SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING GAMING, COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

VOL 15 ISSUE 5

NAG

PC / PLAYSTATION / XBOX / NINTENDO

QUAD DAMAGE:
Four special edition Borderlands covers
Cover 1: Maya

E3
Free supplement
No gimmicks, just games.



PREVIEWS
Twelve previews from E3

HARDWARE
Report back from Computex

BACK TO PANDORA
What ya gonna do with treasure anyhow? All we got here is mud, guns, and dirt!

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NAG

Editor
Michael "RedTide" James
ed@nag.co.za

Assistant editor
Geoff "GeometriX" Burrows

Staff writer
Dane "Barkskin " Remendes

Contributing editor
Lauren "Guardi3n " Das Neves

Technical writer
Neo "ShockG" Sibeko

International correspondent
Miktar "Miktar" Dracon

Contributors
Rodain "Nandrew" Joubert
Walt "Ramjet" Pretorius
Miklós "Mikit0707 " Szecsei
Pippa "UnexpectedGirl" Tshabalala
Tarryn "Azimuth " Van Der Byl
Adam "Madman" Liebman

Art director
Chris "SAVAGE" Savides

Photography
Chris "SAVAGE" Savides
Dreamstime.com
Fotolia.com

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

Marketing and promotions manager
Jacqui "Jax" Jacobs
jacqui@nag.co.za
+27 82 778 8439

Office assistant
Paul Ndebele

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

Subscription department
subs@nag.co.za

Internet
www.nag.co.za
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28 HAVE YOU SEEN THESE GAMES?
Every year, E3 results in millions of milk cartons being sent out, each donning the faces of games conspicuously missing from the show. E3 2012 was no different, with a handful of massively anticipated titles disappearing from under our ever-watchful eye.

54 BORDERLANDS 2
In the jungle, nobody gives a crap about sleeping lions when you've just picked up a gun with sixteen spinning barrels ejecting exploding bullets. Ah wimoweh, mother****er.

92 COMPUTEX TAIPEI 2012
Not that we're trying to make you jealous or anything, but we were totally in Taipei for the world's second-largest computer trade show this year. We may or may not have giddily rolled around in mountainous stacks of brand-new, expensive hardware, *just because we could*. We've written words about such things, plus more.



Just in case you thought it was this easy this month, no, this is not where we hid Roxy this month.

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Reader U



In the March 2012 issue of *NAG* we did a reader survey to get to know you a little better and also discover what you really want in *NAG* (we do actually know, this is just a double check). ;) As usual the results and crazy comments on the survey forms made us laugh, cry and some even made us sit back in stunned silence a few times. The information and feedback is then compiled by a company that specialises in capturing data and helping us ask smart questions. The bottom line is these results are then used to improve *NAG*, and of course let our advertisers know exactly who they're talking to. In the next issue we're going to show you some of the results using pretty pictures (this will probably help us understand them too), and we'll also be highlighting a few choice comments and other bits of creative input we received. It's all very exciting so I thought I'd share a few snippets of info as a sneak peek before the next issue. Ready?

No big surprise that most of our readers are male, 96% in fact. The female demographic is hard to figure because each time we do a survey the results are either up or down on the previous survey – very mysterious, especially when you consider that the female demographic at rAge is on the increase in a major way. The good news is that girl gamer numbers are growing – we just don't know where, why or how. Next up is how many hours you spend playing games a week... 47% (the majority) of you spend between 11 and 20 hours a week playing games, and the extremists (16%) play for more than 30 hours a week – wow, that's like a job. In terms of age, the main bracket is 19-29 with 42% of you falling into this zone. The other big group is 12-19 at 38% and 20% of you are over 30. I recently received a mail from a guy complaining that all the games are 18+ these days and he was wondering how many readers fall into this age group when it comes to gaming. It's exactly 62% (well, *NAG* readers anyway). It also seems that money is no object for around 68% of you who spend between R1,000 and R15, 000 on hardware during a year. 31% of you buy 1-5 games a year and 34% of you buy 6-10 games a year, so well done for supporting the industry we all love.

The clear emerging picture is that the majority of *NAG* readers are technologically savvy, spend large sums of cash on their passion each year and fall into the category of early adopters – people who buy new technology before it's done the round in the market. This is a natural fit when it comes to gamers who are generally more intelligent than most other computer users (because getting computers to play games is hard work see). This passion usually translates into good computer knowledge while growing up and therefore the step into the business sector under the heading IT is easier. Of course we all know why you put up with the "boring" computer jobs – so you can buy more games. Thanks to everyone that participated – you complete us.

E3 SUPPLEMENT

The most important event on the gaming calendar gets another eye-friendly elegantly designed supplement full of useful information about all the games that matter in the upcoming months. Huge thanks must go to our advertisers and sponsors (Megarom and BT Games). You guys make it possible and for that you get all the love, hugs and kisses. The detailed and insightful comments on the games we saw and played are there to help you choose what to buy up to Christmas and beyond. This is the best information you can get straight from the developer's mouth.

NAG LAN

The biggest thing in gaming each year is the rAge expo. This year it's from 5-7 October at the Coca-Cola Dome at Northgate. We'll talk more about the show at a future date. For now I'm going to plug the NAG LAN at rAge. It's been called the biggest LAN in the Southern Hemisphere; we've broken so many records I've lost count (probably like five) and the tickets sell out faster and faster each year (four hours in 2011). Here's the deal. They go on sale at 09h00 (morning) 4 August 2012. This is a Saturday so everyone will have a chance to get tickets. We are not putting them for sale online any earlier because of server jams, and not everyone wants to stay up until midnight and so on. This is the fairest way to do it. You are limited to five tickets per person and if you buy tickets from scumbags who try and make a quick buck from desperate gamers you might not be allowed in the LAN. You have been warned. We offer a reseller service on the *NAG* forums for people selling tickets they can't use for zero profit. Good luck and remember to get into the queue early or you might be sad.

Later people – time to sleep, or maybe a little more *Diablo III*.

- RedTide
Editor

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INBOX

LETTER OF THE MONTH AUGUST 2012

From: Isma-eel
Subject: The Evolution of Video Games and Cinema
I have been thinking about the way games have evolved over time. At first gaming was raw fun, something that you picked up and played just to kill time or just for the challenge and later with the introduction of multiplayer, challenge others. It was pure fun, devoid of any meaning, no scripts were written, no cut scenes or FMV existed – you were entirely in control. Then things started to change over time, with the introduction of still pictures at the very start of a game with some text splashed across the screen, it provided some context to what was happening and surprisingly made you care a little about the little blob on the screen that you controlled. Slowly, it became less about chomping the pills (Pac man) or levelling the blocks (Tetris) and more about, I don't know, saving the world from impending doom.

As games evolved, more and more, it became more scripted or more focused in what it wanted you to feel or made you take on a certain agenda by not only having elaborate intros but interspersing cut scenes or FMV in between game segments to ultimately tell a story. Slowly, the story became an integral part of many games. You were told what the situation was, you were allowed to do something about it in the time between and you were ultimately guided to a particular goal or ending sequence.

Cinema has had a powerful effect on games and continues to make sure that games evolve. It is effectively the marrying of two totally opposite types of entertainment. The one takes away all of your control and the other gives you all of the control, two opposite ends of the spectrum essentially.

But I also feel that this relationship is symbiotic and games can help Cinema as well.

This brings me to the other form of entertainment that I feel needs to evolve: Cinema. Is Cinema immune from any form of change? Will it forever be a non-participatory event or a form of entertainment devoid of providing the viewer any form of control? I do not think so. If games are introducing the elements of movies, why can't movies ever introduce elements of games? Will movies ever bring in a certain level of control to viewers? It is possible. For example, before a key event occurs or a decision is made by the actors on screen, maybe a flash could appear around the edges of the screen in a cinema and this could indicate to viewers that they can vote and decide which action or event they would like to see happen. A simple mechanism, like the one used in Who Wants to Be a Millionaire can be used. It would be great and may encourage repeat viewings because the choice you chose may not have been the one a majority of viewers have chosen. It brings in a level of control to viewers that had previously, never been there.

Therefore, were cinematic experiences in games are taking away the players control. The choice system in cinema seeks to give control to viewers. Please keep in mind that not all movies can have the Choice System™. It will work brilliantly with some movies and not others.

For me, both mediums need to evolve together in order for their convergence to be a true success.

What do you think?

Interesting idea you have there. We do kind of have something similar with extended/alternative endings or even whole different director cuts in some cases. I wonder how things would work on a larger and more immediate scale – like a whole cinema. I'd like to see someone give it a try but knowing my luck the first movie I go see in Choice System™ will be full of morons on their cell phones making all the wrong choices because they weren't paying attention. Ed.

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



LETTER OF THE MONTH

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

HARD TECHNICAL STUFF

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Better mail: letters@nag.co.za
Important: Include your details when mailing us or you'll never get your prize if you win...

From: Brendon
Subject: Magazine
Hello. Could you please tell what I am to do about all the NAG magazines I have bought and collected? I have issues from 2010. Do I just throw them away or can I send them back to you guys? Do you buy them back? Just asking, don't shoot me. Please tell me.

If you don't want them anymore then recycle them. Just remember, if everyone does just a little bit for the environment we all benefit – especially those of you living near a large body of water. Ed.

From: Stefan
Subject: Fan Boys
I have been contemplating this for some time now, and I cannot seem to convince myself otherwise. We are mostly all suckers to the money making machine that is gaming.

I'm a die-hard Gears of War fan. I bought an Xbox 360 purely to play it. You can imagine that sad moment when my buddy and I finished the game on Insane, played through all of the DLC and gotten close to all of the achievements. It's all over. However, over coffee, my buddy and I were discussing this recent disappointment and came to realise it is far from over. Look at Halo for example. The trilogy is over, but then came Reach, and hope grew. Then Bungie went poof,

and hope was lost [not poof, just working on something new and different, Ed]. Then 343 announced Halo 4. Once again hope was restored. I have never been much of a Halo fan so I went on to mock him that 343 is just after his money and no matter how bad the game, he would buy it because it's a Halo game, then it hit me, that's just it. He mentioned that I would do the same if it was Gears of War, and I would.

Together we sat there and realised that even after Halo Reach, there would be more, even after Gears of War 3, there would be another. And here we are with the recent announcements of Halo 4 and Gears of War: Judgment. I realised that one day I would wake up and wonder where all my money has gone, and look over to my ultimate collection of Gears of War and just smile with satisfaction. It is what being a fan is about. I still buy posters and other peripherals. It makes me feel like I'm part of something bigger than this plain and seemingly normal life I lead.

Now moving on to Xbox LIVE – there one can purchase things for your avatar, buy skins and backgrounds for your dashboard and so on. All this costs real money and developers take full advantage of this, you essentially buy half the game off the shelf or from pre-order and then rest you buy separately from the Marketplace.

I couldn't care less. Though games aren't as challenging as they used to be, well besides Dark Souls as a depraved example, they still provide high level satisfaction and something to look forward to at the end of the month. It is somewhat disheartening to see the overall direction that gaming is moving toward, especially with the downloadable content (I don't have access to a super-fast, uncapped internet line and I'm sure I am not alone in this) but I can still have a ball playing the games I love, looking at the art books and displaying all my goodies I got with the Limited edition I bought.

You sir are a credit to gamers everywhere. You also mentioned in a part of your mail that I had to cut for space that you spend money on special editions even when you have no money for food or something like that. Game companies love people like you and you are important to them because you're the kind of gamer that pre-orders future titles and enjoys all the little extras that come because of it. You're just like us really except we turned our obsession into a job because it was getting kind of expensive. The online thing is a thing that's not going to go away anytime soon so get used to it. Also, just think of a high-speed always on Internet connection as an essential part of your hobby – just don't buy too many coloured dyes for your digital wizard beard see. Ed

ON THE **FORUMS**

Going just plain bat poop. We can't help but will pretend to care.
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Q: Do you prefer to do your gaming on the move with your mobile phone/tablet, or is a dedicated handheld gaming device (3DS, PS Vita, etc.) the only way to go?

"I'd go with a Vita or a 3DS for long journeys but mobiles and tablets for shorter journeys."
Jodez

"I prefer mobile phone. It's cheaper and there is some amazing content out there that you can't get on dedicated handhelds."
5h@un13



"I love gaming on my iPhone. I don't see the point of having a dedicated device when you have one that can provide the same quality of gaming and a hell of a lot more. DS, Vita? No thanks."
brazed

"I'd really love a Vita, but as I know myself I'll play one or two games and the device will become a dedicated media streaming device of sorts. Therefore, my Galaxy S is perfect. Sometimes weeks go by without me touching a game on it, but at other times I just can't leave *Angry Birds* alone."
Toxxyc

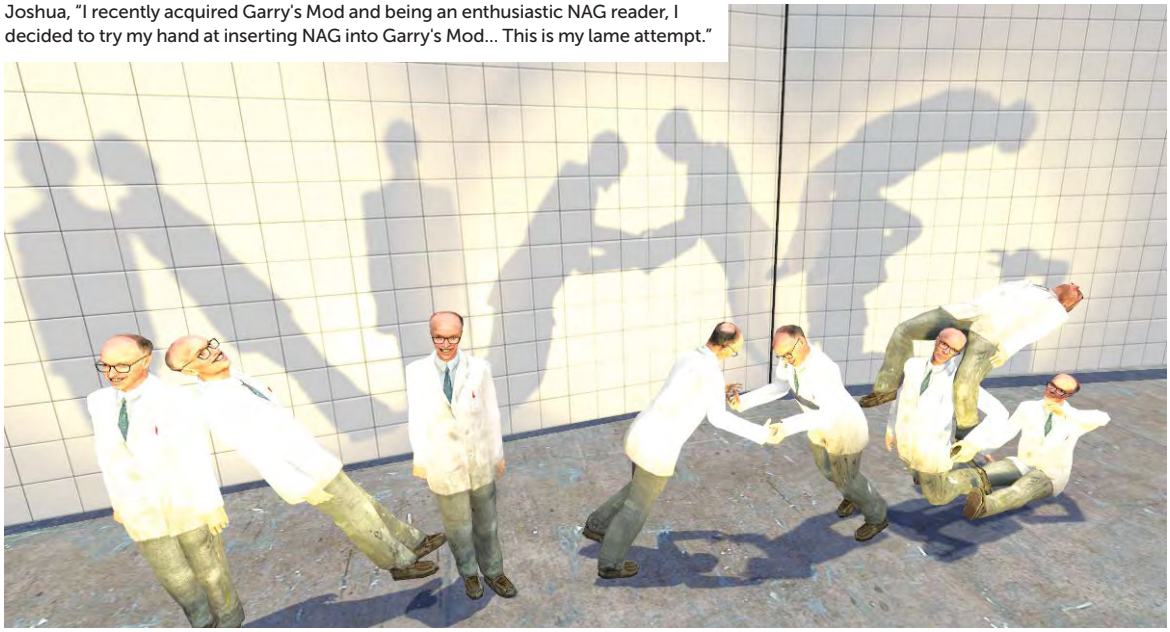
From: Keaton
Subject: Oops! I did it again!
Four score and something odd months ago, I wrote an email to you guys glorifying your magazine and confessed that I had not bought NAG in a year or so... I did it again. I am ashamed! Don't look at me! So this is my attempt at salvation and reconciliation. Let's give this one more try shall we? I know I haven't always been there for you, or spent enough money on you. And I know I haven't ripped your clothing off and opened you up, fingered your pages and flipped you around and around; felt your silky body or listened to what you had to say; or fantasize at the images you give me. You see, it's not you, it's me. I've been... busy - studying and at work a lot. We've both changed over the past year. I haven't met someone else, promise! I just hope we can work things out. I will be at your every beck and call when it's that time of the month. I'll even put your DVD in my DVD ROM.

Sexual innuendos aside, here's to new beginnings? Let's pick up where we left off.

And even though I provided my details, I hope you don't put this letter in you - as short as it is - I'm quite embarrassed.

This is a LOL letter. There had better not be someone else Keaton. We all know that "someone" else, a dirty whore that tries to imitate the pretty and successful girls just to get your attention. When that fails she tries ridiculous makeup and pointless surgical or decorative gimmicks to impress while everyone just points and laughs or sadly just feels sorry for her. Sometimes she even makes up stories or tells outright lies to make an impression, but everyone knows she's just a cheap unoriginal copy of something else. Nobody likes that

Joshua, "I recently acquired Garry's Mod and being an enthusiastic NAG reader, I decided to try my hand at inserting NAG into Garry's Mod... This is my lame attempt."



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.

someone else. Don't go there buddy, you'll catch something nasty. Anyway, I'm glad you're back and we'll never hate you for taking a break on us – we can be a bit much sometimes. Ed.

From: Dave
Subject: Rest

Every time you purchase a console or a computer game it often comes with a little leaflet or manual (you know the one, it's the thing you ignore and throw away or use to stop a table from rocking) that mentions the health risks and possible side effects of the game/console. The main thing it stresses it that for every hour you play you should rest for 15mins. We read this and laugh at the thought of playing a game for just one hour. But I now bring you a whole new reason to do it! Resting every hour or so raises you game skill immensely! For example I was playing Demon Souls yesterday and I kept getting owned by this boss, so I threw the controller on the floor, called the game stupid and left. 15 minutes later I returned remembering I had left the game running. So I thought I would give it one for shot and to my surprise I completely obliterated the boss. So girls and boys when playing take a little rest and you'll see the benefits.

What you have "uncovered" there my fellow gamer is a rage quit followed by panic and guilt and what sounds like a little bit of luck. This is very different from taking a break every 15 minutes as per the recommendations. But well done anyway. Plus: you ended up in NAG, minus: you've shortened you controller's (and heart's) lifespan. Ed.

From: Tayab
Subject: Is NAG 9GB DVD really free?

Greetings to NAG and its readers... You have mentioned several times that the NAG DVD is free and the money you pay is actually for the magazine, but the truth is the free DVD saved me loads of money that made me buy internet cap to download demo's and videos since I don't have an uncapped ADSL. From my opinion, it's the DVD that really matters to me. And the question still remains: do 9GB DVDs exist?

In answer to your original question, yes it's free. Here's why, when we priced the magazine originally we made it ridiculously expensive because we thought it was a pretty good magazine with quality articles and so on. In fact, South Africa's leading gaming, computer & technology magazine sums it up perfectly. Then we thought... you know what, if all our loyal fans keep buying it then we should say thanks and give them something for free (the DVD). It's this story or admitting that we use the word free like everyone else: to make you think you're getting something for nothing when you actually aren't. In answer to your other question, no there is no such thing as a 9GB DVD – it's more like an 8.5GB DVD. I don't really know why we call it 9GB – might have something to do with answer A. glad you find it useful anyway. Ed.

From: Sebastian
Subject: Complaints

I have noticed that everywhere I look I see complaints about the video game industry. Whether it's because Activision releases a Call of Duty every year, or because Nintendo prefers to appeal to the casual market, or because 3D is totally useless, or because every FPS is the same and multiplayer should not be the focus of a video game, gamers always seem to find something to complain about. I am not complaining about this (it would be kind of amusing and I would be a hypocrite if I did), but I find this interesting. Has it always been like this between gamers? Or is there something that the modern developers have done that has made gamers so whiny?

I was going to say that you're complaining now but then you said you're not so that's me all done. Ed.

THE SHORTS

Extracts of n00b from NAG letters

"I usually don't take umbrage to what people say, at least not enough to type out a response, but I don't like blatant bias, and I feel that all Tarryn's 'article' was, was a thinly-veiled slap at the PC and it's community."
- Neal

"Ghost Recon future soldier it's the best you can play online or off line, but my problem – it's too short. I have finished it in one day and for that I give it ten out ten."
- Dallas

"Good evening (going to say evening because at the time of writing its 8:10pm) ladies and gentlemen of NAG magazine"
- Odin

ON FACEBOOK

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"I think that if NAG Magazine expanded to Africa it would be the biggest and best. How about that idea? By the way :/ Why was NAG's meaning changed from "New Age Gaming"? Or is it still called that? PERHAPS I MISSED THE WHOLE POINT :O"
Nkanyiso Hermy Mbambo

"Absolutely love pages 34-41, awesomely rad job guys, thank you. The zombies won't know what happened..."
Charmian Thompson

"Yesterday I was too busy reading the new NAG to study for the exams :P"
Arno Crous

"when the next issue coming out ? Am itching for my next fix #halucinating in the corner, scratching my skin off"
Goitseone Vlad Mathanga

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I, Gamer



The great digital car-boot sale

On the 3rd of July, a very important court in the EU issued a verdict that would have made people behind digital distribution channels sit up and take notice. We're talking about services like Steam, Origin and GamersGate; all of which are surely going to be affected by the ruling delivered by the Court of Justice of the European Union.

According to that court, any software user in an EU country is unequivocally in their right to sell their licence key (for a digitally acquired piece of software) to somebody else. In other words: if little Klaus Strudel decided one morning, over a bowl of knockwurst and Rice Krispies, that he no longer wanted his copy of *Half-Life 2*, he could sell his Steam key to somebody else, and Valve would have to let him.

So yeah, this ruling is kind of a big deal.

How did this start? Basically, software company Oracle took German company UsedSoft to court for selling second-hand licence keys for software that Oracle distributes. A few weeks ago, many would have thought that UsedSoft was screwed. Thing is, the complete opposite happened and I'm pretty sure Oracle's super-lawyers did a bit of a double-take when the court with the most authority in the European Union sided with UsedSoft. Can open; worms everywhere.

The Court of Justice's ruling was that no matter what clauses were stuffed into an End User License Agreement, once that licence key was sold to the consumer, the initial software distributor (in this case Oracle) relinquished any further distribution rights for *that specific* licence key. Furthermore, the original sale was the only amount of cash that the initial distributor was entitled to. Or as the court's official ruling put it so eloquently: "a rightholder who has marketed a copy [of a piece of software] in the territory of a Member State of the EU thus loses the right to rely on his monopoly." This ruling has officially given software distributors the finger in favour of us, the consumers.

