gearbox and wheels. Cars, planes, motorbikes, trains, you name it – I’ve had an interest in it since I was old enough to understand what wheelspin was. So it was with this childlike curiosity that I put my review copy of *Ride* into the PS4 for the first time. I’ve never played a motorbike racing game outside of the arcades, so this was a new experience for me.

Milestone S.r.l has previous history with bike racers, most prominently in the *Superbike* series and *MotoGP*. They have pedigree. But that’s not how *Ride* was presented. It feels like a cross between Polyphony Digital’s *Tourist Trophy* and the spirit of *Driveclub*, but it’s kept on a tight leash. *Ride*’s atmosphere is lighter than many racing games I’ve started in the past, though the overall feel of the game and the soundtrack contributes to this strange feeling of “good enough.”



 **BELOW /**
 Masturbation level
 – Diamond League.

That is rather weird because it looks good in most respects, with some tracks clearly inspired by *Driveclub*’s amazing backgrounds. *Ride* isn’t pushing modern consoles very far graphically, which results in it offering up a solid 60fps. Unfortunately, there are no weather effects or day/night cycles.

You’re given the option early on to tweak how the physics and gameplay work for you, which can vary the gameplay from simple to tricky combos of using front and rear brakes and adjusting traction control for each upcoming corner. If you aren’t paying attention to cornering and braking, you pay the price for being uninvolved, but the lack of a competitive AI makes me a bit lax about this.

Multiplayer is also here, but it isn’t very populated yet. It feels a lot like *Driveclub*, where you move to a lobby and wait for the race to begin while there. The experience is more or less stable, but the lack of local servers might introduce frustration, particularly when you’re overtaking someone who has 200ms faster reflexes.

Like other semi-sim games in the racing genre, there are also customisations available for your bike, to improve both performance and looks, but the build order for a race bike is still the same – suspension and brakes first, then tyres,


then performance. Changing exhaust tips doesn’t change the engine note, so it’s just like *Gran Turismo* in that respect.


Ride is, overall, mostly enjoyable. The soundtrack is all original, but it lacks passion. The sound capturing is decent, but not ear-splittingly awesome. It’s not realistic to a T and the physics can be janky, but that’s okay – *Ride* is an entry point into the world of motorbikes and that’s perfectly fine for beginners. **NAG**

CataclysmZA


SCORE

69 *Ride is a good first outing for someone who isn’t sure motorbike racing is their thing, but it feels reined in. Weather effects, a better soundtrack, and more tracks would help for a sequel.*

 Many bikes to choose from / Customisation options are varied / Easy to jump into

 Feels uninspired, lacking emotion / Only 15 tracks on launch / No livery editor / Soundtrack isn’t very good



 **ABOVE /**
 Scraping the knees happens frequently for tight turns.



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AA4





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RED-E

NAG MUST
PLAY

BOXBOY!

A whole other form of boxing

When you come down to it, platformers are one of the genres that feel most at home on the 3DS. Fans of the big N's portable game system are spoiled for choice in that regard, as there's no shortage of run-and-jump goodness available in its ever-growing library. If, however, you're craving something slightly different from the usual franchises, you may be keen on checking out the puzzle experience that is **BOXBOY!**

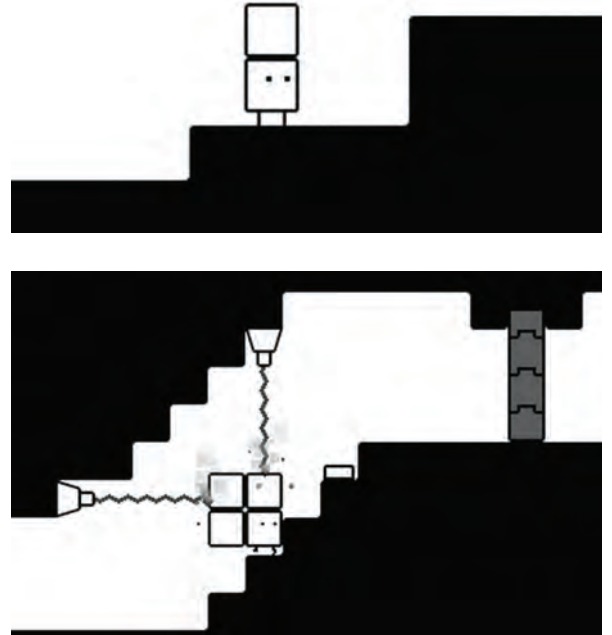
The game casts players squarely (ha!) in the shoes of a living cube named Qbby. Our 90-degree hero can generate more blocks which enable him to traverse his obstacle-ridden universe. These prove to be staggeringly useful, as Qbby can use his blocks for anything from a shield to a rudimentary grappling hook. The first handful of levels are pretty simplistic and gradually ease players into the mechanics, but before long the puzzles get more intense and the genius behind the simple mechanic becomes all the more apparent.


In order to up the ante and maximise efficient thinking, each level has a set number of boxes which may be

spawned. In addition, new gimmicks appear in each world, such as switches, teleporters and conveyer belts. There is also an abundance of checkpoints, which encourage experimentation and are designed in such a way that it never feels like the game is holding your hand.

The main campaign can be completed in roughly four to five hours, which is unfortunately brief considering how much potential the concept has. However, there are a number of unlockables to keep players coming back, ranging from costumes for Qbby to bonus levels which introduce even more devilish gimmicks. There's also score attack and time attack modes, encouraging the replaying of previously-beaten levels, though honestly these aren't as interesting as the main campaign.

The aesthetic is notable: the whole affair has little in the way of colour, and the game largely relies on simple white backgrounds with basic shapes to represent the level structures and hazards. Music is likewise simplistic and together with the graphics, they give the impression that this game could be a lost



 **TOP** / Nobody liked to talk about the box stuck on Qbby's head.

title from the original Game Boy all those moons ago. There isn't much in the way of variety as far as eye candy is concerned and pretty soon it all starts to look same-y, but it doesn't detract too much from the overall experience.

BOXBOY! feels fresh and enduring, especially when compared to the more lucrative Nintendo IPs available on the 3DS. With its simple concept and almost-entirely monochromatic presentation, it may not seem like much, but there's a lot of fun to be had here and it's an absolute bargain at only \$4.99 (around R60). It's another gem of the Nintendo eShop and I can't recommend it enough. **NAG**

Delano


SCORE

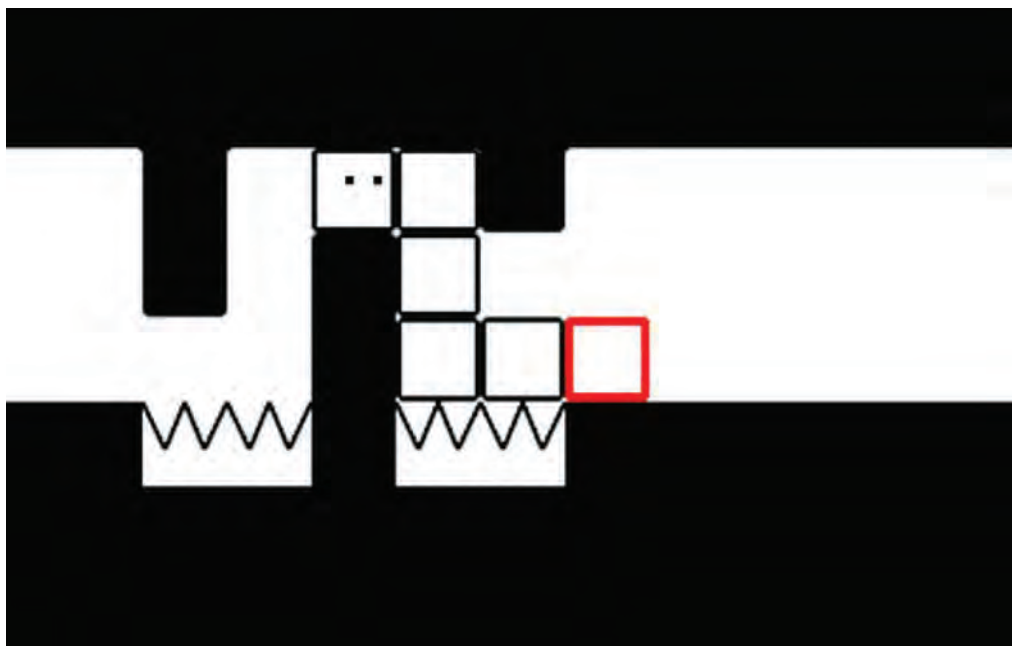


88

A cute and endearing puzzle-platformer that pushes a simple concept to its maximum potential.

 Perfect controls / Lots of puzzles / Unlockables galore

 Lack of visual variety / Main campaign is a bit too short





NAG MUST
PLAY

Project Cars

“Don’t push it too hard, the brakes are cold!”

I got goosebumps while playing *Project Cars*. What set it off was my pit crew leader telling me, before heading out on the track, that the brakes were still cold, so I needed to slow it down a bit. Sure enough, three turns into Brands Hatch GP, the brown stuff hit the fan and I had less stopping power than I anticipated. Ploughing across the field straight towards the tyre wall, I knew this was going to hurt. My bumper was smashed, I had no steering to speak of and the tyres themselves were stuffed.

Defeated, I hobbled back to the pit lane in second gear. With the car repaired and the conditions on the track warmer, I set two flying laps to put myself on pole. This is the essence of *Project Cars*. Is it a sim or an arcade racer? The answer is neither – it’s what you want it to be. Do you want a super-realistic racer with super-aggressive AI? You can have it. Do you want something easier to handle with AI that are just challenging enough? That’s possible too.

When you start *Project Cars*, you’re greeted by a gameplay trailer that feels a bit like a *Gran Turismo* title. The music is epic. The visuals are stunning. Afterwards, you’re shown the menu system, composed of separate tiles like Windows 8. After starting a new career, you’re asked



▶ ABOVE / Bob decided that he wanted to be Evel Knievel for a day.

to pick which racing disciplines you want to try out first. There are options from karts all the way to Formula One-style machines or Le Mans monsters, but there are no drifting events, nor is there any kind of off-road rallying.

There are no progression levels or experience points to earn, so you can go where you please. There’s no real garage either – no cars to collect or customise, simply those that are unlocked. There are options for tuning the cars to your liking, but there are no options for modding aside from adding a livery. The only real career progression comes from the three optional trophies – Zero to Hero, Defending Champ and Triple Crown.

The first requires that you win a karting championship, then play another four seasons in other disciplines before winning the LMP1 Championship. Defending Champ requires that you win the same championship three times in a row, and Triple Crown is awarded once you win three different kinds of championships.

Visually, *Project Cars* is miles ahead of many other racing simulation games. The Madness Engine is impressive, recreating the cars and the environments with fine detail. The water effects are

just as impressive, and racing in the rain is terrifying because the water kicked up by other cars reduces visibility to near-zero. If you don’t want a lot of the eye candy, you can also turn it off to preserve performance.

Project Cars doesn’t kid around for the most part. You need to feather the throttle in Formula-style cars in order to not oversteer and skid off the track. Braking before entering the corner is practically required for GT-class cars. The racing line does give you hints about where to brake or accelerate, but it’s up to you to explore the real capabilities of





▶ ABOVE / Racing in the rain is genuinely scary!



the cars you choose to drive.

There's also a new physics and damage model which Slightly Mad can be proud of. Tyre wear, for example, can be calculated in real-time based on the track conditions and your driving style. Grip levels and suspension are also fairly realistic, and if none of these things are just right on your car, you can always head to the tuning menu to tweak it to your liking.

This kind of attention to detail also filters into the music and the sound effects. There's the slap of the clutch in the gearbox as you change gears, an aggressive whine as the turbo charger kicks in, as well as a heart-wrenching rattle when you've broken something critical. All of this adds up to some of the most addictive sound I've heard from a racer yet.

There are ways in which the game changes the status quo as well. In career mode, you can pit in for a tyre change and switch out to a virtual driver that takes over for you. That driver will match your average lap time in order to simulate your actual performance. There's a similar option to simulate a qualifying session or a race from the race menu, without ever going on to the track. Poof, mind blown!

The multiplayer aspect of the game is quite good, but I struggled with common launch network issues. You can join and host races, and you can participate in community events which are organised every week. Unfortunately, while the game

does give out penalties for track cutting, colliding with another player, and going off the track, it doesn't always deter others from trying anyway.

There's so much more to this game than I can cover here and that's why it's special. *Project Cars* is a love letter to the driving experience. It tries to encompass everything there is to love about the sport and gets about 90% of it completely right. The other 10% is made up mainly of lingering bugs, the penalty system not being harsh enough on corner-cutters, and the fact that you need a wheel to enjoy the game fully. In a nutshell, *Project Cars* gave me tingles in the base of my spine. Go buy it. **NAG**



CataclysmZA

SCORE



90 *Project Cars does more for the racing sim genre than any other game before it. This will be difficult to top.*

- ⊕ Sweet, sweet engine noises / Great weather effects / Good track and car selection / Challenging to master
- ⊖ Some bugs still linger / Max 16 players for consoles / No custom livery editor / No clubs or leagues

PLATFORMS / 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO 
 REVIEWED ON / PS4 
 GENRE / Fighting
 DEVELOPER / Dimps
 PUBLISHER / Bandai Namco Games
 DISTRIBUTOR / Megarom
 WEBSITE / dragonballxenoverse.com

Dragon Ball XenoVerse

It's under 9,000! Waaay under

Dragon Ball Z is very easy to have a history with, undoubtedly forming the “gateway anime” that got most of us hooked. But despite its popularity, nostalgia, and cultural value, it hasn't had a truly good video game in some time. *Dragon Ball XenoVerse* doesn't fix this, but it is a step in the right direction.