So what does this mean for gaming? Well, assuming this doesn't get appealed to hell and back (and it will), it'll mean that digital game distributors will need to make some adjustments to their services for EU counties. We won't be directly affected, but we could be indirectly affected if the likes of Valve and Electronic Arts decide to be mean. The court ruling made it clear that the resale of a licence key would only be allowed if the key was initially considered a permanent purchase. Therefore, if the original key only ever entitled the initial purchaser to a year with the piece of software, then that key could not be sold to somebody else. And that right there is a potentially nasty loophole for publishers to exploit – they could make us begin to pay annual subscriptions for access to our games, whether they're online games or single-player games.

That is, of course, a worst case scenario for us. The best case would be if companies like Valve and EA decided to be clever and implement a second-hand section to Steam and Origin respectively. This would allow users to sell their unwanted licence keys, and then Valve or EA could take a percentage of the sale as payment for hosting the shopfront.

There's an old Chinese curse that says "may you live in interesting times", and I think we all just might be.

- Miklós Szecsei

Minecraft gets adventurous in patch 1.3

Indie super-hit *Minecraft* continues to plough forth, unstoppable in its quest to make itself bigger, better and more filled with stuff for us to tinker with. Soon to be with us (there's a good chance it might already be with us, depending on when you're reading this) is patch 1.3, which, as with any major patch release, brings all manner of wondrous additions, exciting improvements and tantalising new craftable objects.

From a recent blog post by Jens Bergensten comes details of the most important patch changes to look forward to. New mineable emerald ore (which obviously yields emeralds) is sure to send you scrambling back into the depths of all those big, scary cave networks in search of the new treasures awaiting within. Collected emeralds can then be traded with NPC villagers, who will buy, sell or enchant items.

Other new items to craft and collect include: new half-slabs and stairs, cocoa plants, cauldrons, levers, tweaked dispensers and a whole load of improved versions of existing items – like levers can now be placed on ceilings.

It'll be possible to read and write in books when the update hits, so you can leave stories for other people. Tripwire is a particularly exciting new addition, allowing you to set up new traps (which we imagine would be quite useful to deter pesky thieving players from jacking your goods on multiplayer servers) and contraptions. New terrain features perk up the look of the game world. You're able to choose if you'd like to start with a "bonus chest," filled with items that'll get your game of survival started quicker. New to the patch will be Adventure Mode, which for the moment will only be accessible via

Computer says noooo

As if *Diablo III*'s online issues weren't enough to put off some players (not us; we're stilling playing and enjoying this game), Blizzard seems to have slightly lost the plot when it come to treating all of their gamers equally.

As it turns out, if you buy *Diablo III* online through the Blizzard store, you'll be restricted to accessing only certain content for 72 hours until your account becomes "verified". You won't be able to access the auction house, public games, any public chat channels or Global Play until Blizzard has verified your account and deemed that you're not a spammer or gold seller. It's a bit of an irksome move for new players, but for existing players, it at least resembles protection against the spammers.

Something else that might upset certain players is the rumour doing the rounds that Blizzard has been banning Linux players who run the game through the Windows emulator WINE. A large number of players have taken to the (often hilarious) official *Diablo III* forums with claims that their account has been banned for the use of unauthorised third-party software. Blizzard claims that no such policy is in place, but it's difficult to blatantly refute with this many claims. We suspect that it's rather a case of their cheat detection software going a bit wonky. Either way, Linux gamers (you exist, right?), you have been warned.





commands. When active, building, setting things on fire and buckets are all disabled, effectively turning the game into a role-playing game as you can only interact with mobs and the existing environment. It's a whole new way to play *Minecraft*, and we expect it to evolve greatly and become a more prominent feature as development powers onwards.

The tech behind the game will be altered as well: single-player games now exist as a shell that runs alongside multiplayer. It'll significantly affect the upcoming, long-awaited modding API, as mods need only be created once to work with both solo and multiplayer games. It also means that any bug fixed in future for single player will also affect multiplayer servers. Another exciting addition: LAN support.

Minecraft's 1.3 patch is due to land on August 1st. Hopefully when you read this news piece it'll have you eager to dive back into the game if it's been gathering digital dust on your hard drive for a while.

A new challenger enters



There might soon be a new kid on the home console block, but its producers are aiming for a retail price of just $99 (R820)... and the games won't cost a cent.

It's called Ouya and, before you get too excited, it'll essentially be a Tegra 3-based mobile/tablet platform with a TV connector and wireless controllers. It's also still a long way from completion, but the company behind this neat idea has the right people in place to actually make it happen. Yves Behar, the designer of the very successful One Laptop Per Child program is on board, along with Ed Fries (former VP of game publishing at Microsoft during the original Xbox's heyday), Amol Sarva (founder of Virgin Mobile USA), social networking guru Peter Pham, and IGN's VP of business development Julie Uhrman.

Ouya will be designed to run the Android operating system and is being "built to be hacked", with every shipped console including a development kit to encourage owners to make and share their own games. There's no word yet on a revenue model for game developers, but we assume it'll be ad-supported or elicit a premium membership.

As far as release dates are confirmed, there are none! We'll let you know as soon as we do – this is certainly an exciting project.

At E3 2012, Sony announced that *Final Fantasy VII* and *Tomb Raider* would make their way onto the PS Vita through PSone Classic support. Now, we have a little more information on the story: **support for PSone Classics will officially launch with firmware version 1.8.** Unfortunately, no date has been confirmed yet but we expect it'll be within the next couple of months. There's been no word yet on which other games will make their way to the Vita's store, but with the likes of *Crash Bandicoot*, *Resident Evil*, *Spyro the Dragon* and *Tekken* as potential additions, we have high hopes for the future.



The Game Stalker



OCGD – Obsessive Compulsive Gaming Disorder

Considering the amount of time that I usually spend rambling about things that are on my mind, you might be surprised to find that it can be somewhat difficult to come up with something for a column every month.

Not because I run out of opinions, but because when it's a dry gaming month you tend to revert back to old favourites, or games that you never quite finished.

In my case, at this point it's *Skyrim*. I'm currently obsessed with getting 100% and finishing all the millions of side quests, little by little.

I have returned to a number of other games at various points as well over the years and I'm always curious to discover which titles hold extra fascination for gamers, that makes them return to something over and over again. Bring up a topic such as this in gaming company and inevitably there is the chorus of, "I've played that game through about six or seven times!"

The logical question most non-gamers would ask of course is, "Why?"

I have very few games I'll obsessively play through to such an extent that I feel compelled for any length of time to shut out all else, until I manage 100%.

I can honestly say that I have obsessed to this degree about perhaps a handful of games in recent years. *Grand Theft Auto* (managed it in *GTA 3* and *Vice City* but none of the later ones), Red *Dead Redemption* (98% or some such before I lost interest), *Neverwinter Nights 2* (yes I know it's not as good as the original ones blah blah), *Oblivion* (yes, I did it) and now *Skyrim* – which I despair that I ever shall. Simply because I keep getting distracted by pesky things like work.

But as to the why? Well, I couldn't rightly answer that. Obsession certainly comes into it. Is it because you have the need to feel superior to the masses of other gamers? Not in my case, I don't much care about rankings and the like, but I can certainly see how for some people it becomes all consuming.

I'm not going to go all psychoanalytical and stuff and start talking about the why's of obsession and compulsion and all that jazz, but think about it: Does gaming play into our obsessive nature by "rewarding" us with multitudes of trophies and achievements?

I remember once scrolling through the achievement list in *Dragon Age: Origins* and thinking, "Oooo, I haven't had a relationship with all the different characters available!" Really? I was going to play through a game plagued by an annoying Paladin (yes, Alastair was the most irritating part of this game for me) just so I could have a relationship with yet another character (I had already romanced two of them). And whilst I didn't ultimately go through with my playgirl tendencies, the fact that I considered playing this game through for a third time just for that is um... just a little crazy. You know it's true.

So to return to the perhaps only implied question – are gamers obsessive? Well, hopefully not in a creepy, stalkerish way, but in many ways I think gaming certainly caters to some of those tendencies within us by providing us with incentives.

What's that you say? I'll get an extra special weapons bonus if I romance every single character in my party?

Sigh. Wait here while I get my lipstick.

- Pippa Tshabalala

Revealing the semi-obvious: there's a Call of Duty Online



But it's only coming to China for the time being. Now, depending on your outlook on the series, your opinion on both its existence and the China-only nature of it could swing violently either way, but love it or hate it, a free-to-play version of the highest-selling gaming franchise of all time is a massive deal.

As you'll notice by the well-camouflaged words we slipped into the above paragraph, it's going to be free-to-play. Activision has partnered with Chinese game company Tencent to bring the long-rumoured, online-only variant of the series to light. Back in 2010, Activision CEO Bobby Kotick said that Activision had "dedicated teams in these new markets creating content for the audiences that, to date, have only been satisfied by Blizzard games." He went on to say that this game would take advantage of what he reckons is a globally shared desire to be a soldier, regardless of cultural differences.

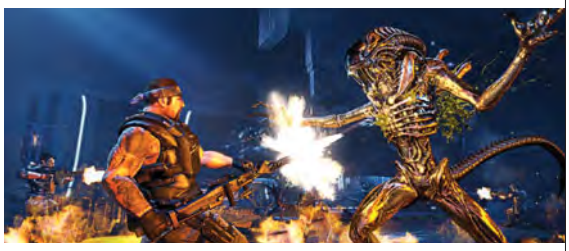
A press release for the game states that it will "capitalize on the rich multiplayer experience that the *Call of Duty* franchise is known for" while implementing "a new gaming model designed specifically for the Chinese market." So: microtransactions then. "Using an in-game store, players can enhance their weapons, gear, and perks built specifically for the Chinese market," it reads. Interestingly, it also appears that there'll be more to it than just straight-up multiplayer action, promising "an original story told through a series of Special Operations missions based on the *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* universe."

Now, there's obviously no word on whether or not this new game touting the *COD* brand will appear outside of China, but we're willing to bet all our LEGOs that it absolutely will, eventually. For the time being, Tencent has the "exclusive license" to host *Call of Duty Online* in China. Bobby Kotick is "very excited" about the game's potential.

"Many games are designed to be as long as possible and from the get-go aim at a certain play-time length. This can only lead to bad things in terms of building a good holistic experience. Trying to extend a two hour experience to a eight hour one often completely removes the impact that it could have had."

-Thomas Grip, creator of Amnesia

SEGA rolls with the punches, ditches retail



As gamers with a bit of history, it's saddening to see a once-great gaming empire like SEGA slowly shrivel up. The company has had a bumpy ride for the last decade and tried desperately to hang on to favoured franchises while occasionally dipping into new IPs (with varying degrees of success), but it seems that the last year has delivered too forceful a blow to SEGA, and now it's been forced to take a big step back in the attempt to recover.

This recovery comes in the form of distribution closures in a number of locations worldwide – including Germany, Switzerland and Australia – and a radical shift to digital distribution. With much lower distribution costs, SEGA feels that digital is the only way forward in today's market, but they won't give up on retail boxed copies entirely – at least not yet. Let's hope that this decision helps the company to smooth out its declining revenue over the coming years; the loss of a publisher this large would certainly be detrimental to the industry as a whole.

Who watches the Adventuremen?



Here's an exciting sliver of news for adventure game lovers: Dave Gibbons, artist and co-creator of *Watchmen* – one of the most influential and powerful comic books of all time – is teaming up with Revolution Software, developer of critically lauded adventures *Beneath a Steel Sky* and *Broken Sword*, to create an all-new adventure game. Gibbons will be involved in the project "from the ground up" and will direct the visual style of it.

"It will look like a Dave Gibbons game," assured Gibbons in an interview with *Eurogamer*. This isn't Gibbons' first video game rodeo: he consulted on downloadable movie tie-in *Watchmen: The End is Nigh*, contributed on updating the art for *Broken Sword: Director's Cut* and had a great deal of involvement in cult classic *Beneath a Steel Sky*. He's now once again joining forces with Revolution founder Charles Cecil to create something completely original.

"We're developing something – I really shouldn't say anything more about it – but it's something I'm quite excited about and it's in an area I don't think has been explored, and it isn't France, and it isn't Paris and it isn't catacombs," teased Gibbons, alluding to the fact that it's not another *Broken Sword*. "It's going to be something that combines a lot of the things I'm perhaps best known for, which are a design sense and a sense of symbolism and maybe an obsessive attention to background detail."

BALDUR'S GATE REMAKE SET TO GET PAID DLC

Baldur's Gate. What a fantastic game that was. You may have heard that Beamdog is revamping and re-releasing the classic RPG – and it's now been revealed that there'll be paid DLC to go along with it. "Boo! Hiss! Damn your DLC!" we hear you cry, but studio head Trent Oster was quick to take to Twitter to quell the dissatisfied uprising by promising that the content will be completely fresh.

"We'll be doing free feature improvements and existing content improvements as we go, but we are also planning some paid DLC," he said. "We would never DLC existing content. Any DLC content we plan to sell will be all new."

"DLC = Downloadable Content, not furry earrings +3. The big guys have overcooked the term with badness. New BG storylines, New characters." Phew! Guess we can put down the pitchforks then. Oster also reveals that game updates for the remake would automatically arrive via a new launcher. Spiffy!



The Indie Investigator



A surprisingly simple rule

I try to avoid making generalised statements about good game design. Reducing the craft to one or two brushstrokes always poses its dangers because it allows us to box our feelings about how a new game's design *should* act. Sticking too closely to the rules blinds us to the many exceptions out there, and understanding that there will always be more hiding just out of sight is part of the challenge.

Still, I'm going to go out on a limb and suggest that the purest forms of game design tend to follow a pattern. First, they are brought forth with passion (well, duh). And second, they are all as close as possible to the idea of being unified games.

"What does this mean?" I hear you ask. Or at least, I think I do, because at the time of writing I've just spent the past 36 hours awake, working furiously on a hot new game prototype that hopefully won't bring crushing shame to my professions of experience. A unified design* is the core idea that everything in a game should touch upon everything else as much as possible. If two design concepts or puzzle pieces don't ever communicate with each other in a meaningful way over the course of a game you make, then you should ask yourself why. After that, ask yourself if there's a meaningful way you can make that communication happen.

It's logical, really: when we speak of being "absorbed" by a good game, part of that process entails noting how well all the different elements click into place with respect to one another, kind of like a well-fitting puzzle. I'm not just speaking for "puzzle games", of course: an action-heavy FPS is still similarly rated on how well things all "click together" for the player. Does the rocket launcher exist in harmony with the pistol? Are shotguns still "OMFG imba noobsticks", et cetera?

It's what we're appealing to when we talk about game balance, and what we want players to explore fully when we mention that a gaming experience will have "over X features in Y categories!" We don't want to make a game where you have to ban those damn shotguns, we just want them to work well together with everything else (and demonstrate to others once and for all that no, guys, seriously, you *were* totally the most skilled player all along. No, really!).

A recent, excellent example of this philosophy lies with *Spelunky* on XBLA. Those who don't have an Xbox should do themselves a favour and at least grab the PC alpha. Just study the living crap out of that game: everything that happens has an impact in myriad and tightly-webbed ways. Although incredibly hard (its design as a bite-sized roguelike platformer pretty much demands this), persevering with this particular title teaches amazing things about what tight, pure game design is all about. Bonus: it features an adorable pug.

Remember that just as one may notice and become jarred by dropped notes in a song, clashing wardrobe colours and *seriously those shotguns are BS* it can be said without a doubt that we live in day-to-day experiences of games being "jarred" by design elements which fail to communicate with the rest of the piece. It's something worth putting time into.

- Rodain Joubert

*This isn't actually an official term by the way, just a thumb suck.

Molyneux and the Expected Over-Promises: 22 Cans Edition

Since leaving Microsoft to pursue his own game development interests at newly formed studio 22 Cans, perpetually hyperbolic industry legend Peter Molyneux has been quite careful to keep his enthusiasm-fuelled claims of everything he does changing life, humanity and the universe forever to a bare minimum. Now that he's ready to detail his studio's first game, the Muzzle of Enough with the Hyperbole +1 that he's been donning has officially been removed.



Called *Curiosity*, the experimental title is due to land on PC, iOS and Android on August 22nd – so if you're reading this before then, keep the date in mind. In it, players chip away at a cube that's formed of 60 million different cubes. The point? To reach the core of the cube and uncover the mystery within. Being a social experiment, the responsibility of chipping away at this cube will be handled by thousands (it'll allegedly support a million people concurrently chipping away at the cube) of players. And interestingly, only one of those people will actually get to see what's at the core. And Molyneux says, in typical 'Neux style, that the secret within "is so valuable, and so life-changingly important."

"It's so amazing I think it will appear on news reports," says Molyneux. "Though it's not a dead cat, by the way." Controversially, the game will support microtransactions, with players able to buy pickaxes for use in their block-chipping shenanigans for half a dollar, and a ludicrous, but obviously powerful diamond pickaxe available to anyone willing to spend $50,000 on it. Wow.

"It's so amazing I think it will appear on news reports"

The results of this experiment will eventually be appended to a larger final project built on the foundation of 21 other social experiment-style games, with the ultimate goal being to connect people globally. If this all sounds compelling, be sure to mark the 22nd of August as "*Curiosity* Day" on your calendar.

Game of Thrones goes massively multiplayer

We've had *Game of Thrones*, the RTS. We've had *Game of Thrones*, the role-playing game. Late last year, MMO peddler Bigpoint confirmed that we'd be getting a free-to-play, browser-based MMORPG set in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* fantasy universe. With the massive success of the gripping novels and HBO's phenomenal television adaptation, it's no surprise that the series is popping up all over the place in gaming.

Now, Bigpoint has given their massively multiplayer *Game of Thrones* its own subtitle. It's to be called *Game of Thrones: Seven Kingdoms*. Bigpoint's previous releases include *Battlestar Galactica Online*, another F2P browser-based MMO. Powered by Unity, Bigpoint is co-creating the game with Norwegian studio Artplant, and the story begins right as [SPOILER] King Robert Baratheon is killed and Westeros is divided by the ensuing chaos. [/SPOILER]

All we know about the gameplay so far is that "players are challenged to form alliances through Player vs. Player (PvP), Siege combat and politics to control Westeros." It'll be mighty interesting to see if Bigpoint manages to make incestuous subterfuge a key gameplay element.



Human Element to include real-world features

Robert Bowling used to be the creative strategist for the *Call of Duty* series at Infinity Ward. Towards the end of March this year, he resigned from that position to start his own development company called Robotoki. On 01 June, Bowling and Robotoki announced their first game: *Human Element*, an open-world zombie survival game with some very neat ideas.

Human Element is only scheduled to arrive in 2015 and will be for next-gen consoles and PCs. You can choose to be a survivor with a focus on action, stealth or intelligence. You'll also need to pick an "identity", which dictates whether you face the zombie apocalypse as a loner, with a companion or with a small child in tow. The last of those three identities will obviously be the harder one as you'll need to scavenge supplies for both you and the child.

The real-world features come in the form of *Human Element* apps for tablets and smartphones. Instead of the usual app spin-offs that we've been subjected to in the past, this one sounds genuinely interesting. Using Google Maps, and overlaying the game's zombie apocalypse elements to those maps, you'll be able to visit places in the real world in order to "scavenge" supplies for your in-game character. Bowling used the example of checking-in (a la FourSquare) at a chemist down the road from where you live; once there, you'd be able to "find" medical supplies for your in-game character.

Sounds interesting, doesn't it? It gets better: it could turn out that somebody in your life becomes rather fond of this real-world scavenger hunt app. As such, they could "find" objects in the real-world and gift them to your character in *Human Element* without ever actually playing the PC or console game.

So far not much more has been revealed about *Human Element*. Regarding the real-world app features, Bowling said that the system would work anywhere GPS map data is available. What's more, Bowling and Robotoki plan to bring "some experience out" prior to the game's 2015 release, so that people can start engaging with *Human Element*'s story.

RANDY PITCHFORD WANTS BORDER-LANDS 2 ON THE PS VITA

And you know what? So do we, especially if it incorporates the idea he's got in mind. Speaking at the recent Rezzed PC and indie gaming show in Brighton, the head of Gearbox and all things *Borderlands*-y said that he'd love it if an outside developer would pick up *Borderlands 2* development for Sony's PlayStation Vita.

"One of the things I wish Sony would do is get behind *Borderlands*, because I'd love to see a Vita version of the game. I want to be able to have the character I'm working on with my PS3, and then when I'm on the road with my Vita I can just keep developing that same character because it exists on the cloud somewhere. Technologically, that's possible."

Gearbox is currently entirely focused on shipping the PC and console versions of *Borderlands 2*, and as such they simply don't have the resources and manpower to be able to tackle this hypothetical PSV version. Still, Pitchford believes that there are "a lot of talented developers who could take our code, our source and our content and perhaps create something like that."

Don't worry... we got this



Miktar's Meanderings



Be not content

Try to imagine the *NAG* readership. Now stop, because you're wrong. You're projecting yourself into that imagined image of what you think *NAG* readers are. I can tell. And I don't even know you. Trying to write something I think you might find interesting, is a fool's errand. I don't know you, and if I try to imagine you, I think you're like me. And you're not like me. You should be happy about that. I'm not all that great. I could stand to lose a few pounds. (Look, I'm American now; I say "pounds" instead of "kilograms"! Kids, the Imperial System is stupid. Metric is way better. It makes logical *sense*.)[*Well that didn't take long, Ed*]

As a writer, this is almost a ritual by now. I ask myself, "so Miktar, what do you think you should write about?" And my answer is usually, without fail: "I don't have the slightest clue, you nosy son-of-a..." and it kind of breaks down from there. Do you think I'm easy to get along with? I don't.

So if I can't write for an audience, what then? Write for yourself! That's what all the English teachers will tell you. And Kurt Vonnegut. He was a pretty good writer. At least, I think so. Okay, so if I write for myself, what would I say?

Aren't you tired of the word "gaming"? Talk to an old person spending their pension in a failing casino, and it means "gambling". Talk to a youth screaming profanity into his Xbox LIVE headset and it means "pwnage". Wall Street bankers ruin people's lives with foreclosures, as they "game" the system to their advantage. "Gamification" everything for maximum learnings! Sexism in gaming? Tell me more about the patriarchy!

Look at you. You shiny bit of you, reading this. I'm not asking you to restore a Harley Davidson and find yourself by driving cross-country, getting into bar-fights and hooking up with loose women. But this distance, right here and now, between us: there is an equidistant point. If you could stop thinking critical hits in *Team Fortress 2* are The Most Important Gaming Issue for just a second here...

The chasm of profundity between those that "Get It" and those that "Don't" when it comes to gaming, is the span that defines the new generational gap. You play *Assassin's Creed*. Your mom plays *Farmville*. You're both gamers, in the eyes of modern culture. I bet that just pisses you off. With the wonders of our space-age digital singularity-sloped culture, you don't even need to wait until you're 80 to become a cranky old man and bitch and whine about what kids are doing today.

Wasn't always like this, y'know.

It's the mid '80s, and gaming is a psychedelic counter-culture. It bestirs (some of) the offspring of an ignorance-drenched milieu, goading them into a safari of Infinite Fun. Kids that "Got It" found a munificent Rock and Roll, a new-kind of *Literacy* that gave escape from the hollow pantomimes of ego and consensus reality. Enlightenment, in a box, crafted with meticulous and artisanal care, and you didn't even need adult supervision. Gaming then, was the perfect antidote to the ennui of the '80s, an appropriate poster-child for the "problem child" of that generation's parentage.

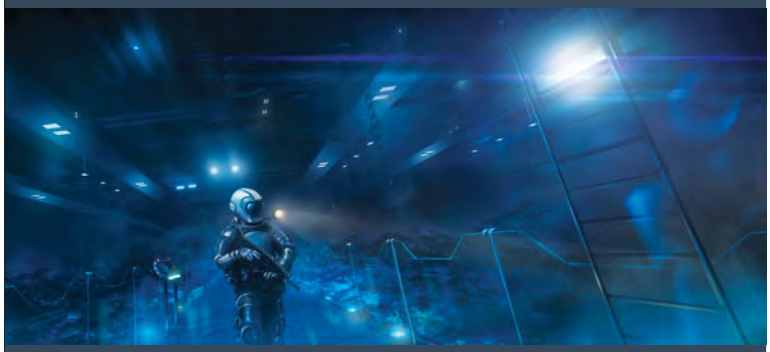
Gaming *was*, but no longer is, a secret, self-selecting club of adepts. It was freedom, and the promise of better things. What is it now? You tell me.

- Miktar Dracon

"David Cage is a genius. If Tim [Schafer] isn't the best writer in gaming, David is. *Heavy Rain* works because it's five scripts all jammed together and meshing together and branching together. It's like it's the world's biggest choose-your-own-adventure book."

-Warren Spector, founder of Junction Point Studios

Dungeon keeping in space?!



Oi! You! Listen up, 'cause this here's important. We don't care if you've no love for *Dungeon Keeper* and don't get as impossibly excited as we do for anything that might even vaguely resemble something that might once have been a *Dungeon Keeper* before it became a *Call of Duty*; you should still pay close attention. Indie developer Simon Roth (who, incidentally, is the newest hire over at Mode 7, creators of excellent turn-based tactical gem *Frozen Synapse*) is creating a game that we can't help but see the *Dungeon Keeper* in, with its clearly Bullfrog-inspired roots.

It's called *Maia*. Named after the planet its particular breed of management sim is based on, we're promised up to 2x2x2 kilometres of procedurally generated alien environment in which to muck about. The idea is to escape the hostile surface of the planet by digging out an underground colony for a bunch of colonists you're then tasked with keeping happy, productive and – most importantly – alive. You mine minerals used in the construction of entertainment facilities, housing areas, space-y dining rooms and even "intricate defence systems" to protect your colony from hostile wildlife, eventually transforming your corner of Maia into a prospering, ever-expanding community.

It sounds simply brilliant, and impressively ambitious for a one-person development team. Promised on the game's official site are complex colonist AI, water and lava simulation, a first-person mode, cellular atmosphere, open data for modders and even bi-polar androids. Built in a proprietary engine, Roth believes that AAA quality graphics are a very real possibility. "The plan is to keep it as a on-going piece and to let it grow organically, over a long period, in the same way *Dwarf Fortress* did," says Roth. Pre-orders are likely to go live soon if they haven't already by time you read this, with different tiers of rewards (depending on how much cash you donate to the game's development) and obviously the game itself then being made available to you once development of the release build is complete.

Get pre-ordering people! We want this to happen. You want this to happen. Head over to **www.maiagame.com** for more stuff packed with info.

LEGO takes another stab at an MMO

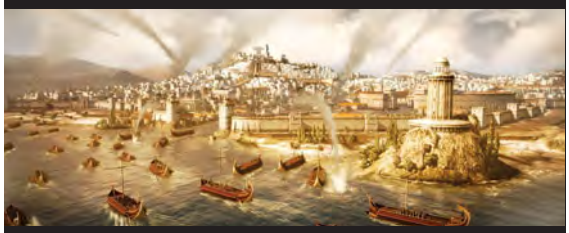


Norway-based MMO developers Funcom have just put the finishing touches on *The Secret World*, but already the company has secured their next job: the development of a LEGO MMO.

"The market for family-friendly online experiences intended for children and youngsters is brimming with potential," said Funcom CEO Trond Arne Aas. "This is source material we all know and love and we simply cannot wait to get started working with the LEGO Group on realizing this exciting project."

The game will be based on the huge selection of available LEGO minifigures, which sounds like an excellent opportunity for fun and quick character customisation. There's no word yet on which worlds will be presented in the game, but we hope it's *all* of them. The Harry Star Wars of the Rings Craft world is just begging to be built. We hope that this MMO manages to survive longer than the mere 15 months that *LEGO Universe* crawled through – just a third of the amount of time that it took to build the game.

For the glory of Rome



Creative Assembly's *Total War* franchise has enjoyed a solid run over the years. The game might have a niche appeal, but those who play it love it, and those who love it should be very happy to hear that the studio has finally confirmed the next game in the series: *Total War: Rome II* – because naming conventions are silly (or maybe it's the change of publisher between then and now). A sort-of sequel to *Rome: Total War* of 2004, *Rome II* will add a number of new gameplay features including simultaneous land and sea battles (complete with amphibious warfare), customisable weapon load-outs for legions, a variety of playable factions in addition to the Roman Empire itself, and a supposedly deeper narrative than other games in the franchise, which the developer claims will add more "human drama" to the game and the experience of ruling your faction of choice.

At this early stage in development, a final release date is anyone's guess but initial stabs in the dark indicate that Creative Assembly is aiming for Q3 2013.

NEXT SUPER SMASH BROS. PROBABLY WON'T HAVE MORE CHARACTERS

Nintendo's "every possible Nintendo character ever brawling in a Nintendo-themed arena for super happy fun times" simulator *Super Smash Bros.* has a new title in the works now that Masahiro Sakurai is all done with *Kid Icarus: Uprising*. The as-yet-untitled game will release on Wii U and 3DS in the future. Speaking with *Nintendo Power*, Sakurai revealed the slightly disappointing news that the roster likely won't expand with this next title.

"It isn't a matter of 'if the next game has 50 characters, that'll be enough'," said Sakurai. "There is a certain charm to games that have huge casts of playable characters, but they tend to have issues with game balance and it becomes very difficult to fine-tune each character and have them all feel distinctive.... In terms of quantity, we've probably already reached the limit of what's feasible. I think a change of direction may be what's needed."

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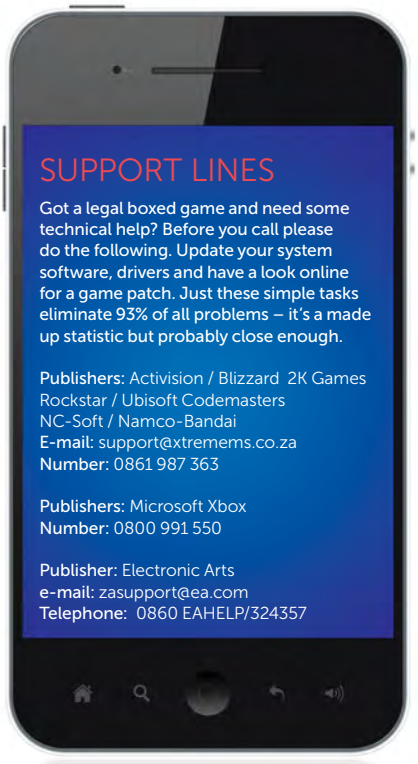
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RIP Radical Entertainment



Despite raking in close to a million sales, *Prototype 2* didn't find "a broad commercial audience" for Activision, and now the publisher has decided to all-but shut down the game's creators, Radical Entertainment.

This rather shocking news came seemingly out of the blue, for both the public and a number of employees at the studio; *Prototype 2* hardly blew back everyone's hair, but it was a solid enough title that delivered precisely what it promised. Unfortunately, Activision seems stuck on the idea that if a game doesn't crack the kind of sales levels easily managed by big hitters like *Call of Duty* and anything from Blizzard, then it's not even worth bothering to keep the studio together. This is a huge pity and, frankly, a short-sighted, cut-throat move from the publisher. At times like these, with indie studios showing that creativity and freedom to experiment is critical to this industry moving forward, it's a shame that a studio that "only" manages to sell a million copies of its latest game is deemed unfit to continue development.

So what happens to *Prototype 2*'s PC launch? Well, it's still going to happen. A few key members of staff will stay on to finish the port and provide support for the game, and those people who are lucky enough will find themselves lumped onto other Activision projects. The publisher is supposedly working to keep as many people as it's financially viable to do, and a few reports claim that Activision may even attempt to sell the studio to recover costs.

ACTIVISION ANNOUNCES THE WALKING DEAD FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

Don't confuse this with Telltale developed adventure game series for *The Walking Dead* – those games are based on the comic books and are, incidentally, really good and worth checking out. Activision, on the other hand, has announced that they will be publishing another game based on *The Walking Dead*, only this one is a first-person shooter and it's based on the AMC TV series of *The Walking Dead*.

The game is being developed by Terminal Reality, whose last three games include the recent *Ghostbusters* game, *Def Jam Rapstar* and *Kinect Star Wars*. This also means that *The Walking Dead* FPS could go either way; we're hoping for the direction that leads to "awesome".

You'll take on the role of Daryl Dixon from the TV show; Daryl's brother Merle will be along for the ride as well. The game itself will be a prequel to the events of the TV series, as the two brothers fight their way across Georgia to reach the supposed safety of Atlanta. Daryl is probably one of the best characters from the AMC TV series, so taking on his role in an FPS has a lot of potential. *The Walking Dead* will be out in 2013 for PC, PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360.

Game programmer? Make a ton of money



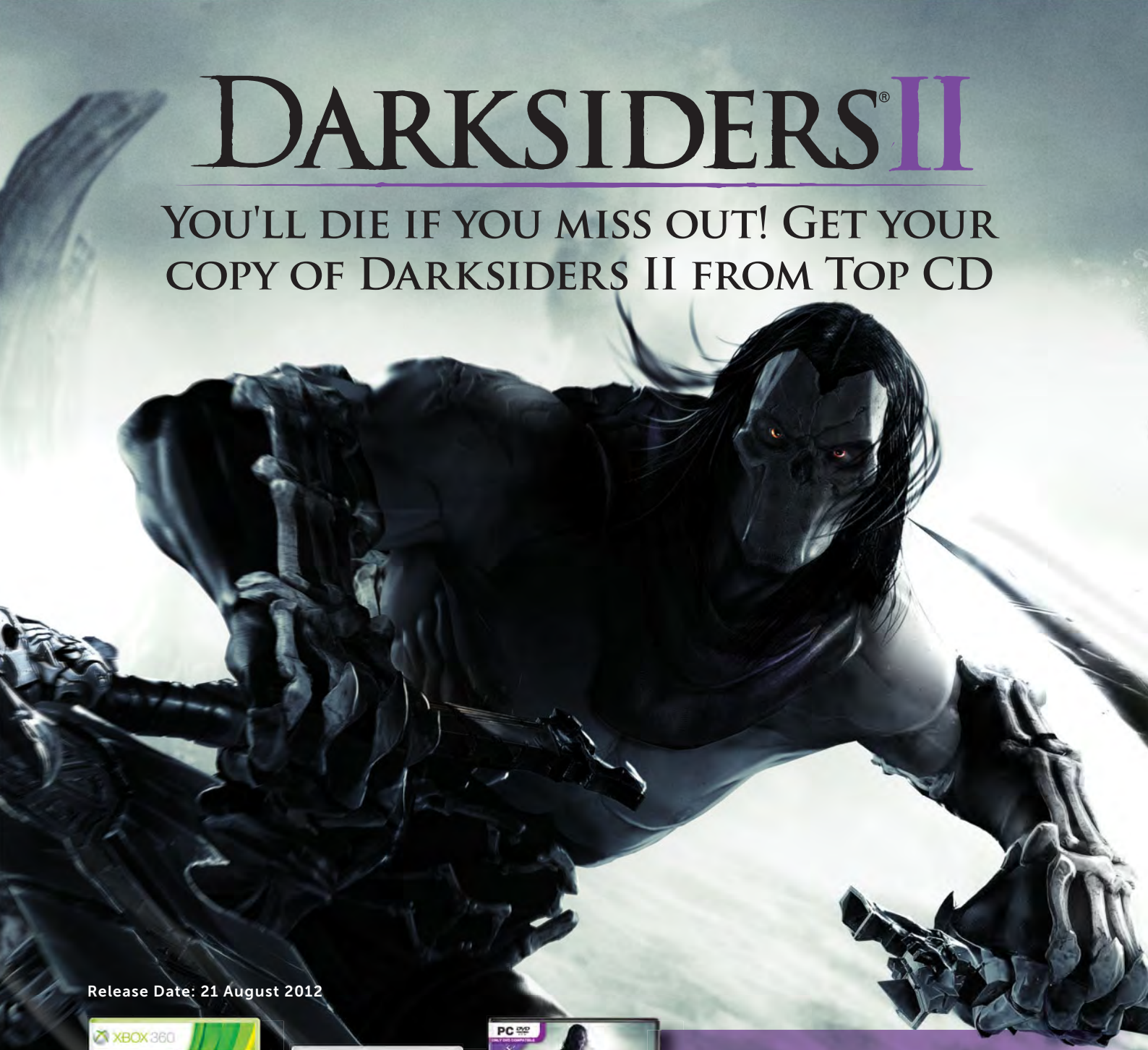
Game programming is one of the most challenging and diverse forms of software development around: physics, artificial intelligence, dynamic geometry, programmable shaders – you name it and you'll find that it's used in the development of games. For this reason, local software development company **Entelect has undertaken to run a massive competition to find the brightest minds among local programmers, with a grand prize of R100,000 and the possibility of finding yourself employed with this enterprising company.**

The competition will require entrants to program an AI player, on either the Java or .NET platforms, that will compete against the AI players of other entrants in a game of *Tron*-style Light Bikes. Here's the catch, though: it'll take place in a 3D environment. Games will be played out in a turn-based fashion, with each player taking alternating chances to outmanoeuvre the other until eventually one is cornered. To avoid any chance of pot luck, each game will consist of three rounds.

The playoffs will begin shortly after the competition closes on the 24th of September 2012, and the finals will take place live on the main stage at this year's rAge, where the top players will have their AI players do battle to win them that huge prize purse. Stay glued to NAG Online for further coverage, and visit **challenge.entelect.co.za** for all the competition entry details.

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Oh snap!



Angry Birds – you may have heard of it. Rovio has made ridiculous amounts of money from both the premium and ad-supported version of the biggest thing to hit mobile phones since the term LOL, and, using just a portion of that money, recently bought the IP for another mobile game called *Casey's Contraptions*. Now, the studio announced that they've renamed the title to *Amazing Alex*, which is due for release soon on iPhone, iPad and Android. We assume that every other platform in the world will follow shortly after.

Amazing Alex, which looks *very* much like Sierra's classic physics puzzler *The Incredible Machine*, sees players placing the missing components in physics-based puzzles to complete a chain reaction of rolling, bouncing, flipping, cutting and other related present participles until a goal condition is met. In addition to the 100 included levels, the game will allow players to build their own puzzles and share them with friends using any of the game's 35 interactive objects. Since this is Rovio, expect plenty of added content and regular updates.

Look & Listen

Pre-orders **www.lookandlisten.co.za**

PC

Guild Wars 2	August 28th
Borderlands 2	September 21st
Hitman: Absolution	October 12th

Xbox 360

FIFA 13	September
NHL 13	September 14th
Resident Evil 6	October 2nd

PS3

Darksiders II	August 29th
Far Cry 3	September 7th
Assassin's Creed III	October 31st

Wii

Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two	September 1st
Skylanders: Giants	October 31st
WWE '13	October 31st

3DS

Ben 10: Omniverse	2012
Pro Evolution Soccer 2013	2012
New Super Mario Bros. 2	2012

Rambo game announced; will be "AAA"



"Yo!"

UK-based publisher, Reef Entertainment, has revealed that they'll be bringing to market a AAA game based on the Rambo film series. It'll be called (wait for it) *Rambo: The Video Game*. Reef Entertainment acquired the *Rambo* license in August last year, and since then they've been busy getting the ball rolling. According to the company's commercial director, Craig Lewis: "we have been dedicated to creating a video game for consoles and PC that will allow Rambo fans and gamers across the globe to really get under the skin of Rambo and wield his iconic weapon-set in battle".

The game is set to be revealed at this year's Gamescom in Germany, which runs from the 15th to the 19th of August. For those needing a memory jolt, Reef Entertainment has brought us games like *Sniper Elite* for the Wii and *Rogue Trooper: Quartz Zone Massacre*, also for the Wii. Yes, we're a little dubious about *Rambo: The Video Game* as well.

Is EA Canada creating a new action franchise?

Word has gotten out that EA Canada, whose most recent title was this year's well-received SSX reboot, might be working at creating a new action franchise. It's all thanks to a fresh job listing for a lead gameplay designer at the company. "This is a major opportunity to lead the gameplay of an exciting new intellectual property that will entertain millions of people around the world," reads said listing.

EA is looking for someone with a "proven track record of designing and balancing combat, player controls, and AI for AAA shooters or action games." They should also have a "deep knowledge of the action/shooter game genre." This person must "drive the player progression experience to ensure a deep and addictive persistent online experience." So it's an all-new shooter/action game with a hefty focus on its multiplayer component.

The wording of the listing also suggests that the project isn't far along into development, so it might be a while before we actually hear anything concrete about it. EA Canada is still searching for someone to "plan and define all components of the game, including its setting, structure, rules, story flow, characters, objects, vehicles, interface design and game modes."

ATTENTION: HALO 4 REQUIRES A BIT O' SPACE

Remember when *Halo: Reach* caused a bit of a stir when it was announced that its co-op functionality would require that all players have an Xbox 360 hard drive? It caused particular concern to gamers who'd just bought the Xbox 360 S 4GB models. If you're one of those gamers, and still haven't upgraded your Xbox's storage capacity since, but are mighty interested in *Halo 4*, you're going to want to read this.

As reported by Xbox.com, players will need "at least an 8GB USB flash drive or an Xbox 360 Hard Drive" if they hope to play any of the game's numerous multiplayer modes (basically, any of the game's functionality that requires a connection to Xbox LIVE). Moreover, the hard drive is "highly recommended" for those seeking an "optimal" experience.

Microsoft responded to queries requesting clarification by saying "*Halo 4* will offer an optimal experience if played using a hard drive, but will deliver a visually impressive and immersive gameplay experience whether you use a hard drive or a flash storage device."

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Well hello, sexy lady!

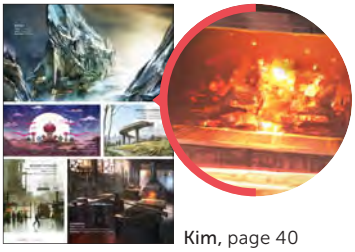
Ladies and germs, we'd like to introduce you to Roxy, our official rAge mascot for 2012. It's not that we don't love Scarlett anymore, it's just that rAge turns 10 this year, and we thought it was time for a new babe sporting some cool gear. So we briefed South African illustrator Warren Louw, who also did Scarlett for us back in 2010, and our vision for a rAge/NAG gaming chick was created. We think she's hot and would play her in a video game any day.



Every month we'll hide her somewhere in the magazine – your mission is to go find her.

Send your sighting to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line "August Roxy", and of course your contact details, and you could win a prize.

July winner



Kim, page 40

THIS MONTH'S BOUNTY

A PS3 Radium Wireless Control valued at R369. Sponsored by Bowline and dreamGEAR.



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Caption of the month

Every month we'll choose a screenshot from a random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better one. The winner will get a copy of *le Tour De France 2012* for PS3/360 from Apex Interactive . Send your captions to **ed@nag.co.za** with the subject line "**August caption**".





NAG's lame attempt at humour
Skiing – #31 in the award-winning book *How to Spend your Kid's Inheritance*.



Last months winner
"When a vampire is drinking blood... and looks around to see who is watching and hits a speed bump!!!" -Dylan Heath



PAULIE IN THE SKY WITH BUNGIE

You'll have to pardon the headline: we couldn't help ourselves. Music industry legend/ former Beatle, Paul McCartney, has happily revealed on Twitter that he happens to be working with Bungie (*Halo* creators) to produce music for their upcoming sci-fi shooter that's yet to be officially revealed. Here's the tweet in question: "I'm really excited to be working on writing music with @bungie, the studio that made *Halo*." Back in May, the existence of Bungie's new series (grandiosely codenamed *Destiny*) was leaked due to court documents related to the West/Zampella versus Activision lawsuit. The first title is set for launch sometime next year, with the series due to add additional content and obligatory sequels all the way to 2020, as is the Activision way.