XenoVerse allows players to create their own unique character from a choice of five races (Humans, Saiyans, Namekians, Majins, or Frieza Clan), and battle through key moments in the *DBZ* story. Your character is recruited to join the Time Patrol, a team that investigates moments when history has been altered. The storyline rehashes *DBZ*'s and honestly feels like a wasted opportunity to tell a truly interesting story, and cut-scenes are also painful to watch. Whether it's CGI or fully animated, the lip-synching is terrible and the script is bland, and you'll find yourself tempted to skip ahead to the fights.

The fights themselves don't disappoint, and capture the spirit of the anime. Battles take place in large 3D arenas and are usually fought in teams of up to six. The characters will banter back and forth, slinging insults and support. It's quite fun to listen to sometimes, and it's better written than the storyline. Besides the custom characters, *XenoVerse* also has a massive roster of famous fighters from the anime. Each one feels unique and has their own custom pool of moves and techniques, and their race has an effect on their stats too. Multiplayer is fun, but local play only has one arena and feels stripped down.

Besides the main story, there are plenty of side quests to tackle, many of them cooperatively. These fights usually place you in “what if?” scenarios, or throw a horde of enemies at you. Grinding through these unlocks loot, techniques, and costumes to dress up your character. Equipping different techniques gives the game a lot of scope to create your own playstyle, and is one of the better aspects




of the game. New costumes, characters and moves are being added regularly through DLC, so *XenoVerse* is bound to be supported for some time.

Unfortunately, there is some bad stuff here. The graphics throughout the game are weak. It's less noticeable in fights because things are moving quickly, but the CG cut-scenes fall well short of passable. The animated cut-scenes are a nice touch, but look as if an unpaid intern drew them. The music never draws on its source material, and is bland and forgettable. This is especially noticeable in the hub world you're forced to traverse to buy items or start fights. Am I saying everything besides the fighting and customising is bad? Yeah, kind of. **NAG**

Sand_Storm

SCORE

58 *There's a fun game for DBZ fans here, although the terrible presentation, weak story, and poor design choices will feel like a waste of time. It's the best DBZ for some time, but that's not saying much.*

 Fights feel epic / Extensive customisation options / Tries something new

 Terrible lip-synching / Weak presentation / Numerous gripes



NAG MUST
PLAY

PLATFORMS / New 3DS 
 REVIEWED ON / New 3DS 
 GENRE / Action role-playing game
 DEVELOPER / Monolith Soft
 PUBLISHER / Nintendo
 DISTRIBUTOR / Core Group
 WEBSITE / www.nintendo.com

Xenoblade Chronicles 3D

Portable feels

If you played *Xenoblade Chronicles* when it was originally released on the Wii in 2011, this is an uncompromised portable edition. Some areas even have better frame-rates than the original. The textures seem filtered down slightly in comparison, but it remains the full (and rather epic) console experience.

For newcomers, *Xenoblade Chronicles* takes place on a world with an endless ocean. Two titans came into being and fought until they killed each other. On their massive corpses, tiny new forms of life emerged until eventually there was the 18 year old Shulk and his friends. After a tragic event, Shulk and company – along with a mysterious sword called the Monado – set out to take revenge. The entire game literally takes place on the body of a dead titan, an expansive open world where you can freely explore, complete side-quests, hunt down specific monsters and improve the interpersonal relationships between your party members. Side-quests improve your standing with the various towns you will visit, which will in turn affect your party's



▶ The environments are massive with full day-night cycles and changing weather, which affects what monsters and NPCs roam about.

capabilities. As your party members start to like each other more, their battle prowess when fighting together improves. This is reflected quite well in their banter during combat (which can become a *little* repetitive).

At the core of all the narrative and exploration is the real-time battle system. If you enjoy the feel of the combat, *Xenoblade Chronicles* is a joy to play. You choose which character to directly control, while the other two are AI controlled. If you're standing close enough to a targeted enemy, you will auto-attack them. Various manually-triggered "Arts" act as spells and powerful attacks, and you can set up the "Battle Palette" for each character to your liking. There is a lot of interplay between attacks: if you inflict the status ailment "Break" on an enemy, another character can then "Topple" them, a third then has the option to "Daze". This kind of combination is made easier when the Party Gauge is filled, letting you do a chain attack and directly input commands for each party member in turn, until the chain breaks. There's a lot of very smart design in the combat, including the Vision system that lets you catch glimpses of the future, allowing you to prevent an enemy's fatal attack by alerting a teammate to the vision, or using an Art that would interrupt it.

Xenoblade Chronicles is a *huge* game with lots of nuance, an interesting setting and plenty of fluff (like the Collectopedia you can fill with items you find). It plays incredibly well on the New 3DS thanks to the second analogue stick for camera control, and the 3D effect is decent if a bit undermined by large enemy name boilerplates. **NAG**

Miktar

SCORE

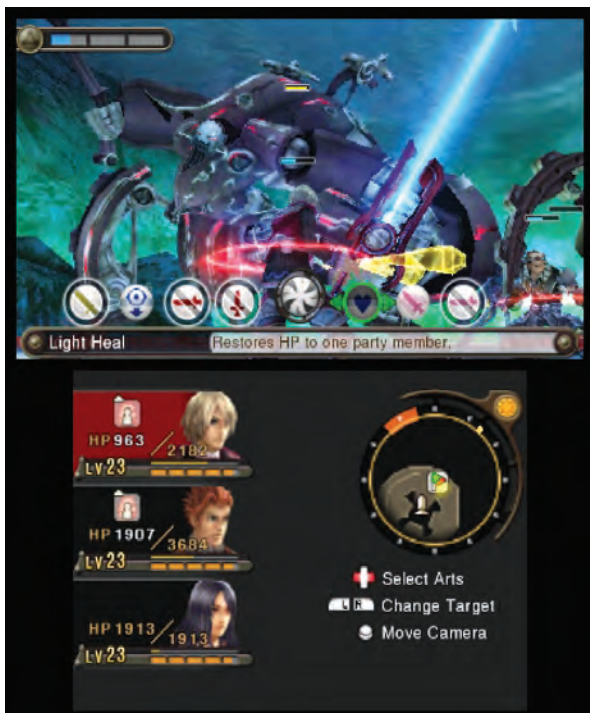


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When it comes to Japanese role-playing games, *Xenoblade Chronicles* is a cult classic for a reason. This new portable edition is the perfect companion for a new New 3DS, especially if you like the real-time combat system. The story is decent, and the characters charming in their own ways, even the dumb ones.

⊕ Save anywhere / Warp points / New Game Plus mode / Great music

⊖ Muddy textures / Repeating battle chatter / Japanese voiceovers were removed



▶ The bottom screen contains the mini-map, character portraits and health, keeping the top screen mostly clear of clutter.

PLATFORMS / PC / PS4 
 REVIEWED ON / PS4 
 GENRE / Online action/strategy
 DEVELOPER / Gaijin Entertainment
 PUBLISHER / Gaijin Entertainment
 DISTRIBUTOR / Digital
 WEBSITE / warthunder.com



War Thunder

Tanks and planes, what's not to love?

Who doesn't want to drive a tank? Trick question, of course you do. If you say you don't, then you're clearly a liar. Or soulless. Or you prefer warplanes.

As a free-to-play action MMO, *War Thunder* faces worlds of competition. Fortunately, this warplane and tank simulator does enough to stand on its own merits and be worth your time.

The gameplay is surprisingly easy to grasp, and after some short tutorials you'll be twiddling ailerons and doing barrel rolls like a pro. Raising the difficulty is like removing training wheels, and the Realistic or Simulation settings will appeal to purists who want a UI-free experience.

Matches are also fairly straightforward, and teams of up to 16 compete to either capture or destroy an objective on enormous maps with highly varied terrain. New missions become playable when you get new vehicles, and there are many single player historical matches to play.

This game wouldn't be free-to-play if it didn't have a needlessly complicated economy. There are three currencies in the game: Silver Lions, Golden Eagles, and



research points. Golden Eagles can be bought with real money and exchanged for certain vehicles or points multipliers. Research points unlock new gear and upgrades, and Silver Lions purchase them. The economy feels complicated, and new players will be scratching their heads at all the strange values. That said, paying money never feels necessary, and it's great that a freemium model can actually be optional and fair like this.

The graphics are gorgeous, especially when seen from the air. The sound effects are immersive, but the music is forgettable and you'll find yourself either wishing there was an epic score to match the action, or humming *Star Wars* music. But the vehicles are the best part. Every aircraft and tank is lovingly and realistically detailed down to the last rivet. Cockpit view in planes is recommended just to watch every dial moving, but the lack of an interior tank view is a letdown. Vehicles are also customisable using stickers and decals, and custom-modded skins are supported too. Only the player can see their own modded skins, but this is a good feature if you plan to Twitch-stream matches.

War Thunder on PS4 isn't recommended if you have a gaming PC.

It's not bad, but it's clear this was made with PC in mind. Menus are cluttered and difficult to navigate without a mouse, and a keyboard is better equipped for all the hotkeys.

On a final note, *War Thunder* is also constantly expanding. Frequent updates bring more vehicles and maps, including community created maps. Playable ships have also been promised, and should arrive this year or next. **NAG**

Sand_Storm

SCORE

80 *War Thunder feels like an MMO for non-MMO players. It's easy to get into, fun to play, and is constantly expanding. The PC version is easier to navigate, but this F2P title is worth a look either way.*

+ PLANES AND TANKS! / Easy to learn / Good graphics / Fair payment model

- Forgettable music / Poorly optimised for consoles / Unintuitive menu design

PLATFORMS / 3DS
REVIEWED ON / 3DS
GENRE / Action role-playing game
DEVELOPER / Ambrella
PUBLISHER / The Pokémon Company
DISTRIBUTOR / Digital
WEBSITE / www.pokemonrumble.com/world



Pokémon Rumble World

Cheap toy thrills

Shallow but fun, *Pokémon Rumble* is a freemium action game where you fight with and collect toy Pokémon.

The full 719 Pokémon species are in the game, though the differences between them is simplified. You move your little toy Poké around, attacking enemies and collecting ones that “topple” over. You can swap to any Pokémon you’ve collected on the fly, but it takes a little while to “wind up” the toy, during which you can be interrupted if you’re hit. The king of the Kingdom of Toys will send you on special quests with specific objectives, or you can just travel via balloon to specific regions. As you play, you unlock more regions using diamonds earned from completing quests.

You can also purchase diamonds with real money, but unless you’re impatient there’s really no reason to. Nintendo does deserve some credit for putting a limit on how many diamonds you can buy, once you hit about \$30 worth the game prevents you from buying more. Beyond the core game loop of “pick island, run your Poké through it, repeat” there isn’t much else to do. You can unlock cosmetic items for your Mii for the game’s StreetPass functionality, but that’s about it. Everything about *Rumble* feels cheap, even if it is charming (and free). **NAG**

Miktar

SCORE



55

A little Gauntlet clone with cute, cheap visuals and bland gameplay. There’s a lot of Pokémon to collect, but the game itself is rather uninteresting past the first hour.

+ Free / Undemanding / Fair micro-transactions

- Overly basic

PLATFORMS / 3DS
REVIEWED ON / 3DS
GENRE / Puzzle
DEVELOPER / Genius Sonority
PUBLISHER / The Pokémon Company
DISTRIBUTOR / Digital
WEBSITE / www.pokemonsuffle.com



Pokémon Shuffle

Puzzler for the poor

Like its non-freemium cousin *Pokémon Battle Trozei*, *Shuffle* is a match-three puzzler where you fight Pokémon and then attempt to capture them.

You match three or more of the same Pokémon face on the bottom screen, and they’ll attack the Pokémon on the top screen. Some stages limit how many Pokémon you can take, and most limit how many moves you have before the enemy escapes. Certain Pokémon can Mega Evolve for special attacks, once you fill up a Special metre by matching their faces. If you’ve played *Puzzle & Dragons*, you’ve already got a good idea of what *Shuffle* is like, albeit far more simplistic.

There are daily challenges that rotate through a schedule, allowing for easier ways to earn powerful Pokémon and coins. Coins can be used to buy one-shot power-ups, or you could spend real money to buy a bunch of coins (don’t, it’s not worth it). You have a limited amount of “Hearts”, which refill after a certain amount of time. You can only attempt a stage (or series of stages) until you run out of Hearts. This is pretty much the standard freemium “energy” model, not unfair, just a bit boring. As you fight, your Pokémon level up, doing more damage per attack. *Shuffle* is not a bad game, just incredibly generic. **NAG**

Miktar

SCORE



56

As far as match-three puzzlers go, *Shuffle* is very easy to get into and understand. But it comes at the cost of being overly simple, with no real nuance to learn and apply.

+ Free / Easy to play

- Too simplistic

LEGO JURASSIC WORLD

RELEASE DATE	>	June 2015
PLATFORMS	>	360 / 3DS / PC / PS3 / PS4 / PSV / Wii U / XBOX
GENRE	>	Action adventure
DEVELOPER	>	Traveller's Tales
WEBSITE	>	videogames.lego.com

LIFE FINDS A WAY

Since 2005, Traveller's Tales has delivered more than 20 *LEGO* games to the world. That's an average of two titles every year for ten years – and the studio shows no signs of slowing. Even as you're reading this procession of text detailing *LEGO Jurassic World* (which is either soon to be released, or already on store shelves, depending when you're reading this), Traveller's Tales is feverishly toiling away to piece together *LEGO Marvel's Avengers* and *Skylanders*-like *LEGO Dimensions*, both due for release later this year. Love them or hate them, there's no denying the endless popularity of the *LEGO* games and their exceptional ability to faithfully recreate your favourite franchises and characters in lovable *LEGO* brick form. And now it's *Jurassic Park*'s turn to be transformed into digital bricks and blocks.