"Killing enemies and finding items is a lot of fun, and we think we have a lot of the systems surrounding that right, or at least on the right path with a few corrections and tweaks. But honestly *Diablo III* is not *World of Warcraft*. We aren't going to be able to pump out tons of new systems and content every couple months. There needs to be something else that keeps people engaged, and we know it's not there right now."

-Blizzard community manager Bashiok on why Diablo III*'s "item hunt" endgame isn't sustainable*

Future EA titles to be well seasoned



EA recently launched their Premium pack for *Battlefield 3* – a $50 season pass for all current and upcoming additional content for the popular modern shooter – which many saw as a response to Activision's somewhat mishandled Elite subscription for *Call of Duty*. Despite the comparison, EA Games boss Frank Gibeau claims that Premium is more of an evolution of their EA Sports subscription than a response to Elite (and he thinks it's a superior offering).

"It's something we'd always been considering and we had been looking at. We didn't have it ready for launch and it took us some time to get it prepped. Having said that, they [Activision] did something really innovative and if your competitor does something innovative and you think it applies to what you can do, then there's no harm in doing that," he said. "This is an industry where people have a lot of one-upmanship and if somebody innovates, you match it or you exceed it."

Expect more of these subscription services from EA. The publisher feels pretty confident about its offering and wants to extend the concept to other games in its future line-up. We're willing to bet that upcoming *Medal of Honor: Warfighter* is a likely candidate.

Release list

Dates subject to change without notice

August week 1

The Amazing Spider-Man	PC

August week 2

Sleeping Dogs	360 / PC / PS3
New Super Mario Bros. 2	3DS

August week 3

Darksiders II	360 / PC / PS3
Dark Souls: Prepare to Die Edition	PC
Brave	360 / DS / PC / PS3 / Wii
Transformers: Fall of Cybertron	360 / PC / PS3

August week 4

Guild Wars 2	PC
Tales of Graces	PS3
Madden NFL 13	360 / PS3

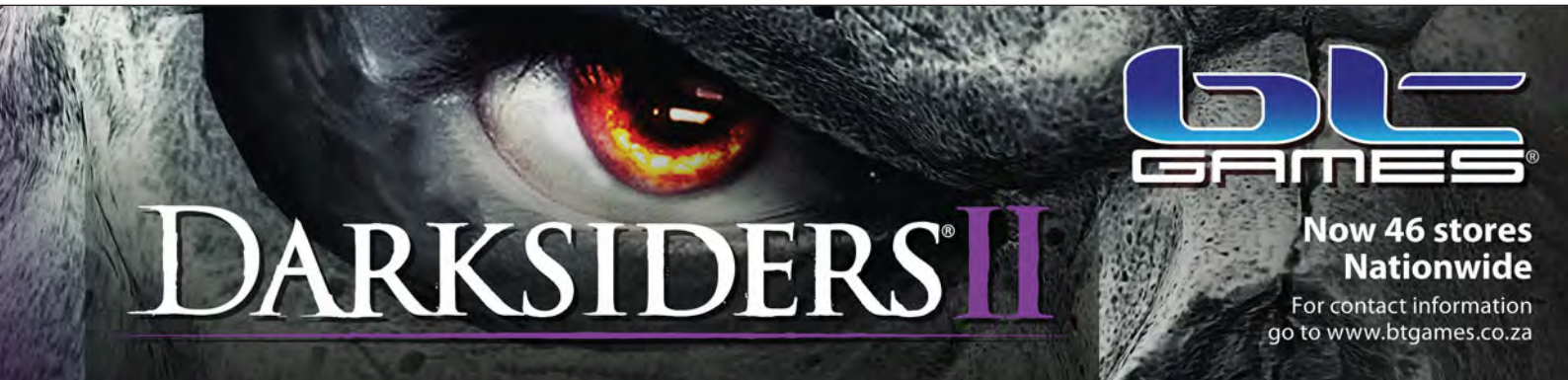
Quantic Dream reveal their new PS3 exclusive: Beyond: Two Souls

Quantic Dream, the talented team behind *Fahrenheit* and the excellent *Heavy Rain*, have revealed their next PlayStation 3 exclusive. *Beyond: Two Souls* stars Hollywood actress Ellen Page (*Juno, Inception*) who takes on the role of Jodie Holmes.

Jodie has always had a link to the supernatural, which has given her certain psychic powers. She access to these powers through her connection to an invisible entity known only as Aiden. This has resulted in Jodie being hunted by government agents, and this hunt sends her fleeing to locations all over the world.

You'll be taking control of both Jodie and Aiden, and you'll follow the story throughout fifteen years of Jodie's life. CEO of Qunatic Dream, David Cage, describes the game as "unlike anything you have experienced before. It will be emotional, mature and unique. But also epic, breathtaking and spectacular."

Beyond: Two Souls is categorised as an interactive drama, so expect something along the lines of *Heavy Rain*, but with more action and explosions. PlayStation Move support has been confirmed, and at present the game is scheduled for the first quarter of 2013.



Have you seen these games?

In the craziness that is E3 2012, it's easy for a game to get lost. The game gets distracted looking at a teddy bear in a storefront window, mom doesn't notice the game isn't following... [*Weird and sick but still funny, Ed*]

OVERSTRIKE

Last seen: Walking with *No One Lives Forever 3*; neither has been seen since.

Cheeky four-player cooperative action with hints of *Team Fortress 2*, developed by *Ratchet & Clank* luminaries Insomniac Games for both PS3 and 360? Yes please, Electronic Arts! Near-future misfit agents who infiltrate enemy strongholds in tricky and lethal ways sounds pretty good, up until EA disavowed any knowledge of the team's existence.



BIOSHOCK INFINITE

Last seen: Partying with a bunch of video game journalists after E3 2011, but nobody remembers where they went after that.

The original teaser for *Infinite* was a lesson in "vertical slice" faux gameplay. Made to look like actual play but with the polished interactivity of a scripted event, it was the most exciting hype maker since the infamous 2006 *Killzone 2* "real-time demo". But, we must wonder: after the applause died down, did they remember that they still had to make a game?



FINAL FANTASY VERSUS XIII

Last seen: The only reason we even know *Versus XIII* exists in the first place, is the trail of belt-buckles it leaves behind the Square Enix building.

In terms of the sheer "where is it?" factor, *Versus XIII* is a contender for the industry's next *Duke Nukem Forever*. Like the noble Yeti and the elusive Loch Ness Monster, nobody really expects to see this one pop up at trade events... but it's hard to repress a sense of childlike hope.



THE LAST GUARDIAN

Last seen: A dubious blurry photo appeared last year, and the *Mythbusters* team is still undecided if the photo is real.

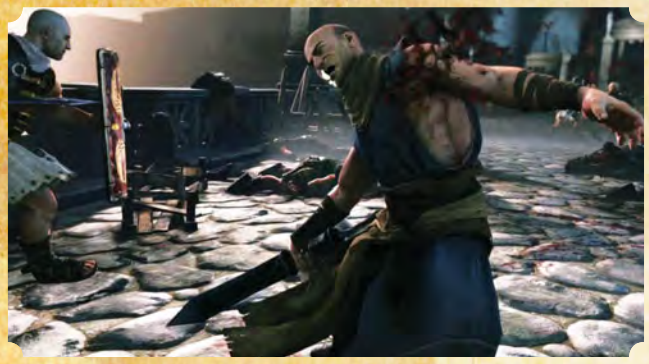
The next game from the famed creators of *Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus* has gone back under the knife several times and the latest word from Japan is that development is "challenged". In fact, the former director, Ueda, left Sony then returned to finish the game as a contractor. Wrangling that cat-bird is proving to be tough.



RYSE

Last seen: Being knocked around by *Homefront 2*, while Crytek looks the other way at some clouds.

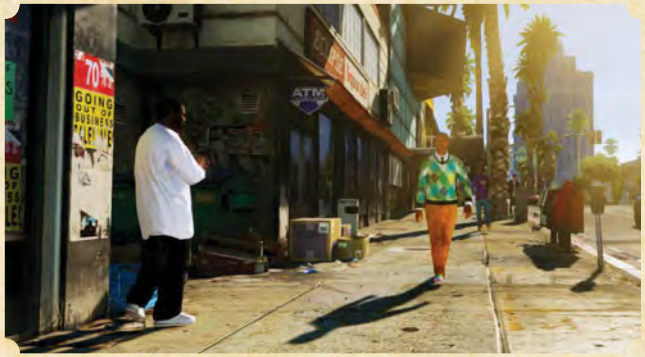
Also known as *Codename Kingdoms*, this first-person hack-and-slash using Kinect was announced at E3 last year. A pre-rendered trailer and some tiny slices of gameplay footage was shown during the Microsoft Press Conference, and all we know is you play a Roman warrior, who we hope is called Maximum Maximus.



GTA V

Last seen: In a hip trailer last year that went viral, until everyone remembered they didn't like *GTA IV* anyway.

Could it be that Rockstar has learned the value of restraint? There's nothing to indicate that production of the next mainline *GTA* is anything but on-track, yet where E3 could have presented a golden opportunity for a typical "sizzle slice that explains nothing", the *Grand Theft Auto* developers played it cool.



AGENT

Last seen: August 2011, seen in the company of Leigh Donoghue (a former Rockstar North environmental artist). If seen, alert authorities to their whereabouts.

In 2007, Sony and Rockstar confirmed they were working on something nice together. In 2009 at the Sony Press Conference during E3, the game was officially announced. Set during the Cold War, Rockstar promised a world of "counter-intelligence, espionage and political assassinations". We can assume this game was murdered by *GTA V*.



LEGEND OF ZELDA WII U

Last seen: While Shigeru Miyamoto insists this game's whereabouts is "a secret to everybody", its shadow was spotted near the Nintendo E3 booth last year.

Fans were intrigued (and taunted) at E3 2011 by a real time demo of Link fighting a monster spider. While obviously a concept piece, seeing *Zelda* in HD with modern visual effects was the stuff of fannish dreams. Such a game would clearly take time to percolate, its absence from this year's show understandable. But no less nerve-wracking for players.



BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 2

Last seen: Pictures of this game appeared on the Internet last year, but Ubisoft was quick to deny having seen them at all.

The sequel to the 2003 cult-hit was teased in 2008, talked about '09, hinted at in '10 and whispered about at E3 '11. The original creator, Michael Ancel, has been overly fixated on reviving *Rayman*, perhaps. At an exclusive Ubisoft dinner, Ancel mentioned that *BG&E2* is "far into development", but for "next-gen" consoles.



DETAILS
Release date
Q4 2012
Platforms
Wii U
Genre
First-person shooter
Developer
Ubisoft Montpellier
Website
zombiu.ubi.com
Publisher
Ubisoft



The developers are aiming for a total campaign length of 12+ hours. While the missions are predesigned, there'll be some non-linearity to them and many of the zombie encounters themselves are entirely randomised.

ZombiU

Zombie me too?

Hands ON E3 from the expo floor

Many gamers still enjoy a romp with the undead, but for a lot of us, zombie game fatigue has begun to take hold. We've seen it all, right? Barring a family-friendly racing and rhythm game set during the zombie apocalypse, there isn't much that'd be a surprise, but *ZombiU* is special – possibly even unique – for a few very good reasons, and it's those reasons that made our hands-on experience with this game one of our most unexpected and exciting things during our time at E3.

ZombiU takes place in London at the tail-end of a zombie outbreak. Millions of people are dead and now aimlessly wonder the streets, buildings and tunnels of the city, and you take on the role of a randomly generated survivor who must go out in search of supplies. Missions are assigned to you by other survivors, and accomplishing them isn't as simple as going out and bashing in the heads of a few undead. You'll have to find CCTV offices and hack their equipment to survey your objectives and routes. *ZombiU* has a clever twist on the concept of life and death which ties in with your objectives: each time you die (and die you will), your body, complete with all items you were carrying at the time, will rise as a zombie. You'll soon respawn as a new, randomly generated character back at the safe house, and you'll have to hunt down your former self to regain your equipment and weapons, or be forced to find new supplies. As you progress through the city, any progress you made will remain, so you won't have to unlock the same doors each time you die, and

"You'll have to hunt down your former self to regain your equipment and weapons, or be forced to find new supplies."







Since this is London, your character predictably has a cricket bat as a melee weapon. This slab of wood does a decent bit of damage, but nothing gives the sense of safety and satisfaction that a trusty shotgun can. Crossbows are nice, too.

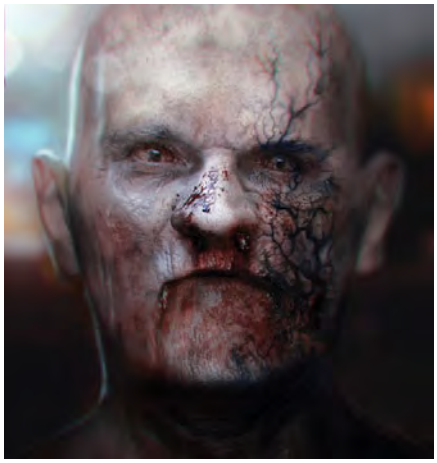


distant objectives will be reachable via a fast travel system.

The biggest standout point on *ZombiU*'s feature list is that it's being developed exclusively for Nintendo's upcoming home console. That means the developers have been charged with the opportunity to integrate the console's tablet controller into the now standard framework of a zombie survival shooter, and it's here where a very simple decision has taken this already spooky game and made it terrifying. For the most part, *ZombiU* handles as you'd expect – dual analogue sticks to turn and move; triggers to aim and shoot; and a button that shoves away zombies that get too close – but there are a few gameplay interactions that happen only on the Wii U GamePad. For starters, it's the only place you'll find your mini-map – a crucial tool for moving throughout the ruined buildings of London to find your next objective – be it medication, food, fuel or other necessary supplies. It's also where your character's inventory is managed and, similarly, is how you loot bodies and supply chests found throughout the game world, as well as picking locks and typing on keypads, which has the nasty habit of forcing you to take your eyes off the environment for what is often just a second too long. This constant back-and-forth between the main screen and GamePad screen will take some getting used to, but it adds a fantastically frantic atmosphere to the game.

We're certain that the Wii U will have its gimmick games – those that make a weak attempt to use the system's fancy new hardware and fall short of delivering an actual game in the process, but we're also certain that *ZombiU* won't be such a title. It's a fresh take on a survival shooter and it's as full of classic scares as it is with ingenuity. And the multiplayer mode looks like it'll be a barrel of laughs. This single title is enough to give us hope that the Wii U can have "proper" hardcore titles. If this is a sign of things to come, bring on the future. NAG

- GeometriX







HOW TO LOSE FRIENDS AND ALIENATE PEOPLE

Before *ZombiU*, there was *Killer Freaks from Outer Space* – a retro sci-fi-themed shooter with a focus on multiplayer. For a number of reasons (Ubisoft now claims that *Killer Freaks* was more a tech demo than a game), the game slowly shifted and grew into *ZombiU*, but its asymmetrical multiplayer system remains more-or-less intact – with fewer freaks and more zombies, obviously.

During our time with the game, we had a chance to play a few rounds of a Domination/Conquest-style game mode in which one player – the survivor – used the Wii U's Pro controller and the other player, using the GamePad, controlled the zombies. Well, "controlled" is a bit of an overstatement, being the brainless things that they are, the zombies could only be deployed to the map and left to hopefully shamble in the right direction, but the unique bird's eye positioning of the zombie lord (not the official title, but we're sticking with it) in the game turned it into something resembling an RTS. Different types of zombies could be deployed – some captured the positions faster while others could move a bit quicker. Setting up ambushes was especially entertaining.





DETAILS

Release date
October 2012

Platforms
360 / PC / PS3

Genre
Action horror

Developer
Capcom

Website
www.residentevil.com/6

Publisher
Capcom

Resident Evil 6

Hands On E3 from the expo floor

Who moved my cheese?

It might surprise our younger readers to learn that *Resident Evil* used to be scary. Not just "holy crap did you see what just jumped out of the cupboard!?" scary (although it had plenty of that), but tense, spooky, and intriguing. Where *Silent Hill* attacked your psyche from the inside, *Resident Evil* did so more forcefully, but the two were thought of as the best of the survival horror genre for their time. Then *Resi 4* happened; the control system, enemy types and location all saw a shift away from the original format, but it was lauded by many (not all) as a welcome change. *Resi 5* furthered that change and tipped the scales even closer to the action side, but it still felt good for what it was. Now *Resident Evil 6* is set to move the series almost entirely into the action genre by implementing every trick out of every book of action game tricks you can think of.

> "Characters in this *Resident Evil* are highly mobile killing machines – a far cry from the ammunition-starved corridor-creeping antics from earlier titles in the series."

Characters in this *Resident Evil* are highly mobile killing machines – a far cry from the ammunition-starved corridor-creeping antics from earlier titles in the series. The intention in *RE 6* is to keep the action fierce, which means more mobile enemies that suffer from a range of infections, some of which even allow them to retain the motor skills to use guns. To counter this, player characters are equipped with a range of new combat manoeuvres such as diving and snapping to cover, dodging, rolling, vaulting and sliding. All of these abilities will be limited by stamina, which quickly recharges when you're not jumping around like a loon. In addition, players will be able to perform killing blows on weakened enemies, and

Just like in *Resi 5*, players will be able to pair up with a buddy and play through each campaign entirely as a co-op experience. There will even be parts of the game in which pairs meet up, during which up to four players can play together.



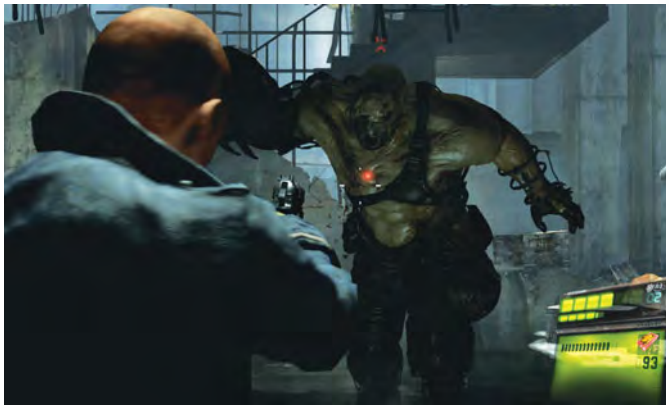


JUST WHAT IN THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?

The iniquitous Umbrella Corporation has been shut down, and Raccoon City has been levelled. But now, the US government seeks to tell the nation what happened in the hope that doing so will somehow curb the seemingly unstoppable spread of bioterrorism that's taken to all four corners of the world. However, during the event at which the president was to break the news, bioterrorists unleash an attack on the venue in the city of Tall Oaks, turning Mr. Pres into one of the shambling dead and forcing good friend Leon S. Kennedy (assuming you didn't kill him in *Operation Raccoon City*, right?) and Helena Harper (a new character) to deal with the situation and get stuck into figuring out what just happened. At the same time, Chris Redfield, who's recently been dragged back into the BSAA by another new character, named Piers Nivans, has been dispatched to China to look into a serious case of C-Virus outbreak. The C-Virus is a new strain with similar effects to the T-Virus, but it doesn't rob its host of as much intelligence, thus creating the premise for gun-wielding foes. The two are sent to investigate some nefarious goings-on, but at the same time Chris is there to exact revenge on a woman who was responsible for the death of his squad sometime between the events of *RE 5* and now. While all of that is going on, Starkiller lookalike Jake Muller and newfound partner Sherry Birkin (who's been kicking around the series since *RE 2*) find themselves stuck in the middle of the global war on bioterrorism. A former mercenary, Jack is fortunate to be immune to the effects of the C-Virus, and, with that in mind, the pair set off to figure out where exactly they fit into this whole mess.







PLENTY OF CHARACTER

Leon and Helena: Leon's campaign is designed to remind players of the classic gameplay of *Resident Evil*, and will feature a slower pace with more jumps and starts in place of some of the run-and-gun action of the other two stories.

Jake and Sherry: Whesker's estranged son teams up with the daughter of one of his pop's researchers to fight monsters and bad guys in the fictional Eastern European state of Edonia. While he doesn't shy away from firearms, Jake prefers to use his fists to deal with his combat opponents. Charge-up attacks, combos and all sorts of arcade-like stuff that you'd never expect to find in a *Resi* title are on offer right here.

Chris and Piers: Chris returns to his style of play from *RE 5*: lots of shooting and blowing stuff up. His story theme feels more like something you'd find in *Bulletstorm* than *Resident Evil*, in which he attempts to recover from his drunken retirement from the BSAA to continue his personal vendetta against bioterrorism, but, hey, a bit of roughing-up of the personality could help keep Chris interesting.



A number of skill points are hidden around the game worlds that can be used to unlock... stuff. We're not sure what, exactly, can be unlocked, as the devs were a little cagey on the subject, but we suspect it'll be something along the lines of new moves, improved stats like health and stamina, and perhaps even weapon upgrades.

can even use the environment to execute quick take-downs such as knocking off an enemy from a high position.

Not content to give players just a single, measly campaign, *RE 6* will feature three separate but intertwining stories to play through, each with its own protagonist and focus on a particular part of the world. Each story will also feature a somewhat unique style of play, although every character will have access to the new combat system.

If it sounds to you as though the *Resident Evil* series might've lost its sense of place in today's market, well, frankly, you're not alone. We have no idea what to make of this new title; while the game felt like a decent enough shooter during our brief time with it, and Leon's campaign managed to give us a few frights, there's going to have to be one heck of a strong story to tie together all three campaigns and deliver a solid experience when it eventually launches. Best of luck, *Resident Evil*. NAG

- GeometriX



DETAILS
Release date
February 2013
Platforms
PC
Genre
Management sim
Developer
Maxis
Website
www.simcity.com
Publisher
Electronic Arts

SimCity

Welcome to the concrete jungle

EA's booth at E3 this year was impressive, with franchises like *Crysis, Medal of Honor, FIFA* and *Need for Speed* dominating most people's interests, but as soon as I stepped onto those plush white carpets, my mind was on a single game: *SimCity.*

I'm a stoic management game nerd, and I owe the love of this genre to the game that might not have started it all, but it did more than any title before to popularise it: 1989's *SimCity.* The Maxis of yesteryear had a lot going for it: Will Wright was still more-or-less sane; computing power had developed to the level where a relatively complex simulation could be run behind the scenes while still coping with the output of then stunning SVGA graphics; and they had a sense of humour that still, to this day, is often lacking in sim and management games. Much has changed since those humble times, but there's always room for a new *SimCity* title that updates the classic gameplay and gives today's generation something that's as intellectually stimulating as it is entertaining.

At the heart of *SimCity* is the GlassBox Engine – a powerful system that simulates everything in the game, right down to individual Sims, the vehicles they drive, and the resources they consume (collectively called "agents"). The flurry of data that flows through your cities – through the chains of buildings and Sims that use them – drives every happening in your humble town or bustling metropolis and represents it visually. This is more complex than putting a brown tint on everything to illustrate air pollution: individual lumps of coal pile up at power stations; graffiti tags the walls of crime-ridden neighbourhoods; Sims become ill if they drink polluted water (and subsequently call in sick); moving vans transport furniture to new homes; fire trucks get stuck in poorly-managed traffic while fire propagates in a realistic manner; and building windows flicker with light as a power shortage is curtailed. Data has always been the lifeblood of any simulation, but now it's infused with every aspect of the visuals to give you direct satisfaction when things go your way, or a firm jab in the ribs when it's time to fix your mistakes as mayor. It's something that's been possible

> "Player cities can share resources and agents, which will likely be a huge boon to some players due to the new city specialisation."







As well as the new GlassBox representation of data, players will also have access to all of those fancy overlays you'd expect from a management game to help you fine-tune your city into the perfect machine.

DON'T BE A TOOL

CitiesXL 2012 gave us a taste of a new era of city-building tools, and now nothing less will suffice. Maxis has no-doubt spent some time with its nearest competitor, as evidenced by the variety of new tools at the disposal of *SimCity* players. Curved roads will make a long overdue appearance, along with curved/irregular-shaped zone placement that looks like it'll work in much the same way as *CitiesXL*. Another nifty feature which we briefly spotted during the E3 presentation was the ability to add tram tracks (accompanied by tram stations and, obviously, the trams themselves) directly to any supporting road.

As well as commercial, industrial and residential zones, you'll also be able to place specific buildings called "Ploppables". As the name suggests, Ploppables are plopped down (literally – there's an elastic animation that governs the placement of all of these building types, lending the game a toy-like character) and include buildings such as universities, police stations and hospitals. Many of these buildings can also be upgraded with addons (similar to what you'd find in *Tropico*) to serve even more specific needs, like greening up a power plant or providing additional facilities at a university.







Natural resources will have a big impact on what your city can and can't do. A lack of coal means you'll need to import the stuff to keep your early power stations fed, but it could also encourage you to go green earlier than usual.





with comparatively small-scale management titles like *The Settlers* and *Stronghold*, but on this level, with tens of thousands of agents interacting with one another simultaneously, it's incredibly impressive.

Another new feature to the series is the introduction of multiplayer. Put aside thoughts of hundred-hour *SimCity* games – this is of the asynchronous sort, which means that players can interact with their friends' cities only indirectly, but just having that interaction adds a whole new dimension to the game. Player cities can share resources and agents, which will likely be a huge boon to some players due to the new city specialisation. Cities no longer have to attempt to cater for everyone, with the option to emphasise education, industry, tourism, or technology. These specialisations will not only give you access to unique buildings, but the entire look of your city will adapt to suit your specialisation. Industrial cities won't look like much, but high-paying jobs might encourage neighbouring Sims to make the commute, leaving their problems at home (for your friends to deal with) and ensuring you can concentrate on making plenty of money. Multiplayer also opens up the ability for players to band together to construct "Great Works". These expensive undertakings will almost definitely require resources from a number of cities, but everyone who pitches in gets access to the facility. An example given during the presentation was the construction of an airport between three neighbouring cities. The industrial city was able to provide the necessary physical resources to the site while the tourism city helped out with a few Simoleans (*SimCity* money, for the uninitiated) and the non-specialised city was able to provide labour to get the job done.

One thing is clear with this new *SimCity*: Maxis has kept a beady eye on the management genre for a few years. They've waited, watched and learnt from their competitors. They've held back until computing power reached a level that has allowed them to put together the ambitious GlassBox Engine. 2013 will mark a full decade since the release of the last core *SimCity* title; let's hope that it'll be worth the wait. **NAG**

- GeometriX



DETAILS

Release date
October 2012
Platforms
360 / PC / PS3
Genre
Turn-based strategy
Developer
Firaxis Games
Website
www.xcom.com/enemyunknown
Publisher
2K Games



XCOM: Enemy Unknown

Humanity's last hope returns

We already introduced you to *XCOM* in our April issue, but here's a super quick recap in case you missed it: *Enemy Unknown* is a turn-based tactical strategy game that aims to recapture the gameplay of the original *X-COM* trilogy for old-school fans while attempting to introduce today's attention-deficit market to something more cerebral than *Gun Killing Beard Man 7*. It's a complex and lofty goal, but from our (sadly all-too brief) time with the game, we were truly impressed. And that was with an Xbox 360 controller in hand – shock, horror, surprise, etc. You can, of course, use a keyboard and mouse on the PC version.



Outside of the turn-based tactical gameplay, players will have access to a real-time strategic view of the Earth which lets them watch the alien invasion unfold. In this mode, decisions made on where to deploy your squads will have long-term impacts on the company as a whole, especially its funding.

In true *X-COM* fashion, squads are deployed to investigate a variety of alien attacks: Terror and UFO Crash Sites have been confirmed so far, but the developers tell us that there are other mission types in store. Squads comprise of four customisable characters from your larger company roster, each with a specialty like heavy, sniper and assault. These troops will gain experience points as they progress and unlock new abilities, and can also be equipped with new weaponry (both human and alien) as you research and manufacture them from your base of operations.

> "*Enemy Unknown* feels just like you'd expect: classic, but updated."

On the field, *Enemy Unknown* feels just like you'd expect: classic, but updated. Instead of giving players action points, though, each squad member has a fixed number of actions that they can take per turn – two in the beginning of the game. Typically, you'd move during your first action and take a shot during your second, but there are a number of other options at your disposal: double actions can be used to hustle across long distances; troops can be set to Overwatch mode which gives them a chance to interrupt an enemy's turn if they pass through your field of vision; grenades and other thrown weapons can be tossed to create smoke cover, stun enemies or deal damage; you can lay down suppressing fire which pins enemies in position until you are flanked (the aliens can also do this to you). Some squad members (and aliens) will also gain access to powerful psionic abilities later in the game through advanced alien research, and there's even talk of jet-packs *[Sweet, Ed]*.

Squad movement through each of the game's predesigned maps is based on a grid, with multiple levels of height available, too. Troops can scale ladders and stairs to gain a vantage point, duck behind full or half cover, kick in doors, and smash through windows. The game feels far more agile than it ever has before, which does wonders for the series' tactical foundations and should give players more options in the field.

If there was any doubt in your mind as to whether or not this new-fangled, unhyphenated *XCOM* can fill the big boots of its predecessors, now's the time to start believing. October can't come soon enough. **NAG**

- GeometriX



Squad death is as permanent as you feel comfortable with. An optional "classic" game mode toggle will restrict players to having only a single save game slot, so if you screw up; it's on your head.



Huntkey



Power Your Dream



H406 Black Storm
BLACK GAMING CASE



H920 Slim Case
PEDESTAL/DESKTOP CONVERTIBLE CASE



X7 900
900W MODULAR GAMING PSU



X7 1200
1200W MODULAR GAMING PSU



65W ES
NOTEBOOK POWER ADAPTER



90W X-Man
CAR NOTEBOOK CHARGER

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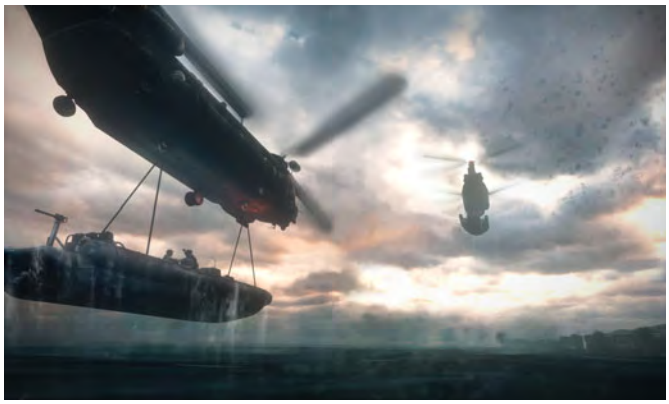


DETAILS
Release date
October 2012
Platforms
360 / PC / PS3
PS Vita / Wii U
Genre
First-person shooter
Developer
Danger Close
Website
www.medalofhonor.com
Publisher
Electronic Arts

Medal of Honor Warfighter

That's my JAMS*

The modern combat shooter genre is one that's rapidly going stale, but each successful game in the genre has that something special about it that keeps people hooked, and it's that hook that has me so damn excited about *Medal of Honor: Warfighter*. Yes, it looks like any other modern combat FPS, but for the 15 minutes or so that I sat down and played a game of Domination/Conquest style multiplayer, I felt like I was playing *COD 4* again. You know, just, new... and much prettier. The controls were tight and the movement fluid; the combat areas encouraged quick reflexes and smart tactics; and there wasn't a wannabe turret sniping my bollocks from the other side of the map. If that sort of comparison appeals to you, then you might also find joy in this title when it launches; I know that I'm now very-much looking forward to it.



Hands On E3 from the expert floor

Like *Battlefield 3*, *MOH: Warfighter* will run on EA's all-powerful Frostbite 2 engine, but that doesn't mean you can expect destructible terrain and buildings. Seriously, don't expect it. Don't you dare. Stop it.

> "Expect near super-human feats such as incoming bullet damage reduction, sight through walls and stealth abilities."





Since I only had a chance to play the multiplayer segment of the game, I'll stick to that for this preview. I'm sure that the single player will be filled with the killing of people who live in a desert, and feeling good about upholding freedom or whatever, but that's never really been an appealing part of these games for me.

Instead of giving players access to a free-form load-out system, *Warfighter* will come with a number of unlockable classes – or operatives – that come pre-fitted with perks and weapons (with a few varieties). Ideally, each of these operatives will be carefully balanced by the developers, and this system could potentially make for a higher level of accessibility to new players without the veterans feeling like they're being held back. Some of these perks, in the form of activated abilities, are extremely powerful but only have a short duration. Expect near super-human feats such as incoming bullet damage reduction, sight through walls and stealth abilities. The overall effect is one that lends the game a more arcade-like feel than *Battlefield*, but doesn't take it nearly as far as, say, *Team Fortress 2*. It feels like a sharp balance between the two.

Warfighter's multiplayer makes use of a neat little concept called fireteams. Essentially two-man squads, fireteams are designed to give you and a buddy the upper hand if you work together. Buddies can almost instantly refill their ammunition supplies off of one another, and, should your buddy fall in battle, getting revenge on his killer instantly respawns him at your position (it still counts as a kill for the enemy, but it reduces your respawn timer). The developers imagine a world in which each of the opposing teams in a match develop one or two "leet" fireteams which can turn the tide of the battle – and when those fireteams clash, it shall be epic. NAG

- GeometriX



There will be a total of 12 operatives to choose from, each representing a unique special operatives organisation from around the world, such as the Polish GROM, the US OGA and the British SAS.

**Just Another Military Shooter. You can thank our esteemed editor for that little gem.*


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Vehicles that have had their crew killed are left in the field where they can be claimed by any troops lucky enough to find them. This will create dynamic hotspots on the map that could make for some sneaky ambushes when combined with True Sight.

Company of Heroes 2

Don't eat the yellow snow!



DETAILS

Release date
TBA 2013
Platforms
PC
Genre
Real-time strategy
Developer
Relic Entertainment
Website
www.companyofheroes.com
Publisher
THQ

There was a time when games based on World War 2 were as common as mismatched socks, but then that faded away and everyone was sort-of okay with that. But *then*, out of the ashes of ambiguity rose *Company of Heroes* – a game that aimed to capture the gritty violence and humanity of WW2 within the confines of an RTS. It was a tough challenge, but it resulted in a huge success, and now it's time to do that all over again from the other side of the years-long conflict – the Soviets.

Anything involving the Russians means you're either in for a lot of vodka or a lot of snow. While we were unable to confirm the presence of the grain-based memory eraser in this game, we do know that there'll be plenty of the white fluffy stuff. Through the power of the new Essence 3 engine, Relic will implement some pretty advanced snow physics that will require your attention during combat. Snow will slow down any ground troops who attempt to wade through it, and it'll pile up in colder, shaded areas to different levels of depth. Certain vehicles will also get stuck in it, so it'll be important to choose your angles of approach on enemy positions with much more care. Many tanks, which will be more intimidating this time round and can utterly change the tide of battle, can cruise through even the deepest patches, leaving behind flattened snow through which your infantry can more easily manoeuvre.

> "Snow will slow down any ground troops who attempt to wade through it, and it'll pile up in colder, shaded areas to different levels of depth."

Along with the expected host of visual improvements to the engine (including some surprisingly detailed unit models), a new feature called True Sight has been introduced. TS will ensure that your individual troops on the field can only see what you'd realistically expect them to see, making the fog of war a more dynamic, organic entity than in other strategy games. It forms part of the development team's refocused efforts to make combat engagements more tactical and dangerous. Approaching a fortified enemy position head-on is a sure way to get gunned down by an unseen machine gun nest, but by carefully surveying the field, you can make a more strategic approach from the best angles. You could even lay down smoke cover to help mask your advance. To further aid this type of gameplay, infantry are now much more agile than before; they'll vault over low walls, dive to nearby cover when under fire, and hustle between cover when they think it's worth the risk.

Company of Heroes 2 is looking even better than we expected it to, and it seems like the jump to the Eastern Front will make for some interesting new gameplay that'll be executed in ways we've never before seen in an RTS. And with no concrete release date just yet, it appears that Relic and THQ are prepared to take the time they need to make this the sequel that *Company of Heroes* so richly deserves. NAG

- GeometriX



Relic hasn't yet settled on the exact format for resource gathering and base building in this sequel, but they told us to expect something similar to that of *CoH 1*. They acknowledge that the concept of claiming territories on the maps makes for interesting games, but could do with a few tweaks.

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DETAILS
Release date
Q4 year
Platforms
360 / PS3
Genre
Multiplayer online battle arena
Developer
Monolith Productions
Website
www.guardiansofmiddleearth.com
Publisher
Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment

Guardians of Middle-earth

Seen at E3 from the expo floor

You shall not pass!

With the flurry about *Dota 2*, *Blizzard DOTA* and everything else that occupies the minds of MOBA players, we imagine that the console gamers are feeling a little left out. Sure, you've got the side-scrolling *Awesomenauts*, which is, well, awesome and everything, but how about a serious, hardcore, top-down, classic-styled MOBA just for you? Well here you go, sad console gamers, here's *Guardians of Middle-earth* for you to play with.

If you think that *Guardians* is a scaled-down (or dare I say, dumbed-down) version of whatever the cool kids are playing nowadays, you'd be wrong; it's every bit the MOBA that you'd want. Obviously the control systems have been adjusted to fit the dual analogue sticks of a console: the right stick handles targeting, and the left, movement; the face buttons are assigned to activated abilities and spells (big-impact, long-cooldown powers); the d-pad handles your potions (short-duration, short-cooldown buffs like increased attack speed); and the right trigger is for a standard attack. It all works rather well and manages to make the concept feel purpose-built for consoles – this is no port.



Five distinct classes make up the roster of *Guardians*: Tacticians rely on traps and AOE attacks; Enchanters are glass cannons with powerful abilities but low health; Strikers are capable melee damage-dealers but need to be light on their feet to avoid death; Defenders inflict less damage than other classes but can soak up punishment like no other too; and Warriors are flexible all-rounders.

> "If you think that *Guardians* is a scaled-down (or dare I say, dumbed-down) version of whatever the cool kids are playing nowadays, you'd be wrong"

As the name implies, *Guardians of Middle-earth* takes place in the world of *Lord of the Rings*. Players choose from the pool of 20+ Guardians from the series (on both sides of the scale of good and evil) and have a go at destroying the opposing team's base. Just like in *Dota*/*LOL*/etc., you'll need to deal with enemy heroes, automatically-spawned creeps and defensive towers before you're allowed to deal damage to the enemy base. A big different here, however, is that instead of buying items from shops within matches, players will customise their character loadouts at their leisure, outside of the pressure of matches. For this purpose, players have two level types: account-based and match-based. Your persistent account level determines the number of spell, potion and gem slots you'll have access to for character customisation, while your match level, which resets after every game, determines which of those pre-assigned abilities your character can actually use. Additionally, players will have access to a gem and rune belt which provides characters with permanent passive bonuses that are unlocked during matches. Players will earn gold in-game which can be used to unlock gems and other characters, keeping the in-game and out-of-game shopping and customisation entirely separate. While this will do a lot to speed up customisation within the game, whether or not this concept will work in the long-term remains to be seen. It's certainly unlike the standards one is used to on PC, but perhaps that's why Monolith has decided to release *Guardians* on consoles only – it's a fresh, possibly more forgiving environment unspoiled by years of refinement. Perhaps it's time to shake up the genre a little bit, anyway. NAG

- GeometriX



Players can choose to do battle in either one- or three-lane maps, and there will be a variety of custom game options including the ability to add AI opponents or teammates.



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DETAILS
Release date
November 2012
Platforms
360 / PC / PS3 / PS Vita
Genre
Racing
Developer
Criterion Games
Website
www.needforspeed.com
Publisher
Electronic Arts

Need for Speed: Most Wanted

Cruisin' for a bruisin'

When Criterion took on the challenge to reinvent *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit*, gamers were sceptical but eager to see how the *Burnout* developers would handle the series. As it turned out, they did an excellent job – our own review of the game gave it a score of 90. A year later, and the core series took an unfortunate dip with *The Run*, but it'll soon be time for another title, again from Criterion, who will be the main developers of the series from now on. They've set a high benchmark for themselves, and they're once more taking on a beloved name from the series to give it their own take and a modern update.





Most Wanted is a free-roaming racer: you're given the freedom to drive through the game's fictional urban environment filled with events and challenges, discover its secrets and smash through its streets by yourself or with a bunch of friends. Even when you're on your own, however, you compete against your friends (assuming you have them, of course) through the Autolog – a feature introduced in *Hot Pursuit* and one which we imagine will stay with the series for some time. Autolog lets you compete for leaderboard positions for the many events around the city to become "the most wanted" among your circle. But this is a game that's clearly being designed with multiplayer in mind, and for this purpose, Criterion has a few neat tricks in store.

> "This is a game that's clearly being designed with multiplayer in mind, and for this purpose, Criterion has a few neat tricks in store"

Multiplayer games won't follow the usual pattern of "find game; sit in lobby; choose game mode; race for three minutes; go back to lobby; make a sandwich while some guy says 'brb, mom nagging me for something'; repeat *ad infinitum*". There will be no lobbies in *Most Wanted*, and waiting for players is designed to be fun. Because there's no fast travel system, players will always have to drive to the starting location of whichever challenge they choose; once they've started the event, all other players will be alerted to the starting location and will need to get there themselves. Obviously, a lot of jostling and shenanigans will take place on the way – *Burnout* inspired takedowns and mini challenges en route award players with points both in and out of events. Once everyone is in place, the event begins within three seconds. There are no starting grids – everyone begins where they were and if you weren't quick enough to find a good spot then, well, that's unfortunate. The same applies to those who finish an event. You don't just sit around and wait for the other chumps to cross the finish line; as producer Matt Webster says, "you can turn around and go f#$k it up for everybody else." Points awarded for a quick finish are dandy, but takedowns and other antics on the unrestricted raceways will increase your event score and could even reduce those of your competitors. Why win by an inch when you can win by a mile? NAG

- GeometriX





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DETAILS
Release date
2013
Platforms
PC / PS3 / 360
Genre
Action adventure
Developer
Ubisoft Montreal / Ubisoft Reflections
Website
www.watchdogs.ubi.com
Publisher
Ubisoft



Watch Dogs

Keeping an eye on these puppies.

Two games made an impact at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo. The numerological *Star Wars 1313* and Ubisoft's surprise clutch hit at the end of their pre-E3 press conference, *Watch Dogs*. Both were huge hits with the crowds, showing what many were quick (and naive) to label "next-gen" visuals. *Star Wars 1313* was running on the Unreal Engine 3, and Ubisoft has already confirmed that *Watch Dogs* will run on current HD consoles, though obviously not with the same quality as the PC-based demonstration at E3.

This is what you *can* bank on:

Watch Dogs is an open world action adventure, strongly influenced by the technology of *Far Cry* and *Assassin's Creed*. The story centres around the idea of information warfare: that the more interconnected our data becomes, the more technology we use, the larger the risk of a single entity controlling (and abusing) it all. Set in an alternate reality version of Chicago, Illinois, the city is one of many running a centralised operating system called "CtOS". This city-wide operating system controls and regulates all the municipal functions, traffic lights, cell phone infrastructure, medical records, as well as maintaining live information on all of the city's residents.



The game's title is stylised as *WATCH_DOGS*. Back during the DOS days, people used underscores in filenames because spaces were forbidden characters. Life was hard back then.