Despite its title, *LEGO Jurassic World* doesn't just cover the franchise's newest film. It covers the original trilogy as well, recreating the magic and wonder of every entry in the series, and hopefully in doing so becoming every bit as timeless as *Jurassic Park* itself. Anyone who's played TT's *LEGO* games in the past will immediately have a good idea what to expect from it, but it's adding a heap of fresh features that are sure to delight both newcomers and long-time fans.

A large part of what makes these games so

successful beyond their ties to well-known licences is their solid, addictive mechanics, which are specially designed to keep you playing long after you've ploughed through the story, and *LEGO Jurassic World* will be no exception. It divides the films into 20 large levels (which are broken up into small, manageable chunks of adventure), with five levels dedicated to each film. There'll be tons of playable characters in the game, but playing through the story mode restricts which of them you're able to use at any given time, and there'll often be locked areas that can't be reached because you don't have access to the right characters and abilities. This is where the long-term value and extensive replayability of the *LEGO* games becomes apparent, because as you advance and unlock new characters, you can revisit levels in Free Play mode and freely switch between everyone in the cast of recognisable faces, using their abilities to explore further, reveal secrets and gather up the many, many collectables scattered throughout the game. There's potentially dozens of hours of play to be enjoyed, and that's without travelling to the open-world hubs.

Between levels, you're able to visit the two islands of Isla Sorna and Isla Nublar. The pair act as hubs for your escapades, and they're completely open for exploration. Given that giant reptiles are the reason we're all here in the first place, the islands are packed

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“There’s potentially dozens of hours of play to be enjoyed, and that’s without travelling to the open-world hubs.”



▶ Mr. DNA, the animated assistant who helps John Hammond explain how the park’s formerly extinct denizens are brought back to life, will periodically appear in *LEGO Jurassic World* to provide cool educational factoids about the game, its dinosaurs, and how to maintain a buzzing social life when you’re an animated strand of DNA.

PLAYING WITH BRICKS

One of the most interesting features of the game is its Dino Customiser, which can be accessed in a special location on the islands. It effectively allows you to genetically modify the dinosaurs (which is likely a nod to the fourth film’s genetics-obsessed narrative), mixing and matching parts of them as you see fit to create weird and wonderful dino-blends. You can put a triceratops head on a T-rex body and vice versa, and you can also assign special abilities to your creations.

Once you’re done with your mad tinkering, you can populate Isla Sorna and Isla Nublar with your newly Frankenstein’d dinos. Take control of them and they can be used to further explore the islands, uncovering secrets and gathering collectables, or you can engage in battles with other dinosaurs. The Dino Customiser ties in nicely with the mixing, matching and general creative experimentation that LEGO naturally nurtures.

I'M PRETTY GOOD WITH A BO STAFF

As with all of the previous games, characters in *LEGO Jurassic World* each boast unique abilities and attacks that can be applied in different ways to solve puzzles, unlock new content and progress through the game's storyline. The characters have been craftily designed to mimic their filmic counterparts in amusing ways.

Ellie Sattler, being a paleobotanist, is more than willing to scrounge around in piles of dino poop to discover what's ailing a sick critter, but she can also water seedlings to grow enormous plants that double as platforms and bridges that characters can use to traverse the environment. Ian Malcolm has his flare, which can be used to bring light to dark areas. Dr. Grant has his raptor claw – useful for chopping through vegetation like a prehistoric scythe – and can dig (because archaeologist, obviously) to uncover useful items. Lex Murphy, who spends much of the first film doing not much other than screaming and knowing Unix systems, can use her scream ability to shatter glass. There'll be over 100 playable characters in the game, ranging from more recognisable lead characters, to more obscure ones like veterinarian Gerry Harding, who's able to follow tracks and sniff out clues in between shooting various things with his tranquiliser gun.

There's a dynamic weather system built into the game. As you explore the levels and the islands of Isla Sorna and Isla Nublar, the weather and lighting will occasionally change, adjusting the mood and atmosphere, and adding visual variety to the game.



with roaming dinosaurs, and it's entirely possible to grab a vehicle (there'll be 15 of them to unlock and drive) and cruise around the islands, spotting dinosaurs and hunting down even more collectables. The developers have alluded to the fact that you can effectively explore Jurassic Park in its entirety, visiting familiar locations and getting up to all manner of brick-bashing mischief. The islands will also be home to the Dino Customiser, which you can read about in one of the box outs on these pages.

It's probably the first question you had when you first learnt of the game's existence, and the answer is yes, there will be playable dinosaurs – 20 of them to be exact, complete with epic dinosaur-versus-dinosaur battles. As with the human characters, each of the dinos has their own unique abilities and uses. The triceratops, for example, can perform a vicious charge that'll smash even the hardest of LEGO structures. The LEGO beasts look incredible, and they appear to have a nice weight to them, with the trike controlling like a tank on legs and causing the screen to shake with every step. We're hoping there'll also be crazy *Dino-Riders*-style raptor racing starring Chris Pratt, if the new movie is anything to go by.

Other than that, it's very much the tried-and-tested LEGO formula. There'll be simple puzzles to solve and LEGO objects to build, with much of the game being about learning to manipulate the environment in order to progress. There'll once again be cooperative play, so you can enjoy *LEGO Jurassic World* with your friends/parents/children/spouse. It'll also feature chase scenes, during which players either control the



“

...the developers spared no expense to ensure the dialogue you hear is exactly as it was in the original films.”



LAUGH IT OFF

The *LEGO* games are known for their wonderful, kid-friendly humour, which we'd imagine is a bit of a challenge to implement when you're dealing with *Jurassic Park's* oftentimes quite serious subject matter. From what we've seen of the game, however, it looks like the team is managing to successfully balance the seriousness of the movie scenes with subtle gags. Much of the game is cleverly designed to inspire a few chuckles while still being highly functional and relevant to the source fiction.

Everything from character abilities and animations (like Ian Malcolm's panicked fidgeting and Lex Murphy's perpetually terrified demeanour) to environmental puzzles and small details during cut-scenes are sure to get you laughing, often out loud. That said, Traveller's Tales isn't shying away from capturing the tension and fear that permeates the films, although they are putting their own spin on things. The infamous toilet scene wherein a cowardly lawyer comes face-to-face with a peckish T-rex is intact, but is handled in a way that'll have kids giggling, rather than scarred forever.

👉 The ill triceratops scene from the original *Jurassic Park* is in the game, complete with an enormous, sickeningly adorable pile of LEGO dino-poop to accompany it. We're told you'll earn bonus Life Points if you dive in and manage to find traces of West Indian Lilac. But not really.

SOUND BITES

Traveller's Tales has opted to use voice overs and audio pulled directly from the films wherever possible. From the sounds of things, however, the process hasn't been without its complications. Given that the original movie is over 20 years old, the quality of the original recordings isn't optimal and thus couldn't always be used in the game. Likewise, some of the lesser-known characters don't have enough lines in the films to flesh out an entire in-game character. In cases such as those, the developers recorded all-new voice overs – but for the most part, the developers spared no expense to ensure the dialogue you hear is exactly as it was in the original films. It tickles the nostalgia nerve and fosters an inherently strong bond with the game, and hearing the T-rex roar is a natural trigger for terror, even when it is made of bits of plastic.





“Scenes ripped straight from the movies have been lovingly given the LEGO treatment and slapped with a liberal dash of TT’s trademark humour.”



humans doing the escaping, or the dinosaurs doing the chasing. In cooperative play, the second player will be able to hinder the dinosaurs, doing things like throwing flares into their roaring mouths.

Traveller’s Tales profess to be huge fans of *Jurassic Park*, and it shows. The team worked closely with Universal Studios throughout, and were given access to the fourth movie during development. They repeatedly use the words “authentic experience” when describing their intentions for the game. Scenes ripped straight from the movies (like the unforgettable first appearance of the Tyrannosaurus Rex) have been lovingly given the LEGO treatment and slapped with a liberal dash of TT’s trademark humour. The LEGO characters have loads of personality and it’s packed with countless little details that fans will appreciate. LEGO Jeff Goldblum’s mannerisms are hilariously over-animated. The T-rex sprays drops of LEGO spittle on the camera when it roars. The loading screens display mini LEGO recreations of the scene you’re about to enter. Everything’s nicely polished and feels like it belongs in this universe.




Ultimately, all anyone really wants from a game wearing the *Jurassic Park* logo is something that treats this much-loved, powerfully iconic franchise with the respect and careful reverence that it deserves, and it certainly looks as though *LEGO Jurassic World* is doing exactly that – but it’s piling on layers and layers of that special LEGO charm which so effortlessly makes these games eternally endearing. **NAG**

Barkskin

MOSH *Pit*

Want to expand your geek lifestyle with loads of cool stuff every month? Our monthly Mosh Pit guide is all you need.

SPEEDLINK RAPAX GAMING KEYBOARD

-  **SUPPLIER** Syntech
-  **WEBSITE** www.syntech.co.za
-  **RRP** R569

Anyone looking for a decent gaming keyboard that'll cater for a semi-tight budget would do well to consider Speedlink's RAPAX. Sporting eight dedicated multimedia keys and red LED backlighting (which can be toggled on and off), you don't need to fiddle with drivers and programmable buttons with the RAPAX – you simply plug it into an available USB slot, and you're good to game. The WASD and arrow keys are specially marked so your eye is quickly drawn to them, and the space bar features thumb recesses that are supposed to help with grip – but we don't see how exactly. The board provides a satisfactory typing experience, is height adjustable and has a 1.8 metre cable.



ASTRUM ST210 WIRELESS OUTDOOR SPEAKER

-  **SUPPLIER** Astrum
-  **WEBSITE** www.astrum.co.za
-  **RRP** R699

The ST210 wireless speaker is great if you're looking for a portable audio solution that won't break your budget, but will survive trips to The Great Outdoors. Two 2.5-watt RMS speakers drive the sound production, and while it doesn't deliver the best sonic quality money can buy, it'll be more than adequate for making your camping trips a little livelier.

Bluetooth 3.0 (with EDR) support lets you pair the ST210 to your mobile devices at a range of ten metres, it boasts FM radio capabilities and there's also an omnidirectional microphone in place to allow for hands-free calls. Micro-USB is used for charging the device and there's a microSD slot available on the unit if you need it, or you can use a basic 3.5mm audio jack to get your tunes playing. The speaker doubles as a power bank, so you can simultaneously charge your mobile gadgets. There's a built-in flashlight and carry handle as well, in case you need further convincing that outdoors is the place the ST210 wants to be.



SILICON POWER MOBILE X21 OTG FLASH DRIVE

- ◆ **SUPPLIER** TPN Technology
- ◆ **WEBSITE** info@tpntechnology.co.za
- ◆ **RRP** R149 (8GB) / R229 (16GB)

These nifty little micro-USB flash drives are designed to instantly expand the storage capacity of your mobile devices – which is mighty useful if you constantly find yourself running out of room to store your media. Silicon Power offers a free Android app that expands the functionality of the X21 with a proprietary file system explorer and enables one-touch backups.

File transfers between devices can be done quickly and easily using the X21 without the need for Wi-Fi or Bluetooth. You can use the X21 with any device that has a micro-USB port, so you're able to plug it into your PC or Blu-ray player to access the files within. Bear in mind that the X21 can only be used with Android devices (sorry Apple people) that feature OTG support.



INCIPIO F38 HI-FI STEREO HEADPHONES

- ◆ **SUPPLIER** Above & Beyond Distributor
- ◆ **WEBSITE** www.above-beyond.co.za
- ◆ **RRP** R399

The f38 headphones are kitted out in synthetic leather padding on the ear cups and perforated leather on the headband frame, and can easily be adjusted to fit your head. They are extremely lightweight and come equipped with both a standard 3.5mm audio adapter and as a ¼" jack. The package also includes a handy black suede carry bag.

LOGITECH G710+

- ◆ **SUPPLIER** Logitech
- ◆ **WEBSITE** www.logitech.com
- ◆ **RRP** R2,799

The Logitech G710+ mechanical gaming keyboard sports Cherry MX Brown switches, so if you're the type of person who enjoys that clack-clack sound of mechanical keyboards but prefers a more toned down version, then the G710+ will hit the right spot. If you have clutter issues on your desk you'll be pleased to know that this keyboard is very space efficient without compromising on any additional features. Within its small size it packs in dedicated multimedia key controls, macro keys and gaming profile keys.

For those of you who prefer a bit of colour in your life, the white-only LED lighting on this keyboard might not be to your liking. Do also keep in mind that you'll need two USB ports to connect the keyboard to your computer, which does however allow you to plug one USB device directly into your keyboard.



THE HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES DVD

- ◆ **SUPPLIER** Times Media Films
- ◆ **WEBSITE** All leading retailers
- ◆ **RRP** R149.99

The defining chapter of Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* trilogy comes to a close and is now available for you to own forever in DVD and Blu-ray format. Relive the epic conclusion to the Middle-earth saga as you follow Thorin Oakenshield, Bilbo Baggins and Gandalf the Grey one last time. If you still haven't had enough you can check out the special features for exclusive behind the scenes featurettes and insight into the making of Middle-earth. A must have for movie and Tolkien fans.



AAXA P3X PICO PROJECTOR

- ◆ **SUPPLIER** iStore
- ◆ **WEBSITE** www.myistore.co.za
- ◆ **RRP** R5,499

Take your presentations or gaming (at 480p) with you wherever you can find a screen or wall to project onto with this tidy mini projector. It lacks some functionality you'd expect to find in a full-size projector, like keystone and zoom/throw adjustment, but it does include focus adjustment to ensure your picture at least looks crisp. There's support for HDMI/composite input as well as USB and SD card input to play video, music, photos and even eBooks directly from the device, and an on-board 1W speaker does its best to deliver audio. A headphone/speaker output is included should you find that insufficient, and it has a built-in battery that should last up to two hours.