> It's not inconceivable that Ubisoft would create something that looks and plays like a game, but is actually an elaborately scripted mockup, just to build hype."

You'll play as Aiden Pearce, a skilled hacker whose main goals are as of yet unknown. He can jack into CtOS to further his own ends, and does so during the E3 demonstration in which he assassinates a media mogul named Joseph DeMarco.

The E3 "live demonstration" and what it showed, is where healthy scepticism may be in order. While running real-time and interactive on a PC of unknown specifications, it gave the impression of perhaps being an elevated "proof of concept" representation. Companies have realised that gamers won't fall for "target renders" anymore, like the E3 2005 pre-rendered video of *Killzone 2*. It's not inconceivable that Ubisoft would create something that looks and plays like a game, but is actually an elaborately scripted mock-up, just to build hype.

During the demo, Aiden walks the incredibly detailed and vivid city streets until he reaches the club where his target is. He jams a cell phone to distract the bouncer, taps a phone call after spotting someone making a call after seeing him, and later manipulates traffic lights causing a major pile up at an intersection to prevent his mark from escaping. Stealth elements and cover-based shooting were shown, all from a third-person perspective, and something that might be interpreted as co-op gameplay was hinted at.

Even if the demonstration wasn't "real" in the true sense of showing the *actual* game, like with *Star Wars 1313*, if just half of what it shows ends up being the real deal, that'll be more than enough. NAG

- Miktar







If you head over to **dotconnexion.ubi.com** you can read some backstory that forms part of the game's viral marketing.

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Also involved is Raf Colantonio, who worked on *Arx Fatalis* and *Dark Messiah of Might and Magic*.

Dishonored

You got some Neo-Victorian in my stealth steampunk!

Corvo Atano is a man with problems. Master assassin and loyal bodyguard, he's been framed for the murder of his employer, the Empress of Dunwall, and betrayed by his former friends. But his real problem is trying to stand out when another assassin has pretty much dominated the stab-people-in-the-neck genre.

Dishonored's lineage is that of the games that inspired *Assassin's Creed, Deus Ex: Human Revolution* and *Hitman*, but some would claim it the pretender to the throne. Not unexpected, considering how much time has passed since the seminal *Thief* series, granddaddy of first-person stealth-em-ups. It's not too much of a stretch to call *Dishonored* the spiritual successor to the *Thief* series, as long as you're cool with the addition of some seriously supernatural elements with which to enact your revenge.



A mysterious visage known only as The Outsider visits Corvo, imparting some mystical powers and a blueprint for payback against the Lord Regent who framed him. These powers include the ability to possess pretty much any living thing for varying degrees of time, time-control and short-range teleportation. Powers can be upgraded, but you won't get to choose them all. If things go south, you've got hand-to-hand combat, razor wire grenades, guns and a crossbow. Visceral finishers can be combined with your teleport: peek through a keyhole to see who is inside, blink up behind them, snap their neck, then teleport away with their body to hide the evidence.

> "If you know your target is taking a bath, why not possess a piranha, swim up the pipes, and enact fishy crotch-death?"

Using these tools, you're free to approach missions your own way: guns blazing is an option, but will bring too much heat. You could summon rats to eat people, or possess one to go sneaking into areas via ducts. If you know your target is taking a bath, why not possess a piranha, swim up the pipes, and enact fishy crotch-death? Or you could sneak in, possess a guard, and have them open a steam valve to boil the person alive. Another way is to not get involved at all. Mission areas may contain useful side-missions, such as helping a local gangster, then persuading them to attack the building your target is in, keeping your hands clean.

It's not an open-world game. Missions are strung together via narrative hubs that let you soak up some plot before choosing your next target. But missions are not linear corridors either: each takes place in a sizeable chunk of the city, giving you ample room to explore, approach your targets and decide on the best course of action. You'll gather information by talking to locals, try to avoid the "Tallboys", authorities that stride high atop mechanical stilt walkers, and uncover more of the plot surrounding Corvo and the plague-ridden city of Dunwall. NAG

- Miktar

Arkane Studios includes Harvey Smith, known for his work on *Deus Ex* and *Thief: Deadly Shadows*.

DETAILS

Release date
Q4 2012
Platforms
360 / PC / PS3
Genre
Action-adventure, stealth
Developer
Arkane Studios
Website
www.dishonored.com
Publisher
Bethesda Softworks







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The Elder Scrolls Online

If you had to pay monthly to play Skyrim, would you?



DETAILS

Release date
2013
Platforms
PC
Genre
Massively multiplayer online role-playing game
Developer
ZeniMax Online Studios
Website
www.elderscrollsonline.com
Publisher
Bethesda Softworks

After five years of secret development, *The Elder Scrolls* gets its own entry in the increasingly desperate MMORPG genre. Even BioWare, tapping the rich lore of *Star Wars* and throwing hundreds of millions in development dollars at *Star Wars: The Old Republic* still lost half a million subscribers within a few months. "TORtanic", as detractors joke, will be free to play soon. DC Comics used their established fandom and decades of fiction to craft *DC Universe Online*, and it went free-to-play faster than the Flash. That's not to say that the F2P model is inherently wrong, but for a publisher that didn't aim for it in the first place it's certainly a risky move. Is there room for *The Elder Scrolls Online*?

The story takes place a millennium before the events in *Skyrim*, during the Second Era of Nirn. Three factions are at odds, fighting over territory and the future of Tamriel. The Daggerfall Covenant (spread across High Rock and Wayrest) is represented by a lion and composed of Redguards and Orcs, seeking democracy for all. The Ebonheart Pact (spread across Morrowind, Skyrim and Argonia) is represented by a dragon, formed by the Dunmer, Nords and Argonians who share an uneasy alliance. Lastly, the Aldmeri Dominion (from Elsweyr, Valenwood and the Summerset Isles), is represented by a bird of prey and consists of High Elves, Wood Elves and the Khajiit, sharing a "join us or die" philosophy.

> "The entire campaign can be played solo: it's your content, your story."

When you join an alliance, you are limited to that quarter of the continent. If you want to see the other areas, you'll have to roll a character for each faction. The backbone of the game is spread across an instanced single-player campaign very much in the traditional *Elder Scrolls* style. No matter what kind of character you create, your personal story starts with the Daedric Prince Molag Bal stealing your soul. Now cursed with convenient immortality until you get it back, you'll explore the factional fenced-in open world, mastering weapons, gaining levels and skills.

The entire campaign can be played solo: it's your content, your story. You won't need to group up with anyone. The second half of the content, past the end-game, is all about instanced raid dungeons and player vs. player. The 100-a-side three-way PvP reveals the developer's *Dark Age of Camelot* heritage. You capture resources and compete for territory. The more territory your faction holds, the more bonuses you get: faster levelling and additional perks, even for those not engaged in PVP.

To streamline things, *Elder Scrolls Online* uses the *Skyrim* compass system for finding things around you easily. To make things more action-oriented, blocking/dodging isn't automatic. No announcements as to price and subscription costs have been released yet. NAG

- Miktar



***The Elder Scrolls* games take place on the fantasy world of Nirn, on the continent of Tamriel, a large landmass divided into nine provinces.**



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DETAILS
Release date
Out now
Platforms
PC / 360 / PS3
Genre
Role-playing game
Developer
Bethesda Game Studios
Website
www.elderscrolls.com
Publisher
Bethesda Softworks

Skyrim: Dawnguard

Skyrim gets its first DLC. We're glad it isn't armour for your horse.

The vampire lord Harkon has beef with sunlight. So, he wants to use the power from an ancient Elder Scroll to murder the sun. You can either sign up with him on his quest, or join the vampire hunters known as the Dawnguard who aim to stop him. Depending on which side you pick you'll experience unique content and get access to new powers and homes. Your quest will take you back to Oblivion, the ethereal plane from *The Elder Scrolls IV*, now all ghostly and called the "Soul Cairn".

If you join the vampires you get Castle Volkihar as a crib: a gloomy island stronghold covered in eternal dusk that provides bonuses to vampiric powers and easy access to blood potions. The Dawnguard have their own fort, a massive keep with unique benefits: new weapons like the crossbow, and sweet armour. Crossbows remain loaded while running, are slower to reload, but shots can stagger enemies. Archery perks apply to crossbows.

Like the werewolf transformation you get from the Companions quest, joining Harkon gives you a Vampire Lord transformation which can be cancelled at will. While in Vampire Lord form, you get powers like force-choking people, hovering menacingly, turning into a swarm of bats or summoning werewolf groupies. Each power has its own perk tree for upgrades. The Werewolf form also finally gains its own skill tree.

You'll find more dragons dotted around Skyrim, legendary versions that provide higher challenge. New breeds of enemies can be found, like gargoyles, death hounds and massive armoured trolls. New functional NPCs have also been added, like a character hidden down in the Ratway of Riften who – for a small fee – will change your face, if you're tired of it. Your race and gender cannot be altered. A new shout has been added: Soul Tear, which lets you steal the soul of a recently defeated foe and raise it as an undead minion.

> "While in Vampire Lord form, you get powers like force-choking people, hovering menacingly, turning into a swarm of bats or summoning werewolf groupies."



In the game's lore, the Elder Scrolls are sometimes called the Aedric Prophecies. It's impossible to know how many Scrolls there are, because they "do not exist in countable form".





While PC players got mounted combat in a recent patch, console players receive the upgrade via the *Dawnguard*. You can use all your weapons from horseback, including the new Dragonborn weapons, but you won't be able to cast spells. It scares the horse, silly. The DLC isn't meant for low-level players, so no joining the vampire defence force when you're just a fresh-faced level 1. You need to be at least past level 10, have some shouts under your belt and a few perks for survival. Once you're ready, listen for rumours about a group of vampire hunters who are looking for recruits. Ask guards in town to point you in the right direction. NAG

- Miktar

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Release date: September 2012 **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3 **Genre:** Role-playing shooter
Developer: Gearbox Software **Publisher:** 2K Games **Website:** www.borderlands2.com

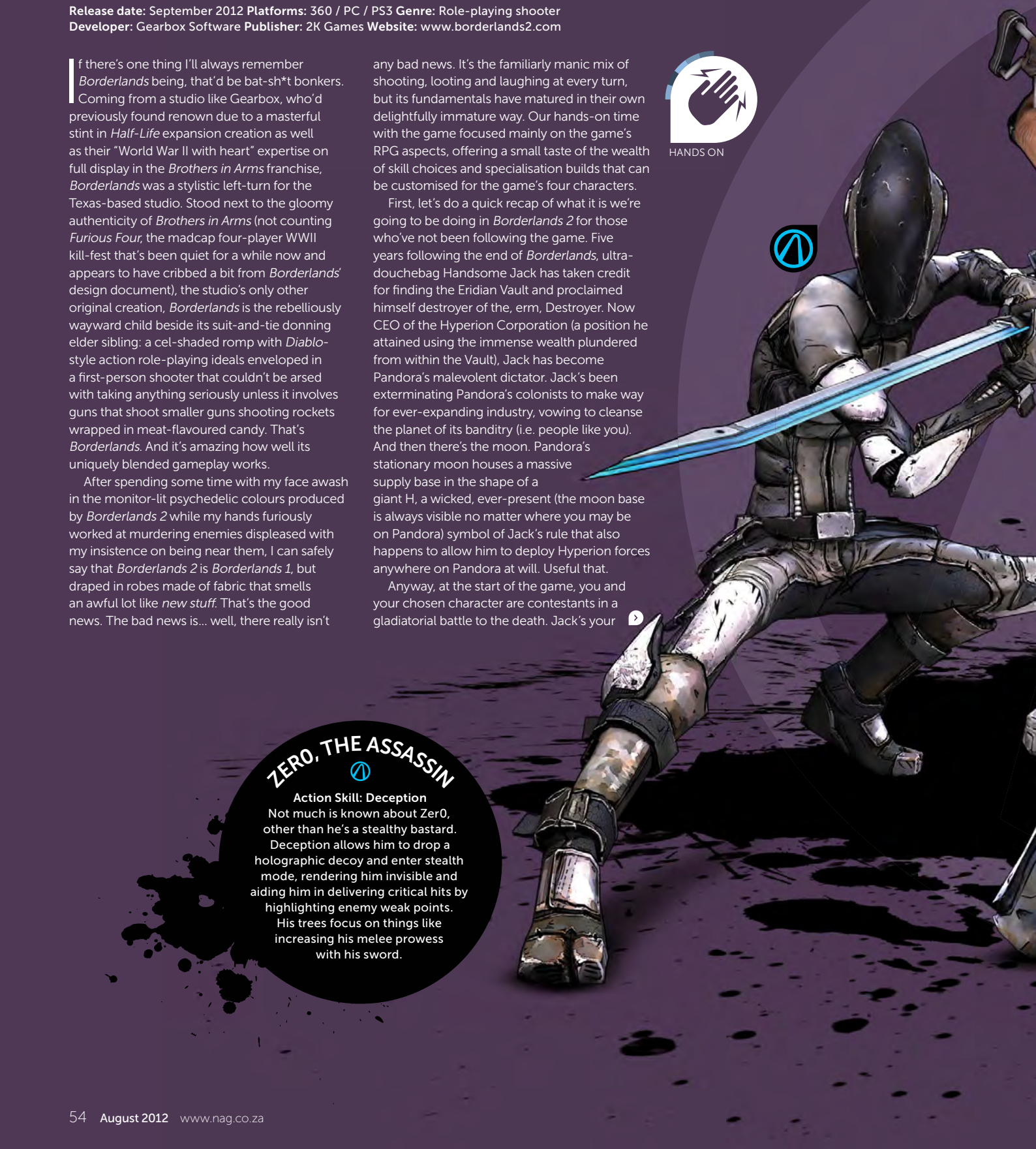
If there's one thing I'll always remember *Borderlands* being, that'd be bat-sh*t bonkers. Coming from a studio like Gearbox, who'd previously found renown due to a masterful stint in *Half-Life* expansion creation as well as their "World War II with heart" expertise on full display in the *Brothers in Arms* franchise, *Borderlands* was a stylistic left-turn for the Texas-based studio. Stood next to the gloomy authenticity of *Brothers in Arms* (not counting *Furious Four*, the madcap four-player WWII kill-fest that's been quiet for a while now and appears to have cribbed a bit from *Borderlands*' design document), the studio's only other original creation, *Borderlands* is the rebelliously wayward child beside its suit-and-tie donning elder sibling: a cel-shaded romp with *Diablo*-style action role-playing ideals enveloped in a first-person shooter that couldn't be arsed with taking anything seriously unless it involves guns that shoot smaller guns shooting rockets wrapped in meat-flavoured candy. That's *Borderlands*. And it's amazing how well its uniquely blended gameplay works.

After spending some time with my face awash in the monitor-lit psychedelic colours produced by *Borderlands 2* while my hands furiously worked at murdering enemies displeased with my insistence on being near them, I can safely say that *Borderlands 2* is *Borderlands 1*, but draped in robes made of fabric that smells an awful lot like *new stuff*. That's the good news. The bad news is... well, there really isn't any bad news. It's the familiarly manic mix of shooting, looting and laughing at every turn, but its fundamentals have matured in their own delightfully immature way. Our hands-on time with the game focused mainly on the game's RPG aspects, offering a small taste of the wealth of skill choices and specialisation builds that can be customised for the game's four characters.

HANDS ON

First, let's do a quick recap of what it is we're going to be doing in *Borderlands 2* for those who've not been following the game. Five years following the end of *Borderlands*, ultra-douchebag Handsome Jack has taken credit for finding the Eridian Vault and proclaimed himself destroyer of the, erm, Destroyer. Now CEO of the Hyperion Corporation (a position he attained using the immense wealth plundered from within the Vault), Jack has become Pandora's malevolent dictator. Jack's been exterminating Pandora's colonists to make way for ever-expanding industry, vowing to cleanse the planet of its banditry (i.e. people like you). And then there's the moon. Pandora's stationary moon houses a massive supply base in the shape of a giant H, a wicked, ever-present (the moon base is always visible no matter where you may be on Pandora) symbol of Jack's rule that also happens to allow him to deploy Hyperion forces anywhere on Pandora at will. Useful that.

Anyway, at the start of the game, you and your chosen character are contestants in a gladiatorial battle to the death. Jack's your



ZERO, THE ASSASSIN

Action Skill: Deception
Not much is known about Zer0, other than he's a stealthy bastard. Deception allows him to drop a holographic decoy and enter stealth mode, rendering him invisible and aiding him in delivering critical hits by highlighting enemy weak points. His trees focus on things like increasing his melee prowess with his sword.



AXTON, THE COMMANDO

Action Skill: Scorpio Turret 2.0
Axton is a well-rounded soldier who can drop his Scorpio turret, picking it up again when it's no longer needed to shave time off its cooldown. It can also fire at enemies 360 degrees around it, unlike Roland's turret, which only fired at enemies in front of it. His skill specialisations let him focus on support/survival and upgrading his turret to fulfil different combat roles.

MEET YOUR NEW CREW

When you start the game, you'll be given the option of four new Vault Hunters with varying specialties to choose from. Each of them has three skill trees, across which you're free to distribute the skill points you earn with every level-up, and each tree in turn specialises your chosen character for different roles – but you'll have to choose carefully, as you won't be able to max out all three skill trees with a single character. Class Mods can be looted that increase these skills, sometimes above and beyond the five-point cap enforced on each skill. Say hi to your new heroes; they're a friendly bunch. Sometimes.

SALVADOR, THE GUNZERKER

Action Skill: Gunzerking
A native of Pandora and semi-dwarf thanks to excessive steroid use, Salvador's Action Skill lets him dual-wield any combination of weapons, be it a rocket launcher and a pistol, or two sniper rifles. His three skill trees split his focus on tanking, damage output and improving his Gunzerking ability. Top-tier abilities include "Come at me, bro" which restores his health, reduces damage taken and taunts all nearby enemies thanks to a strategic flipping of the bird.

MAYA, THE SIREN

Action Skill: Phaselock
Like Lilith from the first game, Maya is a Siren. Her Phaselock ability renders an enemy harmless and suspends them in midair, so teammates can either focus fire on it, or simply keep it out of the battle for a short time while you deal with its allies. Her three trees allow her to specialise in healing, survivability and damage dealing. High-level abilities include "Ruin" which lets you slam a Phaselocked enemy into the ground to create a fiery burst of damage.

tournament host. You best Jack's gauntlet. Naturally. Your reward: epic loot. Naturally. Except it isn't, when Jack decides to renounce the winning prize, instead leaving you for dead in the snowy wastes of Pandora, believing your victory will diminish his popularity with the people. It's here that *Borderlands*' Guardian Angel appears once more, adamantly instructing that Handsome Jack must be killed and that you're the loot-grabbing, gun-toting adventurer (or adventurers) for the job. First on the list o' things that need doing: find the ancient Eridian evil known as The Warrior before Jack does, to prevent him from awakening it for his own nefarious purposes.

That's what you're aiming for. What you're *actually* going to be doing is shooting a great many things (preferably with friends via four-player online co-op, or two-player split-screen) in the pursuit of gradually transforming your character into an unstoppable whirlwind of overpowered destruction kitted with excessive firepower and advanced gear that would make Earth's collective armies blush. And you're going to need all the skill upgrades and deadly toys you can get, because Pandora's jam-packed with nasties looking to turn you into Skag food. The four new playable Vault Hunters are somewhat similar to the original four, but each of the newbies has their own unique take on what made *Borderlands*' character classes distinguishable. You'll also bump into the original four throughout your second tour of Pandora, them having become fleshed-out NPCs in the in-game years that have passed. Other familiar characters like Scooter, Moxxi and Dr Zed all drop by to say hi, while fresh faces like Tiny Tina – a thirteen-year old explosives expert with profanity proficiency that could easily rival that of *Kick-Ass*' Hit Girl – introduce all-new heights of narrative insanity. Love him or hate him, the original Claptrap from the start of *Borderlands* returns, every other Claptrap having been destroyed by Handsome Jack.

It promises to be an absolutely enormous game. In the words of Gearbox vice president Steve Gibson, *Borderlands 2* is "f*cking big." Gearbox postulates that the original game took around 25 hours to complete a single play-through. For its sequel, they admit to having gone a bit overboard, stating that it'll take around 58 hours to wade through all of the content in the game. You'll visit multiple towns as you progress and your character becomes more powerful – the largest of which is Sanctuary, the town we visited in our demo of the game. There are loads of ambient









HEY! NAME'S SCOOTER! I'S NAMED AFTER MY SISTER!

If you've played the original game, you're likely fully aware that the vehicles used to get around its version of Pandora are a tad... iffy in the handling and physics department. They could also only transport a maximum of two players per vehicle. For the sequel, we've got the Party Truck, outfitted with driver and gunner positions, along with space for two extra passengers in the back, who can continue to fire with any weapons they have equipped. Also, the handling and physics for vehicles has been reworked, and vehicles can now power slide so you can look extra cool while mowing down enemies and not getting stuck in world geometry.

Zer0 is so called because whenever he sends an enemy to Pandora's version of the afterlife he displays a "0" on his faceplate. Other facial "expressions" like a smiley face will appear on his faceplate at appropriately zer0-approved moments.





Slag, a new elemental effect that can be applied to enemies using certain weapons, doubles any damage taken by that enemy for a certain time – but beware, you can get covered in Slag too.

improvements to the game's fundamental mechanics: the user interface, for example, has seen tweaks in both visual style and functionality, which will hopefully make trading, upgrading skills and managing your inventory a greatly streamlined affair. PC players can also happy face over specific optimisations for their platform of choice that go beyond the expected visual enhancements: there's also PhysX support and PC-specific UI enhancements, like proper mouse navigation in menus. Mercifully, there'll be no jumping through hoops to get the online co-op working on PC this time either, and LAN play will be available.