INTERSTELLAR DVD

- ◆ **SUPPLIER** Times Media Films
- ◆ **WEBSITE** All leading retailers
- ◆ **RRP** R149.99

Christopher Nolan's latest mind-bending film brings a black hole straight into your living room (not really, because that would kind of suck). The movie follows Cooper (Matthew McConaughey), Dr Brand (Anne Hathaway) and the rest of the NASA team as they travel through a wormhole in an attempt to save humanity, but not all is as it seems with a Nolan film. Expect to be blown away with where the movie takes you, along with great performances from the cast, making *Interstellar* a must-have movie for your collection.



SOUTHERN BASTARDS VOLUME 1

- **SUPPLIER** Cosmic Comics
- **WEBSITE** www.cosmiccomics.co.za
- **RRP** R169

Crav County, Alabama is a tough place for the locals, and an even tougher one for outsiders. So when former resident Earl Tubb returns to town to sort out some final affairs, he has a hard time fitting back in. Things get nasty real quick – this book does a fine job of showcasing hatred and small-mindedness with its roughed-up, noir-esque presentation. Intriguing from the first page to the last, we're sure that this is a series that's going to very interesting places.

NEONOMICON

- ◆ **SUPPLIER** Cosmic Comics
- ◆ **WEBSITE** www.cosmiccomics.co.za
- ◆ **RRP** R299

A weird book for fans of all things dark and off the beaten path of sanity, *Neonomicon* plays on Lovecraftian tropes and will be appreciated by anyone who knows how to pronounce the name "Cthulhu" without thinking twice. Written by Alan Moore, of *Watchmen* and *V for Vendetta* fame, and illustrated by the talented Jacen Burrows, this twisted one-shot graphic novel follows the story of two FBI agents who investigate a series of brutal murders. It's strange and definitely not for young readers, but like all literature, it'll find its place in the world.

BATMAN: ENDGAME PART SIX

- ◆ **SUPPLIER** Cosmic Comics
- ◆ **WEBSITE** www.cosmiccomics.co.za
- ◆ **RRP** R65

It's been three years since the excellent *Batman* series *Death of the Family*, in which The Joker disappeared from the Gotham crime scene. *Endgame* marks his return, and spans over six issues written by Scott Snyder and penned by Greg Capullo. In this last issue, Bats and The Joker face off in a gory finale, and the story arc comes to a close. It's everything you expect from a *Batman* comic: dark, angry, and a bit unsettling. With DC's *Convergence* series now in full swing, this'll be your last chance to grab some classic *Batman* story-telling for a while.



BATMAN: LI'L GOTHAM

- ◆ SUPPLIER Cosmic Comics
- ◆ WEBSITE www.cosmiccomics.co.za
- ◆ RRP R199

With the way that Pop! figures are in the process of global domination, it's good to see licence owners themselves playing with their own franchises in interesting ways. The Li'l Gotham series of figures includes Batman, Robin, The Joker and Harley Quinn, and this Bats figure we have here is the perfect place to start. He's comically squat and will fit on your desk without hogging too much space. There's some minor articulation in the arms and legs, as well as a replacement right hand armed with a teeny grapnel gun.

'TOON TUMBLERS HARLEY QUINN

- ◆ SUPPLIER Cosmic Comics
- ◆ WEBSITE www.cosmiccomics.co.za
- ◆ RRP R249

Bring your love of all things geeky to the dining room with this Harley Quinn drinking glass from 'Toon Tumblers. It's on the large side, holding about 420ml of liquid (we measured it, because we're thorough like that), and is made in the USA. What's really worth noting is that it's not dishwasher-safe, so if you plan on using it as anything more than an ornament, take care of that high-quality print or suffer the consequences. You've been warned!

DC COMICS ORIGINALS WALLETS

- ◆ SUPPLIER Cosmic Comics
- ◆ WEBSITE www.cosmiccomics.co.za
- ◆ RRP R150

Who better to keep your cash, credit cards and pictures of mom safe than Batman, Superman and the Flash? For the sake of accuracy these superheroes aren't actually going to be protecting your money – it's just their logos really. The Batman and Superman versions feature a rubbery texture that pulls the lining out of your pants when you want to pay for something – the nylon Flash one comes out faster. Look the part and show your allegiance to the superheroes of your choice.



HARDWIRED

BY NEO SIBEKO



I've never been and never will be a – “GAMER”!

Gamer. That is a word or identifier I have never used personally and as I get older, I'll probably never use. It really doesn't mean anything to anyone and it is the equivalent of saying, music listener or movie watcher.

Be it we fangled the word or publishers and vendors did, we will never know. Personally I'm inclined to stay away from the term as much as possible, not only because it doesn't mean anything material, but it has some very negative connotations to it of late (sexism, racism, general prejudice and negativity).

By and large, “gamers” on the Internet complain more than anything else. Watch YouTube videos of *The Witcher 3*, *GTA V*, *Batman Arkham Knight* and *Deus Ex – Mankind Divided* or any video for that matter. Within the first five to ten comments you'll read complaints or some negativity for any one reason or another. It's as if “gamers” exist to be dissatisfied with their hobby, which is then projected to everything around them. It is a strange thing, but I believe that the most vocal “gamers” are in the minority and speak loudest because there are so many more places to be heard than before. Forums used to be rife with discussion, no matter how woefully uninformative, they at least had some semblance of coherence. On social media sites, this isn't the case. There's literally no worthwhile input or positive commentary to be found.

I have previously stated that the rise of gaming and all related industries is due to the so called casual gamer. The success of companies like Zynga, Tencent, GungHo, etc. are proof of this in the mobile space. Within the realm of the PC/console we have the usual Blizzard, Activision, Microsoft, Sony, Nintendo, etc. By and large the users that profess themselves to be hardcore gamers, are PC gamers I've found. Mostly the ones that take issue with just about everything on the planet, including how other gaming demographics should be enjoying their games.

There's a disdain for any other control method other than a keyboard and a mouse for instance. An odd combination of input devices to prefer given that they were not designed with gaming in mind. They are the result of the evolution of the PC and by no means offer the most natural interface with which to interact with a virtual world. It is however the “PC master race's” preferred input method I'm told. That master race which I'm not part of because, where possible, I'd still rather game with a controller. This is despite how proficient I've become with the mouse and keyboard by way of hundreds of hours of testing gaming mice.

Again, it is a strange thing that of all people who play games the people who buy the most games are the ones who do not consider themselves gamers. I'm talking about individuals who own both major consoles (i.e. PS3 / Xbox 360 or PS4 / Xbox

One) at any given time with vast libraries for each platform. These individuals have an incredible spend on games, yet you'll never hear from them. When you do hear from them they will tell you of a game they bought, perhaps didn't like or one that they bought with no prior exposure and found it compelling via a strong narrative, great gameplay mechanics, etc.

There is no word yet for these individuals, but if there ever was I'd think I'm more aligned with their temperament and relationship with games and publishers. Sales numbers also do not agree for the most part with the “hardcore gaming” public. Don't believe me? Well consider the whole GTX 970 debacle with endless complaints on forums about NVIDIA and the GPU. The return rate for these GPUs was less than 0.01% and in fact the GTX 970 sold even more after that entire debacle. You'd not have thought so if you read what the most active users on the Internet were saying.

Perhaps it is to be expected because gaming has only relatively recently gained social acceptance and become part of pop culture. Some of the more vocal proponents may be feeling that they are losing their underground, well-established clandestine hobby to influences outside of the traditional demographic. While understandable, this would be untrue, because despite what we may like to believe, games are better today in general than they were 10 to 15 years ago in almost all respects. They are also far more inclusive with a greater representation of various cultures and social norms than before. So perhaps the label “gamer” should be discarded, as there just isn't anything to it anymore but bitterness and pessimism. **NAG**

“It is a strange thing that of all people who play games the people who buy the most games are the ones who do not consider themselves gamers.” “

PSU

Corsair AX1500
R5,799 / www.corsair.com



GRAPHICS

EVGA GTX 980 Classified
R10,870 / www.evga.com



OS DRIVE

Intel 750 1.2TB PCIe
R17,999 / www.intel.com/ssd



STORAGE DRIVE

WD Black 4TB FZEX
R3,199 / www.wdc.com



CHASSIS

Corsair Obsidian 900D
R4,799 / www.corsair.com



DISPLAY

Acer S277HK
R10,000 / www.acer.com



NEW

KEYBOARD

Razer BlackWidow Ultimate
R1,899 / www.razerzone.com



COOLER

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



MOUSE

ROCCAT TYON White
R1,699 / www.roccat.org



NEW

MOUSE PAD

ASUS Whetstone
R469 / rog.asus.com



SOUND

Creative Sound Blaster ZxR
R3,599 / www.soundblaster.com



HEADPHONES

HyperX Cloud
R1,199 / www.kingston.com



INTEL

Intel Core i7 5960X
R13,999 / www.intel.com



MSI X99S XPOWER AC
R5,999 / www.msi.com



Corsair Dominator Platinum Limited Edition DDR4 3400
R12,999 / www.corsair.com



NEW

AMD

AMD FX 8350
R2,999 / www.amd.com



ASUS Crosshair V Formula-Z
R3,699 / www.asus.com



Corsair Vengeance Pro 2,666MHz C11 16GB Kit
R3,899 / www.corsair.com



R95,326



R72,926

G.Skill Phoenix Blade 480GB PCIe SSD

SPECS

CONTROLLER / 4x SF-2282 + SBC 208-2

NAND TYPE / 20nm ONFI MLC

CACHE / None

FORM FACTOR / Half height, half-length PCIe

INTERFACE / PCI Express 2.0 x8

SUPPLIER > G.Skill WEBSITE > www.gskill.com ERP > R8,899

What does a smart DRAM vendor do when profits on SSDs are low? Simple, go for the high-end. That is exactly what G.Skill has been doing with their Phoenix Blade PCIe SSD. Outside of Intel, Kingston, Crucial, Samsung, OCZ and SanDisk, it is very difficult if not near impossible to compete in the SSD arena, or at least SATA SSD arena, without in-house NAND. That seems to be changing for M.2 devices and PCIe solutions but for the most part, the market is more than saturated with SSD providers.

Instead of competing on price, G.Skill decided last year around this time to demo its RevoDrive competitor, the Phoenix Blade. It comes in two capacities, one 480GB and one 960GB. We had the opportunity to test with the former and it has to be stated immediately that this is one incredibly fast SSD. It is a RAID 0 solution powered by four SF-2282 NAND controllers and an SBC 208-2 RAID controller to bring it all together.

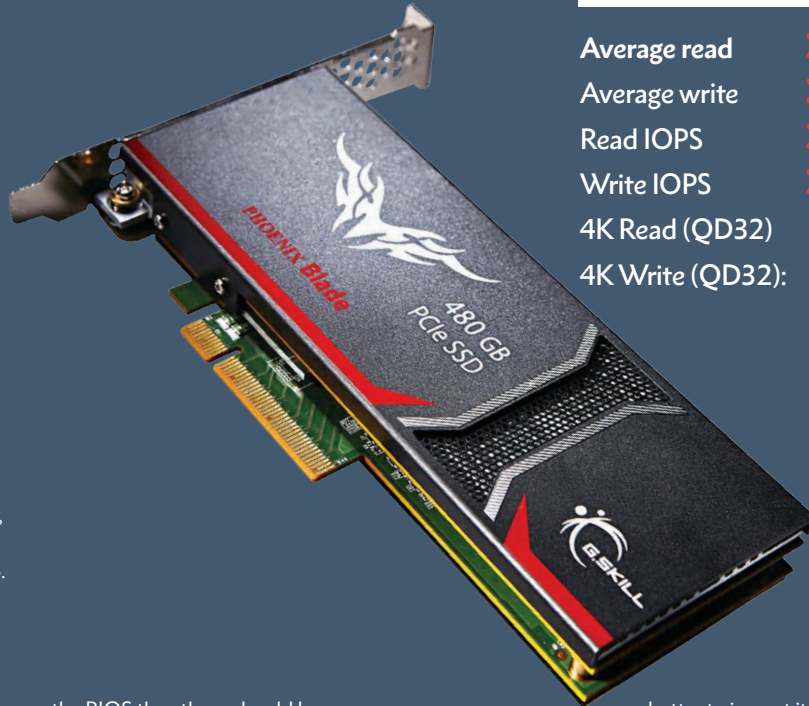
As you'd expect it's a half height, half-length card that can be installed as a regular expansion card within your system. At the rear of the card you'll find two LEDs, one green that indicates "power good" and another that shows drive activity. As you'd expect, the bulk of the weight is due to the heat sinks that cool the controllers and NAND. The SF-2282 controllers don't have any cache associated with them along with the SBC 208-2 chip, a blessing of sorts where pricing is concerned as it would make this drive even more expensive. The drive is rated at 18W which is quite a lot considering that normal SATA SSDs come in at roughly 5W.

Unlike days past, almost all recent motherboards are able to boot the Phoenix Blade, its RAID and PCIe nature transparent to the OS while it supports TRIM and other S.M.A.R.T features. This isn't an NVMe drive, but uses instead the older AHCI standard. Despite that, the performance is phenomenal right out the box. You'll need no software driver either to extract the most from the drive. The drive loads its firmware before

the BIOS thus there should be no motherboard in fact or OS that cannot recognise this drive.

Since the Phoenix Blade doesn't have enterprise roots it's not tuned for such workloads but rather the kind of storage patterns that general users and enthusiasts would subject the drive to. When tested in the same manner as we did the Intel 750 SSD, it produced lower results as expected, but one must be mindful of the fact that we were testing in IO Meter with at least eight clients. In more generalised workloads and certainly in sequential performance, the Phoenix Blade was phenomenal, decimating every other drive we've tested to date save for the Intel 750. It was even faster than our previous champion, the Samsung XP941 512GB drive, delivering an ASSSD score of 2,350 as opposed to 1349 of the Samsung drive. The rest of the performance tests were in line with this result and even in the compressed data tests (a discipline where SF controllers are notoriously weak) it delivered respectable results thanks to its RAID nature.