Environments will be more varied, with tundra, jungle, urban environments and more, while Pandora itself will be more open. Enemies will boast better AI and a wider variety of abilities with which to turn you into a vicious splat on the wall. Six-armed Bullymongs hurl bits of scenery at you. Nomad Torturers have midgets strapped to the front of the shields they carry, who'll giddily hop off and try to skin your face if you kill their captors. Varkid larvae grow into large, winged, insect-like foes if left alive for too long. Handsome Jack's army of varied robotic warriors will construct new bots mid-battle, charge wildly and even deflect bullets as they attempt to send you back to your last checkpoint. Quest variety appears to be a bit more thought out, with quests that offer more than just the opportunity to fetch various items for lazy job-givers: there are quests that require area defence, luring enemies into traps, and some quests can even be failed, reportedly affecting the story if you botch them badly.

It honestly looks like everything fans desire from the series and more. It's set to offer plenty of incentive to play through again and again thanks to the exhaustively extensive skill trees and the four characters (there'll reportedly also be a fifth character, the Mechromancer, who's capable of controlling robotic allies like the "Deathtrap" in combat, offered as paid DLC a few months after launch, or free if you pre-order the game) on offer. From what I've played, I can confidently say that you'll find all the shooting, looting and wooting you could possibly want right here in *Borderlands 2*.

- Barkskin

BIGGER THAN YOURS

Borderlands wouldn't have been such an overpoweringly addictive ARPG on the side without its randomised weapon drop system, which was capable of producing a staggering number of rocket launchers, pistols, sniper rifles, SMGs and more with varying fire rates, reload speeds, elemental effects like fire and lightning, and even different scope types. *Borderlands 2* takes that ridiculous number of possibilities, and multiplies it by numbers that would make your head explode. Impressively, the random stats generation has now been further augmented by each weapon manufacturer featured in the game putting their own trademark features on the weapons they manufacture, altering both their appearance and their use.

Vladof, for example, has a reputation for creating weapons with ludicrously high rates of fire. Their weapons are therefore usually kitted with minigun-style barrels and often spin up to fire faster the longer the trigger is held down. Maliwan make exotic-looking weapons that always cause elemental effects. Hyperion is renowned for accuracy, and bullet spread on their weapons actually decreases and the aiming reticule shrinks the longer the trigger is held down. Tediore is known for making cheap, disposable guns, and they reflect this by looking plasticky and crappy. Whenever they need reloading, you simply dispose of the one you're using and another will regenerate into existence in your hands. In the demo we played, throwing our Tediore away after use turned it into an impromptu grenade, exploding on contact with enemies. What's more, the more ammo we had in our clip on disposal, the more damage the explosion did to enemies.

There'll be a few more weapon manufacturers in the game, also with their own unique gun traits. Even the bandits have begun crafting their own guns. They've reportedly got some of the largest clip sizes in the game, but are made out of waste material – like glass bottles for scopes, and nuts and bolts for iron sights. Grenades return as well, and can be modified using Grenade Mods that apply effects like turning them into homing grenades.

INTERVIEW

Gearbox president Randy Pitchford and vice president Steve Gibson

Part of my trip to see *Borderlands 2* in the top-secret location (London) at a top-secret venue (some bar) to do top-secret stuff (play *Borderlands 2*) and have a top-secret meeting (ask some awesome people some questions) with top-secret people (Gearbox president Randy Pitchford and vice president Steve Gibson) about... stuff. Flight fatigue, failing contact lenses and various moments of brain freeze made it a fairly random chat, but I still harvested some interesting info. Also, I may have totally nerded-out and made a proper fool of myself when first introducing myself to Randy. Because hero worship. Anyway! I couldn't have asked for an interview with a nicer pair of humans, all excitement and enthusiasm even in the face of my more idiotic, exhausted mumblings. And if their commitment to the game they're creating is any indication, *Borderlands 2* is going to be spectacular.

NAG: Could you tell our readers exactly what it is you guys do at Gearbox, and more specifically, what it is you're doing on *Borderlands 2*?

Randy Pitchford: I'm the most accountable – I am the president of Gearbox and I'm the executive producer of *Borderlands 2*. That means I'm responsible. [laughter]

Steve Gibson: I'm the one who's responsible for everything that you're seeing here today, what we show and how it's shown and all that crap, so I'm also quite responsible for what you're seeing right now. But he's also responsible!

RP: I'm responsible for you. [laughter]

NAG: So, for the sequel, you opted to get rid of the four original Vault Hunters and replace them with all-new characters. What was the thinking behind that?

RP: In the sequel, you want new experiences, and so we wanted to try some new skills and some new capabilities, create some new personalities and some new gameplay. We love the characters in the first game though, so we made sure that they are back as NPCs. And if you think of some sequels, they might do an RPG where they want to do everything new and they pretend like the other characters never existed, or others they'll just do the exact same characters if they don't feel like giving a new experience. So we kind of found the best of both worlds there. But we've had a lot of fun with it, and we've really brought some new things to the table with these characters. And they're really cool.

NAG: *Borderlands 1*, as an original IP, came with its own unique challenges and everything. Do you feel that you've changed enough with the sequel that it's been as much of an undertaking to get done as the first one?

RP: The game's about twice as big as the first game. It's about twice the budget, twice the "stuff"...



NAG: So are you working with a bigger team?

RP: Yeah, the team's much larger. On *Borderlands 1* we peaked at about 80 or 90 people; we peaked on *Borderlands 2* at about 200 people, closer to 300 when you count outsourced staff.

SG: Bigger = better.

RP: *Borderlands 1* was our 1.0, and we did a lot that had never been done before. We did this new kind of blend of genres; the FPS game, the way we blended it with the RPG. We also created this new art direction, this new look. The look of *Borderlands* is very unique to the game and created a unique universe to go with it. And all that invention took a lot of time, a lot of trial and error, a lot of iteration.

NAG: The first game was in development for what felt like a really, really long time.

RP: About four-and-a-half years, which is what it takes. And when we see something interesting to us, a couple of years is forever. [laughs]

SG: When you invent new things, it takes time. A lot of stuff iterated: a lot of the game mechanics, the art direction. But everybody remembers that time when they hit the key and all the guns started spewing out. The first time you saw that demo and you're like "holy crap millions of guns!" [laughter] And that part remained from the beginning of development, that core idea.

RP: Yeah, and we figured the RPG side out pretty early on. *Borderlands 2* is about three

LOOK MA! I'M A BADASS!

New to *Borderlands 2* is the concept of Badass Points. These are a form of global experience points shared across all your characters, like a sort of player level. You earn them by completing specific challenges as you play, like killing a certain number of an enemy type, which will give you points to spend on different attributes that will then be applied to all of your characters. So if you fancy things like having a slight health boost applied to all your builds, or to give any new characters you create a small advantage at the offset that'll make it easier to take on some of the game's more difficult challenges, Badass Points might be just what you need. Their benefits can be toggled on and off as well, so if you'd rather roll a character without any bonuses, you can do that too.





years of development, but a lot more people during that time, so it's about twice the everything. And what we've done is that the core loop, like if you've played *Borderlands 1*, you know what worked, and our fans do not want us to throw away all that great game design. Like, we shouldn't make a side-scroller...

NAG: I'd totally play that.

RP: ... or it shouldn't be a rhythm/music game...

NAG: I'd totally play that too.

RP: [laughs] Maybe! But that's not what we expect from *Borderlands 2*.

NAG: You could always do a Facebook tie-in.

RP: [laughter] There's a farming game that we're gonna do...

NAG: BorderlandsVille?

RP: ...it's freemium, and you grow crops out there on Pandora. [laughter] But really, we've committed to the game-design loop that we invented, that works, that is the Special Sauce™ of *Borderlands* and we've iterated that, and improved that, and doubled down on that, and that's committed to. But everything in the game is new. All the environments are more diverse than anything we had in the first game, there's more of it, it's denser, it's more varied. The creatures range from tiny to these enormous behemoths with a bunch of variety amongst them all. The missions and quests are more varied. Each skill tree is about 50-percent deeper than the skill trees in the original. There's more uniqueness. It's a big undertaking.

NAG: And what about PvP: is it being expanded on in any way?

RP: We found that people who played Borderlands didn't care about PvP in general, so we didn't think that investing more there would be the right choice. Duels have been improved; there are some people that did like to duel. And it is kind of neat, when you're in the *Borderlands*, to be able to start a duel anywhere in the world, so you can turn any environment into a competitive map, but it turned out not a lot of people really look at Borderlands as wanting it to be that kind of game. They want a more cooperative or solo campaign where it's about growing and improving and levelling up and playing a great FPS/RPG.

SG: We've expanded the co-op stuff as well, so now there's stuff like drop-in split-screen. You can be playing and another player could drop in at any time. Those kinds of things, the cooperative stuff. And split-screen players being able to join an online game, that wasn't possible in the first game. Or being able to change your quest line to match up with the other guy when you join his game, lots of little niceties like that. But you really don't have to play co-op: it's still a really great game to play single player.

RP: In the skill trees of all the characters, you'll find some skills that clearly are designed for co-op gameplay, cross-character skills that work really well together and have obvious cooperative benefits when players use them together. Meanwhile others are clearly designed for playing alone.

NAG: WIll there really be 95.6% more wub wub?

RP: Actually, that's kind of a lie 'cause I think there was zero wub wub.

NAG: And Claptrap? Was bringing him back a difficult decision to make?

RP: That f*cking a**hole... [laughter]

NAG: Thanks for your time! NAG

REVIEWSINTRO

Shake the tree and some ripe fruit will fall, shake too hard and you get this bunch. Meet your reviewers.

In video games of all time – what is your favourite weapon ever?



RedTide

The toot & splat road kill machine: The ultimate weapon for me is anything in *Battlefield 2* on four wheels with a horn. High speed run downs with a friendly hoot just before impact provided endless ~~hours~~ days of hilarity.



Miktar

It'd be a close tie between *Unreal Tournament 2004*'s "Mk3 Negotiator" Series 7 Flechette Cannon and the Trident Tri-barrel Rocket Launcher. Shrapnel shotgun vs. Heat-seeking Rockets & Cluster Grenades. Tough call.



Azimuth

Unreal Tournament's Flak Cannon. It's the #1 choice for instant, all-mess, no-fuss conflict resolution for the girl on the go.



Mikit0707

The Devastator from *Duke Nukem 3D*... the ONLY Duke Nukem FPS that was ever made. There is no other Duke FPS. You understand?



GeometriX

No matter the game or the setting or the things I'm trying to kill, I never feel better than when I've got a fully loaded shotgun in my hands.



Barkskin

Probably the Land Shark Gun from *Armed and Dangerous*. When guns fire sharks that swim through the ground (no really) devouring enemies as they go, life is undeniably better.

MINIREVIEW

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

JURASSIC PARK: THE GAME



Once upon a time there was a game called *Heavy Rain*. It was an interactive drama. It was filled with quick time events and many people didn't find that appealing, but the game had an incredibly strong, well-told story with film-quality cinematography and fantastic visuals – so people felt okay with the overall balance. Then, one day, the people at Telltale Games thought it'd be a good idea to make an adventure game based on *Jurassic Park*. It'd play out in a similar way to *Heavy Rain* – with quick time events to drive the majority of the game's interactions, but it'd have awful graphics, an engine that couldn't handle the lush, outdoor environments needed in a *Jurassic Park* game, and a boring story with characters you probably won't care about. And that's where we are right now.

Despite sharing a setting with one of the greatest adventure movies of our time (just accept it), *Jurassic Park: The Game* is a painful thing to experience. And not just because the many (*many*) quick time events that drive the game are poorly implemented, but because it's impossible to just sit back and enjoy the nostalgic romp through the dinosaur infested island of Isla Nublar. There's always something vying for your attention, demanding a button press of some sort, which makes the entire play experience edgy. You'd think that all of this captivation would do wonders for player immersion, and you'd be right for about three minutes, but then a ridiculous thing pops up in the top right corner to grade you on your button-pressing abilities and you remember that you're basically just playing a shallow arcade game with an interesting setting.

40

"Often when I have a boner I'm terrified anyway"
- Barkskin



Ramjet
So many good weapons... Although the energy tether from *Bulletstorm* was really useful (even if it wasn't strictly a weapon).



SAVAGE
The knife from *MW2*, as a normal knife and tactically with a pistol.



ShockG
Robert Garcia from *King of Fighters*.

WEBSCORES

How do we measure up? We scour the Net to find out what the rest of the world thinks.

GRAVITY RUSH
NAG: 88
Metacritic: 84
Gamerankings: 83

LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW
NAG: 89
Metacritic: 69
Gamerankings: 70

SPEC OPS: THE LINE
NAG: 85
Metacritic: 75
Gamerankings: 70

RUNE FACTORY: OCEANS
NAG: 55
Metacritic: 56
Gamerankings: 57

REMINGTON SUPER SLAM HUNTING: AFRICA
NAG: 30
Metacritic: N/A
Gamerankings: N/A

MARIO TENNIS OPEN
NAG: 50
Metacritic: 70
Gamerankings: 69

STEEL BATTALION: HEAVY ARMOR
NAG: 40
Metacritic: 39
Gamerankings: 40

QUANTUM CONUNDRUM
NAG: 85
Metacritic: 78
Gamerankings: 80

YS ORIGIN
NAG: 87
Metacritic: 78
Gamerankings: 81

REVIEW SCORES GUIDELINE

Here at *NAG*, our reviewers are gamers first, and, while we strive to be as objective as possible with our reviews, each reviewer has their own preferences, opinion and style that will come through in their reviews. It's not an exact science – anyone telling you otherwise is fibbing. We love playing games and, sometimes, certain genres and series will stand out for an individual reviewer; it's not uncommon for those preferences to reflect in their review score. Having said that, we've put together this little guide to help you understand how we rate our games – more or less.

1–39 This game is broken, both technically and in terms of gameplay. Even if you get it to run, playing it is a painful experience that you wouldn't wish upon your worst enemy.

40–49 It barely functions, but there's little real game here. Maybe if you got it for free you'd spend a few hours with it, but it's not something you'd recommend to friends.

50–59 Acceptable, but nothing special. It's generic in every conceivable way, but it's solid enough and might be worth spending some time hunting for achievements.

60–69 Now we're getting somewhere. This game is good; it has something interesting about it, and fans of the genre or series should enjoy it, but something significant holds it back from greatness and might prevent newcomers from latching on.

70–79 This game is solid. Anyone who enjoys this type of genre will have a great time and could finish it without too much aggravation. It shows care and polish, but falls short in a number of areas.

80–89 Excellence has been achieved; a game that you'd happily play through multiple times and recommend to friends. It adds interesting, if imperfect, advancements to the genre or series, or ticks all the expected boxes with flair and polish. It's technically superior to many other games but perhaps misses an opportunity or two, or doesn't innovate enough.

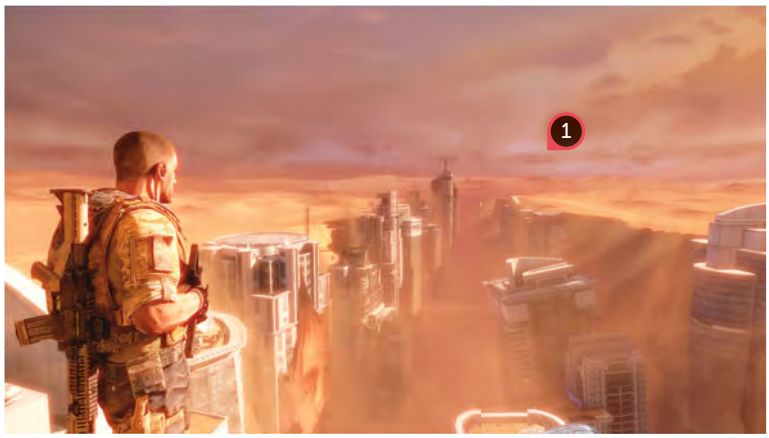
90–100 As close to perfection as possible. This game is highly innovative; it has incredible visuals; it plays like a dream and you can't get enough of it. You have to look for faults just to avoid giving it a perfect score. You'll go back and play this in ten years and shed a tear of joy when you do.

Spec Ops: The Line

One less hero

With its deceptively generic title and violently overblown pre-launch marketing campaign populated with trailers that relied on typical military shooter explosions and gunfights and "I want to be *Call of Duty*!" attempts at appealing to the mainstream market, *Spec Ops* began to worry me that perhaps it wasn't going to veer from the beaten path like it had promised. I'd had the good fortune of seeing the game in action prior to its release, discussing its unusual narrative concepts with its creators long before its release, and everything pointed to a game that was more than just a standard, machismo-laden third-person military shooter littered with fist-bumps and chest-thumping. Having played it, however, I realise that I was wrong to ever doubt it.

Almost all of what makes *The Line* something worth paying loads of attention to lies in its narrative, the pacing and delivery of it, as well as its uniqueness relative to most other games involving anyone wearing a military uniform. In it, you play Captain Martin Walker. You're sent into Dubai six months after a series of devastating sandstorms tears the city apart. When a distress signal broadcast from within the city is intercepted, sent by celebrated US Army Colonel John Konrad, your only mission becomes to assess the situation and report back to your superiors. However, once you witness the situation in Dubai and realise that not only did the disaster leave the city physically battered, but the survivors eking out an existence amongst the rubble have also had their minds understandably warped, fighting amongst each other for control of what's left of the graveyard Dubai has become. And these are central themes in *The Line*'s poignant and often extremely discomforting storyline: that war *is* hell, and the effect that desperation and the business of killing can have on people is anything but pretty.





1 So, sandstorms 'ey? These violent natural monsters rudely appear from time to time in the game, obscuring your (and your enemies') vision, movement and ability to not get sand in your magazine bag. There's a very real sense of desperation whenever you're caught in them.





It ventures into territory where few games dare tread, where violence and war have very real consequences, and soldiers are labeled as the killers they are. As it progresses and we travel deeper into this twisted realm of human decay, it only gets worse for Walker and his two squadmates, Adams and Lugo. There's a very clear effect to be witnessed on the three-man team as your journey through Dubai gradually becomes more taxing, physically and psychologically. It starts off as typical military humdrum, three trigger-happy grunts on a joyride through a warzone – but with each brutal confrontation, the guilt piles on and takes its toll on Walker and his team. And, impressively, the player as well. You will feel powerful remorse, disgust and other emotions normally left buried beneath a pile of mindlessness in other shooters. You will question your role as the "hero" of this game.

Beyond the often uncomfortable tale it tells, *The Line* is a comfortable third-person shooter. It's nothing revolutionary at all, outfitted with the obligatory cover system, weapon

DETAILS

Platforms
360 / PC / PS3
Genre
Third-person shooter
Age restriction
18
Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
8 players
Developer
Yager Development
Website
www.specopstheline.com
Publisher
2K Games
Distributor
Megarom





"Almost all of what makes *The Line* **something worth paying loads of attention to lies in its narrative,** the pacing and delivery of it, as well as its uniqueness relative to most other games involving anyone wearing a military uniform."



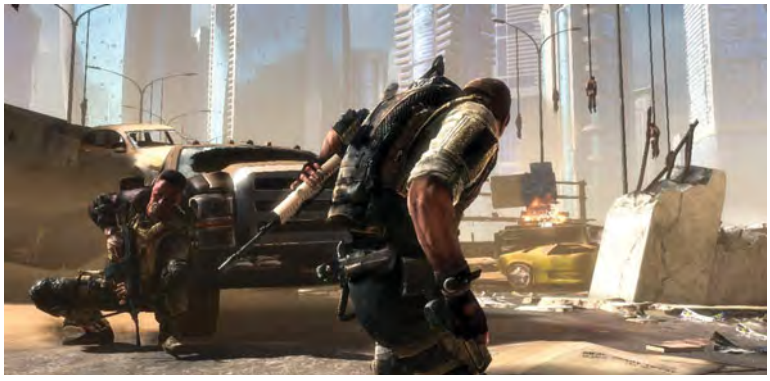


variety and impressive scripting expected of modern games of this type. It works well here though, excellently polished and with a potent arsenal on offer. You'll find some cool game mechanics, like sand that can be collapsed on top of enemies in various ways to bury them and save you some ammo, along with other environmentally destructive tricks that can be used against enemies. In keeping with its themes, however, you're always made to remember the grim business you're engaged in. Grenades don't just kill enemies: they tear off limbs and leave foes (many of whom are no more than desperate refugees with weapons, or fellow American troops) burnt and bloodied. Fallen enemies often don't die from the wounds you inflict straight away: they'll writhe and moan in painful agony as they fade.

The enemies themselves are quite intelligent, able to flank and use a bit of finesse to overwhelm you. Enemy variety is understandably limited, with the only real variation in enemy type and difficulty coming from their weapons and the amount of armour they're packing. Knife-wielding enemies who carelessly rush you again allude to the mental state of Dubai's survivors. Environments start off the drab desert brown so many shooters adopt – but as the game comes into its own and the plot evolves, so too do the environments become more exotic and remarkable. The use of Dubai and the contrast between its opulent past and rotting present makes for a very evocative setting. It's not a very lengthy game – but it's worth playing through again having learnt all of its secrets to see events in a different light.

The journey's not without a few annoyances. The cover









system, for example, dished out a couple of moments where it was fiddly enough to get me killed by being unresponsive at fatal times. A few weird control niggles exist as well, like having your melee key double as the key to vault over objects. More than once, I hit the key to vault over an obstacle and instead was stuck watching Walker hopelessly swipe at the air with his weapon while getting riddled with bullets. Other than such mechanical blunders, the multiplayer ends up being ultimately disappointing. It's not a bad offering by any means, rather simply unremarkable in almost every way. It's got everything you'd expect these days, being class-based across two separate factions and offering a wealth of weapon and ability-improving perk unlocks as you increase in rank. Still, compared to how carefully designed the single-player game is, the multiplayer feels like an afterthought.