All is not great however because local pricing for the drive makes it prohibitive for most, thus it would be



BENCHMARKS

Average read	>	1,624MB/s
Average write	>	1,154MB/s
Read IOPS	>	72,332
Write IOPS	>	141,439.24
4K Read (QD32)	>	382.3
4K Write (QD32):	>	437.5

better to import it. Pay the shipping and the duties involved and it should bring the price of the drive landed to your door to roughly R8,899. It's plenty of money to spend on a 480GB drive (courtesy of a weak rand) but then again you're unlikely to find faster solutions for less on our shores. The G.Skill Phoenix Blade is fast and if you have the funds and want speed above all else do consider it for your next major upgrade. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

SCORE

09 *The G.Skill Phoenix Blade speaks to the heart of what the company is about, which is uncompromising performance for the enthusiast.*

+ Incredible performance / SATA 6Gbps RAID 0 beating performance / Looks like a regular drive to OS and BIOS

- Pricing

SPECS

SENSOR / 8,200 dpi sensors
 WEIGHT / 132g (with cable)
 SIZE / 124.5x81.3x40mm
 BUTTONS / 7+1



NAG VALUE
AWARD

GAMDIAS Hades Laser Gaming Mouse

SUPPLIER > GAMDIAS WEBSITE > www.gamdias.com ERP > R399

GAMDIAS managed to impress us with the Zeus, so much so that it garnered the NAG Dream Machine award. With the Hades, the second mouse we've come to examine from the vendor, things are not as peachy. Granted this is a much cheaper mouse and so it should not be expected to be as grand as its more expensive stablemates. Having said that though, there's no excuse for the build quality of the Hades mouse especially given just how novel it is in so many areas. Essentially a wonderful ambidextrous budget mouse, it is as if the engineers did their part, then accounting came in and asked them to make it much cheaper.

Short of the tacky and disappointing plastics, this mouse (much like the Zeus) ushers in a better kind of thinking that the entire peripherals market could do with. This is largely because, unlike other ambidextrous mice, it doesn't make needless sacrifices in comfort to achieve its symmetry. In fact, the mouse isn't trying to be all things to all people, but a good mouse to any one person at any given time. Yes that's hard to wrap your mind around but here's how the Hades works...

You have a set of panels for both lateral sides of the mouse. There is a small fitting that follows the natural or normal contours of the mouse body. That is the arch and indent are followed as you would find on any other mouse, fitting with what we would term regular ergonomics. These small plastic panels however can be removed (they are attached magnetically) for two larger panels. The largest one is what we are concerned with. This panel unlike the two smaller ones is convex and makes the mouse wider than it normally is.

If you're still following you may have perhaps figured out that with these panels you can actually make the Hades a left or right handed mouse. You simply install the smallest panel on



one side and the largest on the other and the mouse will fit both hands with significantly more comfort than any symmetrical design. This is by far the best part of the Hades. GAMDIAS would prefer that you appreciate the 8,200 dpi laser, the improved HERA software suite or a myriad of other features that don't amount to much but text. However from our vantage point, the only thing that makes this mouse worthwhile despite its appalling build quality, is this unique feature that GAMDIAS has pioneered. With the right materials and a weight system this would score perfectly.

If you're able to overlook the materials quality, you'll find a great mouse that for the price really does bring something new and unique with it. Moreover it is fairly sensitive with an average amount of mouse acceleration by default, but that can be configured to your liking via the software. You may also configure angle snapping or lift off distance but be aware that the former is called straight path correction for some unknown reason. It is however exactly the same thing. All the basics are there including independent tracking of the axis, saving macros and assigning of course different polling rates and sensitivity.

Not to be outdone, the Hades also

features an RGB LED system for the track wheel and you may configure any kind of lighting you desire here. The GAMDIAS logo is fixed at the yellow/bright orange and there's nothing you can do to change that or turn it off unfortunately. Odd considering that their Hermes keyboard's deep orange/red LEDs do not match the mouse either. Other than that, this is an interesting mouse alright. It's a one trick pony and that trick it does very well. At just under R400 it is a very affordable mouse and despite its major missteps it is still a worthwhile mouse to own, especially if you are left handed.

- Neo Sibeko

SCORE

07 GAMDIAS has created the first thoughtful ambidextrous mouse for gamers and has done so at a very low price.

+ Fits both left and right handed players / Customisable / Price

- Horrific plastics / Feels cheap

SPECS

SENSOR / Up to 5,670 DPI
BUTTONS / Ten, programmable
ACCELERATION / 30 G
REPORT RATE (USB) / Up to 1,000 reports per second



Func MS-3²

SUPPLIER > Rebel Tech
WEBSITE > www.rebeltech.co.za
ERP > R899

Func's MS-3²'s most striking feature is the odd shape and size of its design. The left side of it is fairly normal, but the right side extends outwards such that your ring and pinkie fingers permanently rest in grooves on the mouse, rather than hanging off it and partially dragging along the surface on which you're playing. This strange shape ensures that the mouse definitely leans more toward palm-gripped players, although you can get away with claw grip just fine. Left-handed players are out of luck, however.

Its abnormal shape and large form do take some time to get used to. There's a chance you might not like it at all, and as such I'd recommend you try it out before you buy it if possible. If you do choose to roll with it, the MS-3² is a joy to use. After a while I found it to be unexpectedly comfortable, and the quality of the materials used in its construction is top-notch.

Button placement is logical, but a couple of them require some shuffling to reach if you've got smaller hands. One of the buttons adjusts the sensitivity to a chosen level while held down, which is always a nice gimmick. Func's software is straightforward and powerful, letting you customise the usual pointer settings, record intricate macros and adjust lighting options if you're so inclined. Overall, there's a lot to like about it, granted you're okay with having to adjust to its unique physical profile. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

SCORE

09

If you don't mind its untraditional shape and size, the MS-3² is a fantastic mouse.

- +** Excellent build quality and overall design
- Might be uncomfortable depending on your preferences

SPECS

KEYS / Romer-G mechanical switcher, individually backlit
ANTI-GHOSTING / 113 keys
INPUTS / None
MACRO KEYS / Nine, three memory banks each



**NAG
HARDWARE
AWARD**



Logitech G910 Orion Spark RGB mechanical keyboard

SUPPLIER > LOGITECH
WEBSITE > gaming.logitech.com
ERP > R3,699

Let's start with the obvious question: is the Logitech G910 worth R3,699? Personally, I don't think so. There are keyboards on the market that offer a similar user experience to the G910 for a third of its price. That said, if you've got cash to burn, are fanatically loyal to Logitech and want a high-quality mechanical keyboard that's sure to turn heads, you can't go wrong with the G910.

Like the G15 and G19 before it, the G910 has a screen that displays useful information while you game – but this time, the screen is that of your smartphone or tablet. You download a companion app, link it to your Logitech software and this second screen will display information about your PC (temperature, CPU usage and whatnot), let you manage your Logitech peripherals (see lists of macros, set your mouse sensitivity and other such things), and show added details about the game you're playing. In truth, it's a superfluous feature, but it's definitely got that cool factor that sets it apart from other keyboards.

Beyond that, it's got everything you'd expect from a mechanical keyboard. The typing experience on the proprietary mechanical switches is excellent, although the board's layout and the tight spacing between each key does take some acclimatising at first. The G910 also features the heavily customisable LED backlighting options that are all the rage these days. As always, Logitech's software is a joy to use, and customising your G910 experience is very straightforward and intuitive.

For some reason, USB pass-through is not a feature, which seems a tad odd given how much thought has gone into the design of the board. Still, in terms of overall quality, it's an outstanding keyboard. All that's left to decide is how much you like having money. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

SCORE

09

The G910 is a nicely designed mechanical keyboard with loads of cool features, but its price is crazy.

- +** Exceptionally well-made / App is a clever concept / Lights, pretty lights
- Layout takes some adjusting / The price is hilarious / No USB pass-through

MSI GS30 2M Shadow & Gaming Dock

SUPPLIER > MSI WEBSITE > www.msi.com ERP > R26,999

As powerful as notebooks get, with increasing battery life, slimmer profiles, better displays and everything you can think of, we still have the issue of notebooks largely incapable of functioning as the desktop replacement units they are always promised to be. It is true that we have very powerful notebooks that feature dual-GPU configurations and up to four SSDs, subwoofers and a host of other features, genuine attempts at this fabled machine in every sense of the word. The problem is as always, they end up weighing a ton, have lamentable battery life and as far as being portable, they are the equivalent of lugging around a toddler that suffers from over-nutrition.

The GS30 hopes to solve this problem by way of a docking station. Docking stations are not new to notebooks and neither are external graphics cards. The issue with many of these solutions however is that they all tried to be portable, so they were meant to be carried along with you wherever you went. The GS30 does away with this concept entirely. First of all, what you should know is that this model is available without the docking station. Thus should you need it at a later point or perhaps need to save up for it, you can buy it at a later time. Understandable at R26,999. That price doesn't include a graphics card either for the docking station. If you do decide to buy it, you'll find that you have an endless upgrade path for the GS30. Since the docking station takes a standard PCI Express graphics card you should be able to upgrade your gaming experience well into the foreseeable future and for years to come.

Over and above housing your graphics card, this docking station has four USB 3.0 ports and allows you to charge your notebook while playing. It has a built-in 2.1 speaker system with two 5W speakers and a single 5W subwoofer. The sound is alright and definitely pleasant to game with but the subwoofer may as well have not been there. In fact perhaps a better



system would be to include two larger diameter drivers instead. Other than that you're probably wondering what kind of graphics card you are to use with the system. Well it turns out that just about any GPU can be used from a lowly GTX 750 to a GTX TITAN-X that uses a dual slot cooler. The unit has a 450W PSU which should be more than capable of powering any sensible GPU today. If that isn't enough, you may also add a single 3.5" hard drive within. Overall a great docking station that is close to perfect as it gets at present.

Away from the docking station, the GS30 2M Shadow, much like its other siblings in the GS range, is as slim as they come and naturally light weight as well. At just 1.3kg it is Ultrabook like in its weight and dimensions. Within this diminutive package you'll find housed not one but two SSDs, 16GB of DDR3L memory at 1,600MHz and a full-on quad core, eight thread Core i7 4870HQ featuring Intel Iris

Pro 5200 graphics. This isn't the most powerful GPU around, but as an integrated solution and for gaming on the go, it works well to provide a steady 35fps in *Tomb Raider* using normal settings. This Core i7 4870HQ is a 47W CPU but under load, the temperatures reached 73°C and the GPU temperature even higher at 87°C which caused a high pitched fan noise. Still, these are isolated use cases when running synthetic benchmarks and for the most part you'll not have to contend with the noise at all. It is something to be wary of however and certainly not a notebook to put on your lap as all the ventilation holes are located on the underside of the body and this notebook will need a constant supply of cool air to function optimally.

The rest of the system is as you would expect from MSI's range. The screen is lovely to behold and with the small dimensions, the PPI is incredible making for the clearest and

SPECS

CPU / Intel Core i7 4870HQ
 GPU / Intel Iris Pro 5200 with 128MB Cache + PCIe x16 GPU
 MEMORY / 16GB DDR3 1,600MHz (dual channel)
 STORAGE / 256GB SSD (2x 128 in RAID 0)
 OPTICAL DRIVE / None
 WEIGHT / 1.3kg

BENCHMARKS

PC Mark8 Creative Suite (OpenCL Acc)	>	5,138
Battery time	>	1H 48m 49s
3DMark Sky Diver	>	5,785
Tomb Raider DX11 (Normal) 1080p	>	35fps

sharpest screen we've ever come across on a notebook. It's a pity then the trackpad was substandard, especially not up to our expectations of products from MSI's gaming range. The trackpad for instance on the GS60 Ghost and the GT72 is exceptional and is the one we use to measure all others against. However, on the GS30 there's input delay and a lack of precision which makes for a less enjoyable computing experience. Fortunately you can always just connect a mouse to the GS30 and be done with it all.

Battery life with a 47W CPU should be good, but again the GS30 is very small and there just isn't enough room within for a large battery, thus gaming time is likely to be under two hours. In our testing we found that the battery was completely drained at just one hour and fifty minutes. Still, given that you have a RAID storage configuration and a host of other bells and whistles this is understandable. The power of the GS30 2M Shadow is in the options it allows you to have. With some high-end items within the docking station, the GS30 could probably be the only notebook that can be considered a completely desktop replacement unit as it places no artificial limits to upgradability. These kinds of notebooks and solutions don't always come together in a cohesive way. Even with this model, one would think there was an opportunity for a dedicated audio controller and some circuitry to really make the most out of the speaker system, but this isn't the case. Still, it does represent the best we have seen to date and it is only fitting that MSI is the one to present this to the gaming world. If only because thus far, no other vendor makes as compelling a gaming notebook range like MSI.

Should you be in the market for a desktop replacement, you may want to give this some serious consideration as it walks a fine line between being a desktop and an ultra-portable notebook. It is expensive, but it offers years of upgradability and relevance. Something that no other notebook can claim. As such we have no qualms about recommending the MSI GS30 2M Shadow. It's a little different, but for that it offers you something no other notebook on the market can. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko**SCORE****09**

The GS30 is a near perfect solution for gaming on the go and at home. It combines the best of both worlds in the best way thus far.

+ Light weight and slim / Iris Pro 5200 graphics / Fantastic performance

- Keyboard layout / Trackpad input lag is annoying

SPECS

SENSOR / Optical, up to 3,200 DPI

BUTTONS / Six, programmable

ACCELERATION / 30 G

REPORT RATE (USB) / Up to 1,000 reports per second



**NAG VALUE
AWARD**

**Canyon Tyrant CND-SGM7**

SUPPLIER > Livdigital

WEBSITE > www.asbis.co.za

ERP > R379

Given its low price tag, it's easy to dismiss the Canyon Tyrant and assume that it'll offer up subpar gaming performance. That'd be a mistake, because it offers fantastic value for money, and anyone who thinks spending around R1,000 on a gaming mouse from a better-known brand is ludicrous would do well to pay attention.

Obviously it doesn't match up to the overall quality and attention to detail of its vastly more expensive rivals. It feels cheap because it is, but it's nevertheless a perfectly functional device outfitted with all of the features we've come to expect from your average gaming mouse. LED lighting adorns its surface, with the scroll wheel lighting up various colours to let you know which of the preset sensitivity settings you've got active, while the rest of the mouse pulses with blue light to ensure that it looks the part.

Ergonomically it's quite comfortable, although it might pose some difficulty for people with larger hands because it's quite a small, thin mouse. The placement of the six buttons is logical, and they can be programmed with macros and other functions as you see fit. The software for delving into the mouse's innards works well and features most of the customisation options you'd expect. All in all, it's really a surprisingly good mouse at an attractive price. **NAG**

Dane Remendes**SCORE****08**

The Canyon Tyrant is a fantastic budget gaming mouse.

+ Affordable / Loads of features

- Lacks the quality of more expensive mice

SPECS

SENSOR / Pro Aim R3 (8,200 dpi)

WEIGHT / 126g (without cable)

SIZE / 135x78mmx40m

BUTTONS / 16

NAG DREAM
MACHINE

ROCCAT TYON White

SUPPLIER > ROCCAT WEBSITE > www.roccat.org ERP > R1,699

ROCCAT has forever been relentless in its pursuit of the ultimate gaming peripherals, from headphones to mice and everything in between. With some misses along the way, the company has more often than not hit the right notes with their products.

This isn't a mouse that only offers small cosmetic changes and advancements over the KONE and their previous offerings. This one builds anew from the ground up and what ROCCAT has come up with is simply incredible.

First off you'll notice the single analogue thumb paddle on the left side of the mouse. This works to control pitch, throttle or tilt inside vehicles or aircrafts. Naturally, you may assign it to any other functionality, but it is a far more natural way to control such vehicle mechanics than the on/off nature of a keyboard or mouse buttons. It really does make the difference and allows fine grained control like never before. It does take some time to get used to, but once you have, it will prove worthy of the time you invested in it.

Secondly ROCCAT has improved their SHIFT+ functionality. This was available on the previous KONE but it just wasn't fully realised as the SHIFT function was shared with another button. This time around it has dedicated placement and it is in a far better location. You need only press down with your right thumb at the base to activate it. This will free your other fingers and allow them to engage most of the other buttons easily doubling up all functions without requiring you to be a contortionist. Unfortunately as much as this is by far a better implementation than previous efforts, it will be near impossible to reach any of the buttons on the left face of the mouse. Oddly enough, if you place this mouse in your left hand you would use your smallest finger (pinkie) to push down on the Shift[+] key and have access to all the remaining buttons.



Perhaps this function should have been placed on the opposite side of the mouse for maximum usability.

The last of the stand out features is the Dorsal Fin Switch, which is located behind the mouse wheel. The idea here is that you will use your middle knuckle to actuate it left or right. It works provided you have smaller hands or shorter fingers. If you do not have either of these characteristics, then it will not be useable for you at all, as you'll need to lift your two primary mouse button fingers to engage. Again, it is odd that when you place this mouse on the left hand, suddenly the Fin Switch is useable even with larger hands, which if anything suggests that this mouse just may work even better with a symmetrical design.

However, despite all these oddities, the TYON is an incredible mouse that is by far the most comfortable mouse from ROCCAT, assisted in part by increased weight and girth over their previous efforts.

Finally we come to aesthetics, always a personal preference but the TYON white is stunning in the flesh. The materials quality is impeccable as always and the various plastics and buttons fit snugly unto the body. Add

a base RGB LED lighting that traces the circumference of the mouse and illuminated scroll wheel, and it is a feast for the eyes out-classing all previous efforts by ROCCAT. It looks great from every angle and the contrast of the white centre piece and black sides makes for one of the best looking mice around.

The TYON has its imperfections, but despite it all it manages to impress thoroughly. It is expensive, but it is compelling in what it offers and as such becomes the new NAG Dream Machine gaming mouse. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko

SCORE ■

09 *ROCCAT has produced their best mouse to date and it happens to be the most innovative mouse on the market as well.*

+ Looks fantastic / Analogue paddle Shift[+] functionality

- Not all buttons are reachable

SPECS

RAM / 1GB DDR3
STORAGE / Up to 4x 2.5/3.5" SSD/HDD (WD Red drives recommended)
CONNECTIVITY / Gigabit Ethernet, 2x USB 3.0, 2x USB 2.0, Infrared
OUTPUT / HDMI 1.4a, 3.5mm audio jack



ASUSTOR AS-304T

SUPPLIER > Pinnacle Africa
WEBSITE > www.asustor.com
ERP > R6,499 (excluding hard drives)

Sometimes a piece of tech comes along that you won't know you want until you've spent some time with it, and in this case the ASUSTOR AS304-T is now a necessity in my life. Hey, I'm a sucker for cool stuff.

This is a network-attached storage (NAS) device with more flexibility than a circus performer. Setup is a little odd: there's HDMI and rear USB 2.0, but out of the box you can only access the device from your network via a browser-based interface. But it can also be used directly, as if it were a PC, once configured for "media mode". For most users you'll probably bounce between the two modes, handling the configuration tasks from the web interface and browsing media with a direct connection (ideally with a wireless keyboard/mouse combo). Since it lacks support for Netflix, Hulu, and similar services, it won't replace your PS4/XBO as an online media streamer, but in terms of serving your own media the ASUSTOR is unmatched. Thankfully, a version of Chrome is available for those with the patience to work around this limitation.

Where it really shines is in the web interface, from which you can install third-party apps and services that include IP camera recording, online backup automation, web hosting, database management and even torrent services. Small businesses could use it to run their entire intranet, and advanced home users will be able to manage their family's media usage from a single device. Note that I said "advanced users" – there's not much here for technophobes, and most of the interesting features are only apparent once you've dug deep into the app offerings. Still, if you take your time and have the manual on hand, there's plenty to be had from this device. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

SCORE ■

08 *If your needs are as vast as your technical know-how, you'll find nearly endless possibilities with the ASUSTOR AS-304T.*

- +** Apps for most needs / Very flexible / Good performance
- No native Netflix/etc. apps / Configuration takes some effort

SPECS

CPU / Quad-core ARM 400 @1.3Ghz
CHIPSET / Mali-400 MP
RAM / 1GB
STORAGE / 16GB (MicroSD supported)
DISPLAY / 7" IPS @ 800x1280
CONNECTIVITY / 3G, Wi-Fi, NFC



Prestigio Multipad Color 7.0 3G

SUPPLIER > Asbis
WEBSITE > www.prestigio.co.za
ERP > R1,999

The mid-range market of tablets is flooded with low-quality stock, but thankfully Prestigio knows what it means to make a product that isn't afraid of being middle-of-the-road, nor does it stoop any lower.

Sporting a decent quad-core CPU and a gig of RAM, the Prestigio Multipad Color 7.0 3G (what a mouthfull!) chugs along at the rate you'd expect for something with the specs of a three-year-old high-end device. Multitasking within the sadly outdated operating system does tend to be a little sluggish, but single-application performance is respectable. This isn't a device intended for extensive gaming, however, but its web browsing and video playback speeds were impressively nippy.

In terms of look and feel it fits right into the mid-range as well, being neither too bulky nor especially thin. Its glossy back plastic panel soaks up fingerprints but gives the tablet a high-quality charm, and the device is light enough to be held in one hand for a moderate amount of time. On board the default installation is a collection of productivity apps but not much else: everything is as close to Google standard as you could want, and that suits us fine.

This is a device that shouldn't set you back more than a couple grand, and you'll definitely get your money's worth. It won't blow back your hair, but for most users it should perform adequately for most tasks, as long as gaming isn't your primary concern. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

SCORE ■

07 *As middle-of-the-road you can imagine, this tablet will neither excite nor frustrate you, but at least it'll look nice and feel good in your hands.*

- +** Good performance in single apps / Decent ergonomics / SIM card support
- Multitasking a bit sluggish / Unimpressive camera / Old version of Android

SPECS

FREQUENCY / 3,400MHz
 TIMINGS / 16-16-16-36 (XMP 2.0)
 VOLTAGE / 1.35V



NAG DREAM
MACHINE

Corsair Dominator Platinum Limited Edition DDR4 3400

SUPPLIER > Rectron WEBSITE > www.corsair.com ERP > R12,999

Corsair has done it again, releasing the fastest DDR set money can buy. Just as we were forgetting that they were the original enthusiast and overclocking memory experts, the firm quietly makes available not only the highest frequency DDR4 set available, but also the only kit tuned specifically for the highest overclocking motherboard - the GIGABYTE X99 SOC-Champion.

To further illustrate the close relationship between this motherboard and this kit, Corsair has employed an orange metallic finish on the DIMMs which matches the SOC CHAMPION's orange heat sinks and accents. The only part Corsair didn't customise, which also happens to be the poorest aspect of this kit, are the new Dominator Air Flow coolers which not only have the incorrect LED colour (red which obviously doesn't match anything on the motherboard), but more importantly they will not mount correctly on the DIMMs. That is, they are almost guaranteed to fall off as each cooler is meant to grip onto four modules, but the SOC CHAMPION only has four DIMMs, with two on either side. An oversight on Corsair's part and certainly disappointing.

Unlike the previous 3,200MHz set we reviewed from Corsair (December 2014 issue), this kit makes use of Hynix chips but they behave very differently, scaling with cooling for much higher frequency headroom. Timings are a hit and miss affair, much like we had with DDR3 and you'll not be able to match the same tight timings as you would on say a Samsung set. Still, given that DDR4 is primarily about high frequencies, at 3400MHz you'll not miss the tight timings of the previous kit. Not only that, but to reach the high speeds this time you need only 1.35V and perhaps lower. There's no need for the high voltages and this is appreciated because at over R12,000 for a set of memory it isn't a kit you'll want to degrade via excessive voltage at all.

However, the best and fastest in the

world has never been cheap or meant to be affordable and right now this is the fastest set you can buy. While graphics card vendors pander to you by telling you that their particular GPUs are binned or specially selected for their overclocking headroom, with memory such claims are easy to validate and that is because virtually all consumer grade DDR4 chips right now are either from Hynix or Samsung. The exact same batch of memory will deliver widely different overclocking results, therefore the only way to find the chips that are capable of 3,400MHz is to actually bin them. Not tens or hundreds but thousands of chips at a time in search for those few that will operate at 3,400MHz at a cool 1.35V. If you want to know what you're paying for, you're paying not only for this performance but the binning process which is indeed costly and that is pretty much why there

aren't any other 3,400MHz kits on the market you can buy. They may be listed in press releases and on online shops but they are perpetually out of stock, vapourware if you will.

Should you have the right motherboard and copious amounts of disposable income, you will still have to spend some time tweaking this memory to get the best from it. Loading an X.M.P profile will work as it should and you'll easily be operating your memory at the specified 3,400MHz. However you should realise that since this isn't an existing or useable divider on any Haswell-E CPU, you are forced in some ways to overclock your CPU. This isn't a bad thing at all and as stated, is a requirement because dividers above 26.66 or 2,666MHz are not supported. So in order to get 3,400MHz your CPU's base clock will need to operate at 127.53MHz. This isn't a stretch however because



as you may or may not know, all X99 platform CPUs have 100, 125, 166 and 250MHz as officially supported base clock dividers. 250MHz doesn't work on any CPU for reasons outside the scope of this editorial, but suffice to say the 166 and lower do work just fine. Thus, 127.53MHz base clock is only a 2% deviation from the reference 125MHz base clock. Frequency however is only half the story, because while four channels at 3,400MHz each (64-bit a channel) provide an aggregated 108.8GB/s of bandwidth, you'll not get anywhere near that operating the memory at the given 16-18-18-36-2N timings, you'll get around 63% efficiency which equates to 69GB/s for memory copy bandwidth for example which is still plenty but not what one would consider amazing. What you need instead is to tune the memory timings down to what your respective CPU's memory controller can handle and that could be as low as 16-16-16-36-1N if not lower. That would boost your efficiency to 71% if not higher, which if you've not done the math is 78GB/s. Not only that, but it lowers latency as well by a sizeable margin. Truly worth investing in and it is safe because there are no memory voltage adjustments required.

In our own overclocking and in seeking to maximise the performance of this set, we reached an incredible 3,500MHz at 16-16-16-36-1N timings. Not only were we able to reduce the reference timings substantially, but increase the speed by 100MHz while still maintaining stability and longevity of the memory. Needless to say all synthetic benchmark results increased accordingly but even more so when paired with a high-end PCIe or M.2 storage drive (Samsung XP 941, SM951 or Intel 750 drive). System response and game load times were the fastest we've recorded. For the seasoned overclockers more can be extracted from this memory as has been shown already where a DDR4 memory frequency record was reached at 4.35GHz at only 1.6V. Low voltage, high performance memory is essentially what Corsair has delivered here and it's not that you'll struggle to find faster DRAM, you simply won't at all regardless of where you may look.

There is a conundrum of sorts however with this kit, because it is certified for one motherboard only which isn't our Dream Machine board. Fortunately, there is one that has come to the rescue at the last minute (reviewed next issue) and

as such we are able to give this kit our Dream Machine award. Corsair has done it again and delivered a peerless set in a tightly contested market. When seeking only the fastest memory available, one has no choice but to go with the Dominator Platinum 3,400MHz kit. It's only 16GB of memory but it is hellishly quick and endlessly tunable. On sheer frequency and performance alone, this kit has deemed itself worthy of a near perfect score. If you have the money to spend, then go out and buy this memory. **NAG**
Neo Sibeko

SCORE ■

09 *The fastest DDR4 kit money can buy.*

- + Tunable timings / 3,400MHz and higher / Unbelievable performance / Lifetime warranty
- Irrational pricing / Dominator Air Flow doesn't quite work

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NAG BEANIES



NAG
HARDWARE
AWARD

ASUS X99 Sabertooth

SUPPLIER > ASUS WEBSITE > www.asus.com ERP > R5,699

A SUS has once again released a new board to add to its X99 line-up. The Sabertooth, like its predecessors, is supposedly built with the most robust components on the market. Each of them meeting and some exceeding the requirements for military grade testing. What that means in theory is that this motherboard and others like it in the family are less susceptible to component failure be it through user error, electronic malfunction, dust, humidity and all kinds of hazardous matter that may visit a motherboard.

What this means in practice though is not clear, as at the end of it all, it's still a motherboard that will either sink or swim by its features over and above how robust it is. After all, buyers of this kind of component are not expecting to use it for even five years let alone ten years. Thus, its life expectancy for power users and all related benefits are of little to no concern.

What really matters here is that ASUS has outfitted this board with a 3rd-party (ASMEDIA as usual) USB 3.1 (10Gb/s) controller. You'll find two of these ports in turquoise at the rear of the board. Naturally these are compatible with USB 3.0 and older devices. The speed that USB 3.1 offers is by numbers double that of USB 3.0, but with the addition of ASUS's USB 3.1 boost software, it ends up being even faster. There aren't any devices we've come across at present that make use of the new standard however. For now, it is good to have it on the board rather than not at all, especially since there's no telling when Intel will integrate support for the specification in their PCH.

More about USB – this board has 11 USB ports at the rear, so connectivity should never be an issue for anyone. It is in these kinds of features where the Sabertooth sets itself apart from the other motherboards from ASUS. For instance, while most users would be content with having five 4-pin



"Overall this is a solid motherboard that ticks all the right boxes and is perhaps the most robust motherboard ever made."

fan headers, the Sabertooth has 11. Moreover these are each configurable and can be set between PWM or DC mode. With software it grants you complete control over the thermal performance of your computer and flexibility that is otherwise only available through a dedicated fan control panel.

This is not to be taken lightly as cooling is a big selling feature of the board. Take for example the thermal armour. It supposedly has several benefits but we believe the most important one is in how it makes for a cooler motherboard. Air is directed and channelled in a way as to keep the components cooler than they otherwise would be which in turn ensures longer component life. It doesn't hurt however that the "armour" helps with the aesthetic appeal as well including structural rigidity. Even if the colour may not be to your liking, there's no denying that this is a decent looking motherboard.

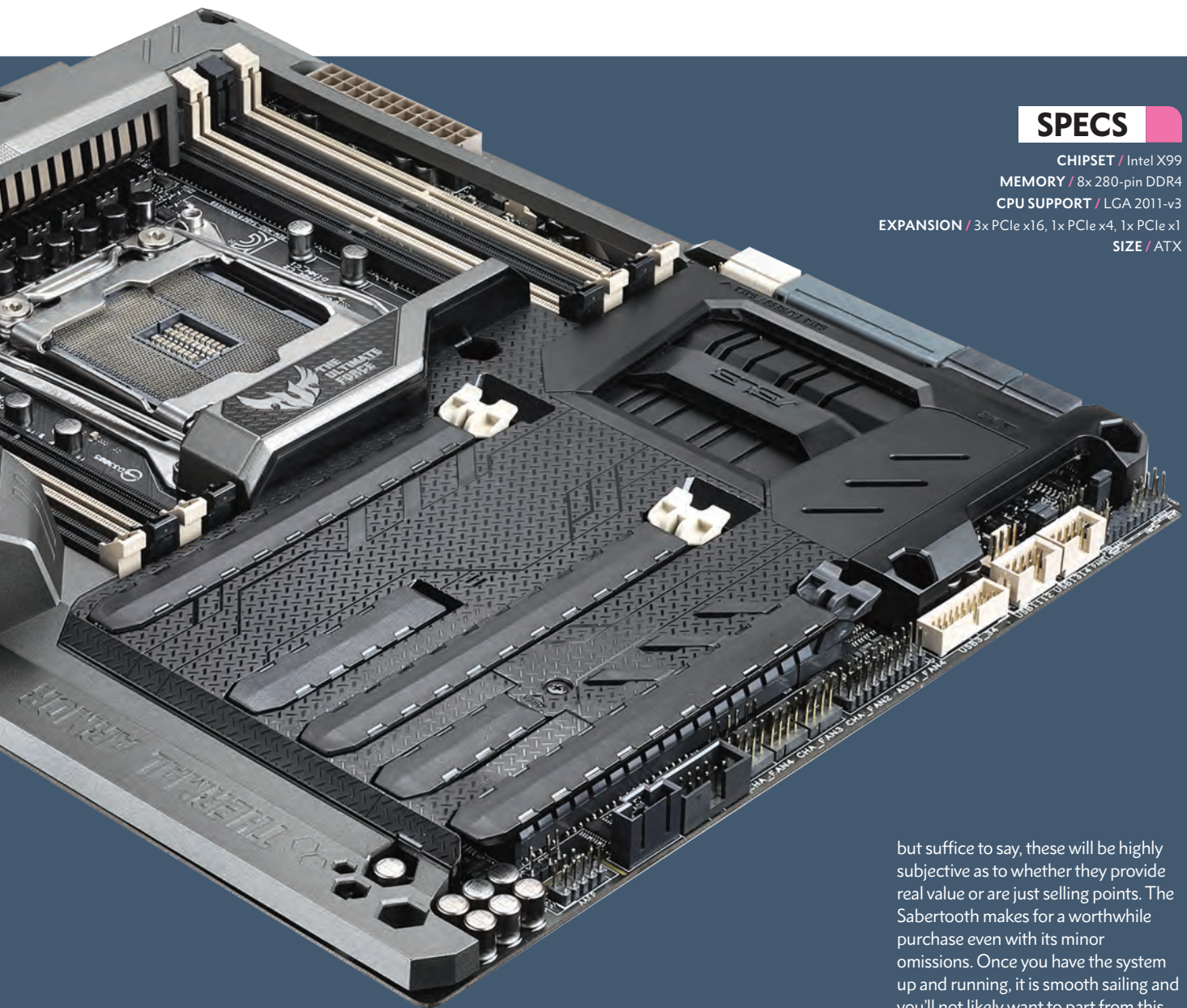
In the list of features that make the Sabertooth so resilient you'll find not only the aforementioned thermal armour, but the TUF ESD Guard 2 for instance which guards against electrostatic discharge from the ports to the pins on various components on the board. This motherboard is made to last and perhaps a more ideal board for those power users who use them in

workstations and critical environments where there can be no down time due to component failure.

Of course with all this focus on reliability that does not mean the Sabertooth is incapable of servicing your gaming needs. It is more than capable of that as it has plenty of overclocking and performance tweaking options within the UEFI. There's very little you cannot configure there. It obviously doesn't feature exhaustive menus as found on the ROG boards, but it is more than enough for any power user to extract the best performance from their machines. As always with the high-end boards from ASUS, voltage regulation is immaculate. ASUS doesn't make it easy to measure this as there are no measuring points on the board, but that is nothing a DMM and some reading can't sort out.

Where the ASUS boards in general do particularly well is in uncore overclocking and perhaps with memory as well. With this motherboard, setting a 4GHz uncore was extremely easy and in fact needed only an adjustment in cache line voltage from the standard (varies per CPU) to 1.2V. The system didn't crash at all and this little tweak goes a long way into boosting performance, especially when combined with





SPECS

CHIPSET / Intel X99
 MEMORY / 8x 280-pin DDR4
 CPU SUPPORT / LGA 2011-v3
 EXPANSION / 3x PCIe x16, 1x PCIe x4, 1x PCIe x1
 SIZE / ATX

some high speed (read 2,800MHz and higher) memory.

The one lamentable aspect of the motherboard, which actually there's no excuse for, is the absence of the POST LED. This can be generalised to other vendor offerings as well, but we expect better from ASUS given just how forthcoming the boards are with information, be it in the manuals or in the UEFI. To not have a simple POST LED to let you know what is going on with the system is almost criminal, as you'll sit in frustration wondering what is wrong with the system for an unnecessarily long time instead of just looking at the POST CODE error. Also missing are power, reset and clear CMOS buttons. These are staples that are available even on ASUS's cheapest X99 motherboard (the previously reviewed X99-A) and as such we can't understand why the decision was made to exclude these basics on what is otherwise a fantastic motherboard.

Moving on to the audio, ASUS has delivered a decent solution but certainly not anything like their SupremeFX supporting boards. It's the familiar ALC1150 codec paired with the typical audio amplifier, de-pop circuitry and audio shielding. It will not disappoint you, but will hardly blow you away either. By today's standards it is average to good.

Overall this is a solid motherboard that ticks all the right boxes and is perhaps the most robust motherboard ever made. Only premium components are used here, not in a way that is easily discernible, but in terms of reliability. Other than the previously mentioned omissions on the Sabertooth, this is one to consider purchasing if you're a gamer, power user or both. It isn't cheap but then again you're getting one of the best X99 motherboards available at present. There are many more features on the Sabertooth that we have not covered in detail

but suffice to say, these will be highly subjective as to whether they provide real value or are just selling points. The Sabertooth makes for a worthwhile purchase even with its minor omissions. Once you have the system up and running, it is smooth sailing and you'll not likely want to part from this family in future. There's something to be said about using a motherboard that you know can survive almost anything you throw at it, including Eskom. The ASUS X99 Sabertooth is easily the best of the entire series to date. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

SCORE

08 *The ASUS Sabertooth X99, much like its predecessors can rightfully claim to be the most reliable motherboard on the market. It's got plenty of features for a fair price.*

- + Thermal armour / 11 fan headers
USB 3.1 capability
- No post code LED, on-board power button or reset Button / Average audio

SPECS

CPU / Intel Core i7 4890HQ

GPU / 2x NVIDIA GTX 980M (16GB)

MEMORY / 32GB DDR3L 1,600MHz (dual channel)

STORAGE / 512GB SSD (4x 128 in RAID)

OPTICAL DRIVE / Blu-ray writer

WEIGHT / 4.49kg



NAG
HARDWARE
AWARD

MSI GT80 Titan SLI

SUPPLIER > MSI WEBSITE > www.msi.com ERP > R69,999

The MSI GT80 Titan is the most powerful gaming notebook that has ever existed. The specs comprise of nothing but the most high-end components and as the name suggests, includes two GPUs in SLI. These are not Titan GPUs though but GTX 980M MXM graphics cards in SLI. If you're not satisfied with the single GPU performance of the most powerful mobile graphics card around, you'll get twice the performance here. This configuration is faster than what any single desktop GTX 980 can achieve especially at QHD and UHD resolutions.

Sadly, this is where we must take issue with the notebook. It features a brilliant 18" IPS Full HD screen. It is wonderful in terms of colour reproduction, producing a sharp image, uniformity and wide viewing angles as you'd expect of MSI notebooks. However, 1080p is just too low a resolution to allow the two GPUs to stretch their legs. This is especially because a single GTX 970 and perhaps even 965M is capable of playing all titles at 1080p. Thus the power of two high-end GPUs is great in theory but means very little in practice. In light of this perhaps a single GTX 980M with high clock speeds which match its desktop counterpart or two GTX 965M GPUs would have been better and cheaper.

The great thing about the GT80 is that you may upgrade these GPUs in future and the notebook is designed to be user upgradable. So in essence MSI is selling you a future proof platform that comes to you with the best components already, including four 128GB SSDs in RAID. These serve as primary storage and in this configuration deliver an incredible 1,619MB/s read and 979.1MB/s write speeds, easily the fastest storage solution we've come across from any notebook. To complement that, MSI has a 1TB storage drive

which seems to be a 7,200RPM model as it delivers a healthy and almost symmetrical sequential read and write speed of 147MB/s and 140MB/s in each discipline.

Memory comes courtesy of Hynix modules, which operate in dual channel mode at 1600MHz. You get an incredible 32GB of memory which will be more than enough for any workload you can throw at the notebook. In conjunction with the very fast SSD RAID solution, the MSI GT80 is snappy and there's literally no waiting for any program to open at all. It is a speed demon shaming many high-end boutique desktop machines.

One of the stand out features and firsts with the GT80 is the mechanical SteelSeries keyboard. It uses Cherry MX Brown keys with red LED backlighting. These are a pleasure to type on and especially to game on. The key caps are replaceable on the WASD and ESC keys and MSI includes gold keys in the package as well. If you use these keys however you'll lose your backlighting and they are a little slippery making them inconvenient and gaudy at the same time. They are best left in the box where they belong.

There is plenty to this notebook, certainly more than we could cover here and if you read the specifications you would understand why the price is ludicrously high. Audio, unlike on other gaming notebooks, is taken care of by the ALC892 controller with Sound Blaster software layered on it. Again it sounds a lot better with headphones than using the built-in speakers though and this will likely be the preferred means of gaming. The notebook supposedly has a subwoofer but it is hard to appreciate as the audio is not better than what is on other MSI gaming notebooks. Despite the tuning by Dynaudio it is anything but impressive nor is it loud. It does however produce clear audio at mid to high levels. Again, headphones are your best bet here.



Cooling all of this is not easy and to that end MSI have used what they term dual thermal cooling which is an eight heat pipe cooling solution that manages to keep the two GPUs and CPU performing as they should be. In our particular test unit, we

BENCHMARKS

PCMark 8 Creative Suite (OpenCL accelerated):	>	7,085
Battery time	>	1h 8m 28s
3DMark Fire Strike	>	12,832
Tomb Raider DX11 (maximum) 1080p	>	179.9fps



some instances. At these times the fans were very audible and sounded louder than the gaming desktop machine or not too far from it. There's no question that MSI has taken precaution against any malfunction due to heat, but there is little to no point in using hardware that is incapable of keeping consistent, practical performance levels at tolerable volumes.

Overall, this is as you may have suspected the fastest notebook we've ever tested and one that will play all games that you load at maximum detail. In terms of the monitor the display overclocked very well from the given 60Hz, and we were able to reach a scan rate of 100Hz, which provides far smoother motion and allows the SLI configuration to be used more effectively. Gaming at that scan rate was blissful on such a

powerful machine. If you want to try multi-monitor gaming you may use the two DisplayPort ports at the rear in tandem with the HDMI output for a three monitor setup. A single GTX 980M may not be able to handle such a configuration but the SLI solution on the GT80 Titan SLI may fair well and we saw this with a Fire Strike Ultra score of 4,256, around 20% faster than an overclocked desktop GTX 980 using a similar CPU.

MSI has done well here, but we would like to see the single GPU solutions as they just make more economical sense and given that they offer more options as far as displays are concerned, makes them more attractive. Still, there is something to be said about a machine that has this kind of power and it is not surprising that MSI would be the notebook vendor to bring such a behemoth to the market. As a halo product this one deserves its top spot and it looks like it will remain unchallenged for the honour of being the most powerful gaming notebook ever made. If you need ultimate power in a portable package and the price doesn't intimidate you, you may want to consider this notebook for your next purchase. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

SCORE

07 *The GT80 Titan SLI is an unmatched gaming notebook in terms of power, delivering better performance than the vast majority of high-end gaming desktops*

- +** Strong graphics performance / Full mechanical keyboard / Incredibly fast primary storage
- Battery life / CPU throttling / Loud

didn't experience any crashing but the CPU did throttle frequently when the CPU was loaded via WPrime or when the system was running through 3DMark Fire Strike tests. The CPU started out at 3.8GHz and reduced its operating frequency to 3.3GHz in

BENQ XL2720Z



VS

ACER S277HK

In this month's Versus we test the BenQ XL2720Z against the Acer S277HK monitor. One is specifically a gaming monitor and the other is a mid- to high-end 4K monitor that should appeal to a broader audience than gamers. Obviously depending on your needs, one may be more suitable than the other, however in the context of our Dream Machine, the choice between the two 27" monitors blurs the line between these two offerings. Regardless of the monitor you select, you'll be sure to get a quality display and hopefully one that can not only serve your gaming needs but your other uses as well.



BENQ XL2720Z

PRICE

The XL2720Z is costly compared to average FHD monitors, but this is a premium gaming monitor. What you pay for is not only the gaming specific features, but the display technology as well. TN panels that support such high scan rates are expensive especially at this size. Over and above that, BenQ uses a completely custom design on their monitors that is tailored specifically for those who would transport their monitors from and to any number of places. Paying over R7,500 for a monitor may seem exorbitant, but as we have previously mentioned in the XL2430T review (see March 2015 issue page 66) a gaming monitor is where all your other hardware investments culminate into a single experience. Thus, the price relative to other components is in context and is more than justified. Over and above that, this high price is still cheaper than what the Acer S277HK is retailing for. Thus, if pricing is your primary concern there really isn't a comparison between the two. The BenQ XL2720Z is simply the better option.

FEATURES

This is where the XL2720Z is strongest and makes the greatest case for itself. It is 144Hz capable, has a 1ms GTC response time and supports NVIDIA's 3D Vision 2 with LightBoost. Those three features on their own would make it an excellent gaming monitor. Even without 3D Vision, this monitor is capable of utilizing ULMB (Ultra low Motion Blur) for faster, lag free gameplay. That is panel side however. Ergonomically, the XL2720Z is height adjustable, tilts, swivels and can be used in portrait mode as well. In addition it has two USB ports and a headphone stereo mini-jack output. Inputs are aplenty with D-sub, DVI, two HDMI 1.4 inputs and a DisplayPort 1.2. Last and perhaps most important is the S-Switch in conjunction with the display pilot software. With these two you can configure every single aspect of the image including the aspect ratio in case you prefer to game at

16:10, 4:3 or 5:4. You can easily select those and even save a profile for specific games. The monitor would then switch to the specified settings upon detecting the game. This flexibility puts power and usability in your hands like no other monitor does on the market. The only downside to this monitor is that it makes use of a TN panel and that means not only is the colour reproduction sacrificed, but it is sensitive to viewing angles as all TN panels are. It is of no concern however if you're coming from another TN panel. Much like other BenQ gaming monitors, the XL2720Z tends to be brighter than its counterparts. The colour distortion at angles that deviate from the normal can't be helped, but the monitor is adjustable in height and angle which helps immensely as you can pretty much make sure you're viewing the screen at a perfect or near perfect angle almost all the time.

VALUE

In comparison to the Acer S277HK, the BenQ XL2720Z is cheaper as previously established, but value is what it provides in today's market for the price. The gaming related and just general usability features are tremendous, but the Achilles heel is the FHD TN panel. For the professional gamer this makes sense for competitive advantage or at least parity with others. However for the high-end gaming user who may enjoy a wide variety of games, 1080p is simply not enough. In the context of our Dream Machine, where only the most powerful and fastest components are used, the minimum resolution we would consider acceptable is 2560x1440 and ideally 3840x2160. Moreover, since the quality of the pixel is as important as the number of pixels, AVHA or IPS displays are a must at this price.

07

As such, the BenQ XL2720Z and its newer TN based stable mates offer diminishing value to the wider gaming audience with each passing hardware generation.



NAG DREAM
MACHINE

ACER S277HK

PRICE

The Acer S277HK retails for around R10,000 making it R2,500 more expensive than the BenQ XL2720Z. For that you get no gaming specific features. The pricing is exorbitant for most gamers and it is without question that as these 4K/UHD monitors decrease in price, this model will decrease in price as well or at the very least will be discontinued for more favorable, more versatile units. Where pricing is concerned, there just isn't any competition between the BenQ monitor and the Acer model. It does however retail for the same price as the larger 28" Samsung S28590D, which is also a TN panel.

FEATURES

There are almost no worthwhile gaming specific features on this monitor, at least not of the caliber that BenQ has on the XL series. That being said you do get DVI, HDMI 2.0 and DP (and mini DP) inputs. There's stereo headphone output as well but there isn't any comprehensive software and for each game you play, if you have different settings, you'll have to adjust the image manually. There aren't any game modes either, so you're pretty much going to stick with sRGB and configure that profile as best as you can for the ideal image quality or your games. With that said, the biggest selling point for the monitor is its IPS panel and UHD resolution. At this resolution and high PPI, there's little to no need to use anti-aliasing in most games. If such a need arises, optimised methods like NVIDIA's FXAA will do the trick and cost very little in performance. As usual for this panel type, the viewing angles are great and just about any practical angle will work for gaming. The colours are vivid and crisp even if blacks do appear slightly washed out. Not noticeable unless looking at an entirely black image in comparison. It is this level of calibration that the BenQ gaming monitors benefit from that the Acer unit cannot match. Having said that, the IPS panel still provides a significantly better image overall and with the high pixel density, games look more alive than before. The image fidelity more than makes up for what is lost in response time. For professional gamers this monitor is unlikely to

be viable, but for the general gamer who enjoys slower paced games or ones that do not rely on split second reflexes, this monitor is more than adequate.

As is the norm with recent IPS panels, the S277HK does indeed allow refresh rates of 75Hz even if they are not officially supported and this may depend on the specific model. For the most part, this is possible and it doesn't distort the image at all, thus you may get some slight reprieve from the 60Hz limit that would otherwise be imposed on your gaming. Operating at the native resolution with the overclocked refresh rate (Vsync enabled) underpinned by an adequately powerful computer, it is simply a better visual experience than the BenQ XL2720Z can offer.

VALUE

At around R10,000 this monitor will need some serious consideration. However given that one is unlikely to seek a 27" 4K or gaming monitor to save money, the financial outlay argument is less relevant than otherwise would be for a 24" model. Purely from our Dream Machine perspective, the Acer S277HK makes sense as it is the only way to allow all those powerful components to be of use. This is especially true of the latest high-end GPUs with plenty of on-board memory and massive fill-rate capabilities. For productivity, general usability and many other usage scenarios (a much cheaper alternative to Apple if you're in the design industry for instance), the S277HK is significantly more flexible than the BenQ XL2720Z. In fact the ability to play an FHD stream or video in a window with other applications open at the same time is not to be understated. In 2013 or maybe even 2014, there would not have been much of a case for the S277HK, but in 2015 with Windows 10's built in scaling for high PPI display and games with UHD textures, the S277HK makes for a very competent and viable dedicated gaming monitor alternative. As such it has to be the new NAG Dream Machine gaming monitor. **NAG**

08

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GG

BY TARRYN VAN DER BYL

Tarryn is writing about games until interstellar space travel is invented and she can pursue new career opportunities as a bounty hunter.



No offence, but but but...

I had this super rad English lecturer during my postgraduate studies. Let's call him John. This one time, in the middle of a class discussion, I said something that upset him. His usually nonchalant demeanour changed instantly from one moment to the next – he looked suddenly furious and... kind of terrified.

"Don't say that word," he told me. "It's a horrible word."

For the remainder of the lesson, he was visibly distressed and I was confused. Later the same day, I emailed him that image of Stephen Fry you've maybe seen on Facebook or 9GAG or some other ivory tower of intellectual thought featuring the quote about how being offended has "no meaning" and "no purpose" and "no reason to be respected". Except, no, I didn't do that because I'm not a smug, sanctimonious asshole.

Instead, I went to his office and apologised, asking what it was that I'd said so I'd know to not say it again. As things turned out, he'd totally misheard something I'd said as a particularly gross

slur for gay men. *Awkward*, because John was gay. And awful, because it's a word that's been used to degrade and terrorise gay men since forever, and a word that had obviously been used to degrade and terrorise John.

As a straight person, homophobic violence is not something I have much personal experience with. But as a human being, I am able to empathise with other people's experiences, and behave with the appropriate consideration. This is, like, simple stuff, isn't it? Apparently not.

Over on Steam Greenlight, Skaldic Games recently tried to push out something called "Kill the Faggot". It's more or less exactly what you'd expect, and according to its conveniently anonymous developer:

"The reason behind this particular game is because of how tired I am of people being overly sensitive and how easily offended people are by every little thing, especially with LGBT issues. [...] So I decided to go down a path that most developers are afraid to go down: to piss these

people off by making the most overly offensive game possible to these idiots to prove a point. The point being that a crappy made video game would offend people so much."

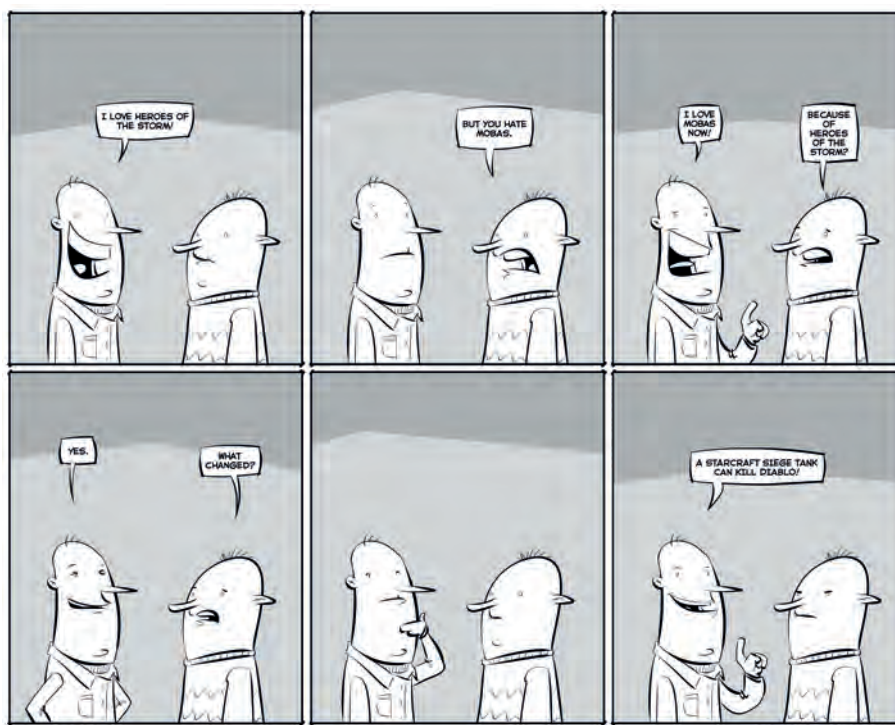
Besides not being an especially profound or otherwise important point to prove, what the existence of this game demonstrates is much less a subversive protest against some prevailing moral police state, and much more a total failure of compassion. Or, as the developer might more honestly have explained:

"As a straight person, homophobic violence is not something I have much personal experience with. So let's stop making such a big deal about it and let's make this all about me."

It's actually almost a shame that Valve yanked the game. When your marketing campaign is, basically, LOOK HOW OFFENSIVE THIS IS LOL IT'S SO OFFENSIVE, the game is probably not the next big thing. You know, the point being that a crappy made video game wouldn't even sell, anyway. **NAG**

EXTRA LIFE

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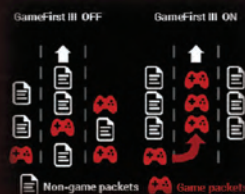
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