I feel silly even mentioning its flaws, because *The Line* should be celebrated for what it gets right, rather than picked apart for what it gets wrong. The narrative really is something we see all too seldom in video games. I've called it the "*BioShock* of the sands" before – which seems even more fitting now that I've reached its finale and been truly stunned by it. And like *BioShock*, it's also a brilliant commentary on games and the way we play them. NAG

- Barkskin

85

What it lacks in originality across both solo and multiplayer gameplay, *Spec Ops: The Line* more than makes up for with its distinctly powerful, uncomfortably human plot. Unfortunately, its desire to offer up something poignantly unique will likely leave it buried beneath the pile of standard military shoot shoots – which is an absolute crime.

PLUS

Compelling, memorable story / Solid, mostly intelligent action

MINUS

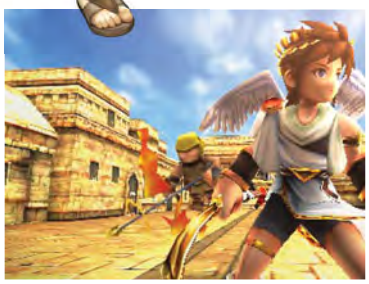
Been there, done that multiplayer / Occasional control mishaps



Kid Icarus: Uprising

"Sorry to keep you waiting!"







Kid Icarus: Uprising's first line holds a surprising amount of importance – what may at first seem like idle chitchat is at the same time an apology to fans who have been waiting for a new installment in the *Kid Icarus* franchise since Pit's Game Boy outing 21 years ago. But can *Uprising* stand up to these lofty expectations, or is this a disappointing scenario à la *Duke Nukem Forever*?

In *Kid Icarus: Uprising*, players take control of Pit, an angelic general of the army of Goddess Palutena. He has been granted the power of flight in order to thwart the plans of his arch-nemesis, Medusa, dispatching hordes of underworld baddies along the way.

Uprising is simultaneously a return to the *Kid Icarus* series and a substantial deviation from its roots. While the NES and Game Boy predecessors required precise platforming skills, *Uprising*'s stages consist of two parts each: an air battle section, which plays like an action-laden shoot-'em-up: Pit follows a preset path and destroys – or evades – enemies in his path, calling for quick thinking and reflexes. The second part is a land battle section, with the player freely moving Pit and the camera around – and each of these is garnished with a boss battle at the end. During both of these sections, voice-acted conversations laden with witticism play out between the characters, commenting on the situation – while some may find this idle banter distracting, it definitely lends a lot of charm to the game.



While the controls have a slight learning curve, which could be off-putting to some, they are very precise when accustomed to and can be further tweaked to one's liking.

Players have a wide variety of weapon types at their disposal, ranging from bulky and slow but powerful cannons to quick and nimble claws, each with a unique play style and its own draws and disadvantages, so picking a weapon you feel comfortable using is of vital importance.

Kid Icarus: Uprising is an incredibly refreshing experience, a joy to play and should be in every 3DS owner's library. NAG

- Milan Triebel

READER SCORE

87

***Kid Icarus: Uprising* is a successful revival of the franchise, and manages to exceed expectations with a surprisingly deep and engaging experience bristling with charm and overflowing with content.**

PLUS

Addictive risk-vs.-reward-based difficulty system / Impressive visual presentation / Humorous dialogue / Wealth of content and unlockables

MINUS

Controls are initially unintuitive, especially during land battle sections / No real Circle Pad Pro support

DETAILS

Platforms
3DS
Genre
Third-person shooter
Age restriction
12
Multiplayer
Local
6 players
Online
6 players
Developer
Project Sora
Website
kidicarus.nintendo.com
Publisher
Nintendo
Distributor
Core Gaming Systems



SEND US YOUR REVIEW

If you'd like to take part in our Nintendo Reader Reviews competition, write a review of 300-350 words on any 3DS game you want, excluding the games we've already seen (*Kid Icarus: Uprising, Super Mario 3D Land, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D* and *Mario Kart 7*). Include a summary of your review (up to 40 words), a few short pros and cons, and a score out of 100. Write a few lines about yourself too. Check it twice and then send it through to **nintendoreaderreviews@nag.co.za** as a Word document (.doc or .docx) or RTF. You need to do this by 12:00 on Tuesday the 7th of August.

The best review will appear in the next issue of *NAG* and the entrant will receive from Nintendo South Africa three Nintendo 3DS games of your choice (limited to first-party titles), a Circle Pad Pro and *Mario Kart 7* wheel accessories. Two runners-up will also be chosen, and each will receive a 3DS game of their choice (limited to first-party titles). Please note that this competition is open to South African residents only. This competition does not constitute a job offer or entitle the winner to any benefits or rights of employment with *NAG*. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash.

Lollipop Chainsaw

Gimme an "O"! Gimme an "M"! Gimme a "G"!

Let's get one thing clear from the get-go: you cannot *possibly* take this game seriously. *Lollipop Chainsaw* is the very definition of brain bubblegum; there is no intellectually nutritional value here, just unadulterated escapism. And much like all food that's horrifically bad for you, *Lollipop Chainsaw* goes down an absolute treat.

The game stars Juliet Starling: a character right at home in the pantheon of offbeat heroes that populate the games of Suda 51 and Grasshopper Manufacture. She's an eighteen-year-old, zombie slaying cheerleader from San Romero High School. She's in love with her boyfriend, Nick, who unfortunately falls victim to the undead apocalypse and spends the rest of the game as a decapitated head attached to Juliet's belt. Once the undead apocalypse kicks into high gear, it's up to Juliet to rid her hometown of the "zombie douche-bags". Fortunately she packed her bedazzled chainsaw before leaving the house.

The game's a typical Japanese hack-and-slash with light shooting elements thrown in. Juliet's primary means of attack is with her chainsaw. You have heavy attacks mapped to one button and low, sweep attacks mapped to another. On top of her chainsaw attacks, Juliet can dish out damage with her cheerleader moves and pom-poms. Her cheer attacks are very fast but they deal light damage and are primarily used to stun zombies and herd them into larger groups. If you kill three or more zombies in one hit, you'll activate something



called Sparkle Hunting, which gives you more zombie medals (currency for unlocking new combos and upgrades) and platinum medals (used to unlock outfits for Juliet, concept art, music etc.). Maximising your Sparkle Hunting activation is key to the game's combat, and it's a rather addictive gameplay mechanic because the visual pay-off is awesome.

Juliet also has a power-up metre that is charged with zombie soul stars; once activated, she can one-hit-kill most enemies. Nick also doubles as a weapon, but you can only use his roulette-style effect if you have a Nick-Ticket, which can either be purchased or found during levels.

On the whole, the game's combat mechanic is good; it's not nearly as in-depth as something like *Bayonetta*, but it's enjoyable and undeniably unique in its aesthetics approach.

One of the greatest aspects of *Lollipop Chainsaw* is that the zombie apocalypse is actually a rock 'n' roll zombie apocalypse, which means that the game is crammed with licensed music and a 1980s, f**k you punk rock attitude. You pretty much know exactly what you're in for the moment the menu screen loads alongside *Cherry Bomb* by Joan Jett and the Blackhearts. There's an eclectic mix of music in this game, including some original compositions by Jimmy Urine of Mindless Self Indulgence fame. It all gels surprisingly well and is by far one of the game's shining achievements.

In total, there are five zombie rock lords that you need to

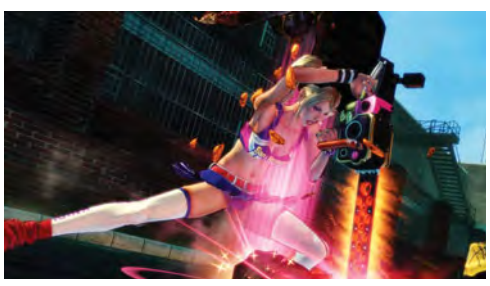
DETAILS

Platforms
360 / PC3
Genre
Action
Age restriction
18
Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
Leaderboards
Developer
Grasshopper Manufacture
Website
www.lollipopchainsaw.com
Publisher
Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment
Distributor
Nu Metro Interactive

1 There are twenty different costumes to unlock ranging from the typically skimpy to the downright ridiculous. There's also an Ash Williams outfit, from *The Evil Dead* series, not *Mass Effect*.

2 The game was made on the Unreal Engine (no surprises there). And yeah, we can't recall the last time we saw this much colour in a UE-powered game either. Character models are very pretty and have a cell-shaded vibe going, which ties in rather nicely with the game's overall comic book aesthetics.









1



2



"The game's a typical **Japanese hack-and-slash with light shooting elements thrown in**. Juliet's primary means of attack is with her chainsaw."

defeat, and each is themed along a different genre of rock music. Most of them make for memorable characters, such as Zed, the frenetic punk rock zombie; or Mariska, the psychedelic hippie rock zombie. The game's boss battles are infused with Suda 51's trademark insanity and the majority are very well done. There are two, however, that are mediocre at best. Fortunately, character interaction and dialogue do a good job of overshadowing the two less memorable boss encounters.

Throughout the game you'll come across various mini-games, but they're a little hit-and-miss. Zombie Basketball is fun and nets you rewards, but a later mini-game sees you harvesting zombies with a combine harvester for no apparent pay-off. Mini-games are a Suda 51 staple, as is the fact that they're very often a mix of clever, silly, infuriating and repetitive. Get ready for quite a few quick time events.

Despite writing collaborations with American film guy James Gunn (*Slither, Dawn of the Dead*) the plot is really nothing special. However, if *The Walking Dead* series has taught us anything it's that all good zombie stories are held together by memorable characters and good dialogue, both of which *Lollipop Chainsaw* has in no short supply. Juliet is endearingly ditzy and her endless cheerleader enthusiasm for disembowelling the undead is exemplified by rainbows and girly pink glitter sparkles exploding out of zombies, while Toni Basil's *Mickey* plays in the background. She's pretty much Kirsten Dunst from *Bring It On* meets Uma Thurman from *Kill Bill*. Juliet's overt sexiness is something that isn't shied away from, but it's done in such an over-the-top manner that it becomes pretty humorous.

As in recent Grasshopper Manufacture games, the in-game dialogue that plays out between Juliet and Nick is very funny. If you enjoyed the banter between Garcia and Johnson in *Shadows of the Damned*, then there's more along those lines in *Lollipop Chainsaw*.

The game is not without some issues. Power-up activation is a tad temperamental due to button mapping; I inadvertently activated Star Soul Mode and Nick-Tickets on numerous occasions. There's no alternative controller layout to obviate this issue. This, coupled with some very sticky shooting controls and a suspect camera, means that controlling Juliet sometimes feels uncomfortable.

The game takes about eight hours to complete but if you want to get all the collectibles, unlocks and Achievements/Trophies then numerous playthroughs will be required.

Finally, the game's voice acting is fantastic (Tara Strong totally nails Juliet) but there are some one-liners that are repeated way too often, especially in the "Chop²Shop" screens where you buy your upgrades and unlocks. **NAG**
- Mikit0707

78

***Lollipop Chainsaw* is a mindless romp of a game, but I had a blast with it. Suda 51 fans will love it, as will anyone who enjoys something offbeat and silly every once in a while. It's straightforward in the gameplay department, but it's the artistic direction, music and characters that make it memorable and destined for a cult following.**

PLUS
Simple but addictive combat / Highly memorable characters
Colourful comic book aesthetic / Unapologetically rude

MINUS
Rather short (±8 hours) / Some stupid mini-games
Environments can be repetitive / Wonky camera controls

Look & Listen For the Fans

Quantum Conundrum

MUST PLAY

For science!

Everyone has that one weird uncle – the type who wears slippers all the time or who eats nothing but candy and potatoes – but few of them could match the eccentricity of Professor Fitz Quadwrangle and his passion for messing with inter-dimensional science. Then along you come, nephew of the afore-mentioned uncle, to spend the weekend at the professor's hilltop manor right as he gets sucked into a pocket dimension following a failed experiment. It'll be up to you to make your way through the manor, get its systems back online and attempt to rescue your uncle from wherever the hell he's landed himself.

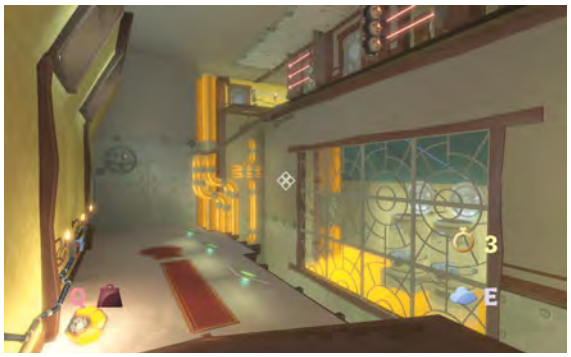
To accomplish all of the above, you'll need to master the five dimensions made available through the glove-like IDS (Inter-Dimensional Shift) device: Fluffy, Heavy, Reverse Gravity, Slow and "Normal". You'll use these dimensions to make your way through the manor's many puzzle rooms by lifting boxes, stopping laser beams, messing with automated robots, flying on couches, building floating stairways and a lot of other activities you'd never think of. The end result is something that initially feels a lot like *Portal*, but as you move through the game, the balance between brain-teasing and some very demanding twitch platforming shifts to a split that's about half and half. It's a balance that some might enjoy, but it could irritate you if



/ It's worth mentioning that *Quantum Conundrum* costs just $15 (R120). For a six-hour game, that's not too shabby.









such platformers aren't really your thing, and many of the puzzles rely on split-second timing. It's frustrating at times, but the good type: *Quantum Conundrum* likes to play hard-to-get, and that makes the eventual "get" part all the more rewarding.

As a puzzle game, *Quantum Conundrum* succeeds almost flawlessly – it's clever and sneaky and makes you feel like a genius some of the time and a Neanderthal the rest of the time ¬– but its packaging leaves a little to be desired. *QC* is quirky, charming and often very funny, and its simplistic but functional visuals are let down only partially by its frequently repeated environments and textures. But the game's attempt at a story shows that it was conceived as an afterthought, assigned to the first unlucky berk who walked past the board room at the time, and as a result of this completely unfounded accusation, falls flat on its face about two-thirds of the way in and never picks itself back up. It's not that story is super important in a puzzle game, but the fact that one is attempted in the first place puts *Quantum Conundrum* in a bit of an awkward position. Maybe we've just been spoiled by *Portal*. NAG

- GeometriX

85 **A charming and challenging puzzle game that's guaranteed to frustrate as often as it rewards you.**

PLUS
Brilliant puzzles / Just the right amount of difficulty

MINUS
Repetitive environments / Weak story

DETAILS

Platforms
360 / PC / PS3
Genre
First-person puzzle game
Age restriction
7
Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
None
Developer
Airtight Games
Website
www.quantumconundrum.com
Publisher
Square Enix
Distributor
Megarom

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Look & Listen
For the Fans

Ys Origin

Straightforward dungeon crawler and prequel to a 25 year legacy.

Most people, if you ask them to name a 25-year-old game series in which you explore dungeons and fight monsters, will likely say "*The Legend of Zelda*". Even though the *Ys* series is as old as *Zelda* and has enjoyed immense popularity in Japan since the first game, *Ys 1: Ancient Ys Vanished* (1987), the series has never been that popular outside the Orient.

A few entries did make it West on PS2 and PSP, either through Konami in 2005 with *Ys VI: Ark of Napishtim* (the first English release of the series in thirteen years) or XSEED's masterful handling of translations starting with *Ys: The Oath in Felghana*[1]. XSEED released *Ys: The Oath in Felghana*, a remake of *Ys III: Wanderers from Ys* (1989), on Steam in March. This is the first time most PC gamers get to experience what is (in terms of number of game releases) the largest Eastern RPG series second only to *Final Fantasy*.

Released on Steam in May, *Ys Origin* is the seventh game in the *Ys* series and a prequel. It takes place first in terms of chronology, 700 years before the events of "Ancient Ys Vanished" (*Ys I & II*). As you explore a huge vertical dungeon known as "Darm Tower", the game elaborates on much of the series' backstory, including characters, mystical artifacts and locations.

There are three playable characters (one is initially locked until you beat the game once with either of the other two), each has their own story and combat style. Yunica, a young knight, uses an axe and sword for close-range melee. Hugo Fact, genius magician and all-round asshole, shoots bullets and is the easier of the two to play. We're not going to spoil the third character for you.

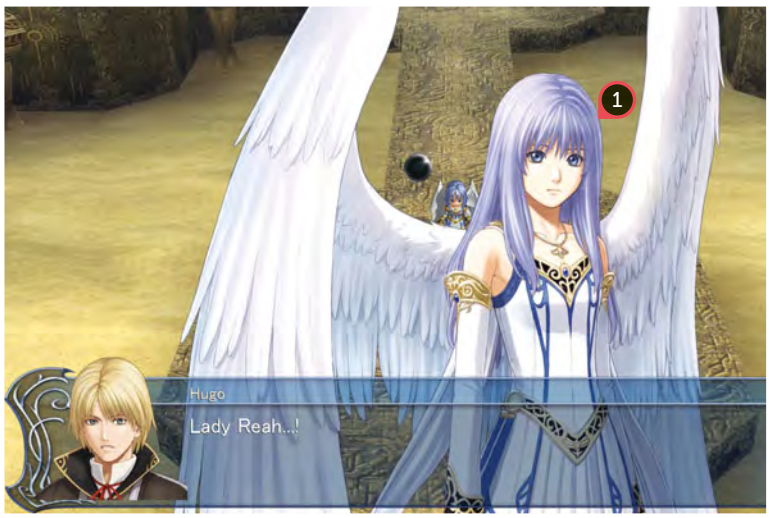
Combat is fast and action-packed, with enemies having clear and recognizable patterns to their attacks. As you hack-and-slash your way up the tower, there are some mild puzzles to solve and mild platforming elements to jump through. There's a kind of momentum system to keep you pushing forward: as you kill enemies without stopping, you gain a bonus to the rate at which you get experience points and "SP". The "SP" points are spent to permanently buff your character, such as increasing resistance to negative effects like poison or confuse, or to upgrade your armour.

The boss fights are where the game (and series) really strut its stuff. While mowing through general enemies is pretty easy, boss fights require focus. You'll need to learn their attack patterns, figure out which skills to use against them, and if you're really into that kind of thing there are Time Attack and Boss Rush challenge modes. **NAG - Miktar**



1 Using Cleria Ore found in chests, you can talk to a specific character and have them upgrade your weapon.

2 As you progress, you gain access to new combat skills or magic powers that are integral to defeating the game's many epic bosses.



ICE? EEZY? WHYS? YEES?
In case you're ever cornered in a dark alley by a man with a knife and asked how to pronounce *Ys*, it rhymes with "fleece" and "lease".







87

Being a prequel, *Ys Origin* is a great place to jump into the series. It's the most modern in terms of gameplay conventions, making it the easiest to pick up and play.

PLUS
Easy to get into / Lots of content to unlock
Great soundtrack / Runs well on older PCs

MINUS
A gamepad is recommended / There's no in-game map
Slightly cheesy plot & dialogue

DETAILS

Platforms
PC
Genre
Action role-playing game
Age restriction
8
Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
None
Developer
Nihon Falcom Corporation
Website
www.falcom.co.jp/yso/
Publisher
XSEED Games
Distributor
Steam

[1]There was already a fan translation of *Ys: Oath in Felghana*, and instead of sending a cease-and-desist to the translation team, XSEED instead purchased the translated script, an act considered quite historical.

CUTTING EDGE REVIEWS

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Look & Listen
For the Fans

Gravity Rush

Falling with savoir-faire.

EDITOR'S CHOICE



Like the swinging jazz violin solo atop bluegrass pizzicato strings in one of its music tracks, *Gravity Rush* is a smart, often exotic game that's not afraid to have fun. Veteran composer Kouhei Tanaka (best known for critically acclaimed Parisian soundtrack to *Sakura Wars*) strolls the background music through epic European-style brass flourish, mellow piano and flute medleys, soaring strings atop inspiring chord progressions, right back into 1930s bustling-metropolis ragtime where clarinets dance the Charleston in double-time.

The game's musical score is a pitch-perfect accompaniment to the game's distinct visuals. Directed by Keiichiro Toyama (known for survival horror games like *Silent Hill* and *Siren*), the sepia-tinted cityscape of *Gravity Rush* was heavily inspired by the Franco-Belgian *linge clair* ("clear line") art style of the world-renowned artist Jean Giraud (a.k.a. "Mœbius"). Each area of the city is perfectly distinct in mood, colour palette and musical accompaniment, surprisingly detailed and alive on the Vita's capable screen.

You play as Kat, an amnesiac girl who finds herself with control over her personal gravity. At the tap of a button, the direction you were looking at becomes "down", and you fall in that direction. You can stop your "fall" at any time, adjust your plummet parabola, walk horizontally up building walls, or speed up your relativistic descent as you fly through, above or below the floating city. It's an open world: you can accept missions in any order you want, with certain missions progressing the main storyline, opening up new areas and abilities.

Occasionally, graphic novel style panels are used to tell story (you can rotate your Vita to play with their orientation and perspective), which at first may seem nonsensical but if you stick with it, ends up being as grand in scope as the music. As a hint: pay attention to when you're told a legend regarding a bus that fell off the side of the world. Much of what sets up the embracing concepts to the central story, comes through incidental dialogue with random strangers, and not the main characters.

The combat, which involves gravity-defying dive-kicks and dodges, can feel clunky at times. But don't be too quick to fault the combat system, sometimes it's too smart for its own good. One example: a specific boss fight that expects you to figure out the principle of "static profile". A multi-headed hydra, each head difficult to hit due to their rapid up-and-down motion, is an exercise in frustration until you realize that when attacking from above, the heads look like they're staying in place. Because you can attack enemies from any angle, you'd be surprised how many people don't think to try changing their angle of attack.

Gaining a different perspective on things is what *Gravity Rush* is all about. NAG

- Miktar

1 Each section of the city has a distinct visual appearance and soundtrack. You travel between them via train, air-boat and sewer shortcuts.

2 There are thousands of crystals scattered across the city (*Crackdown* addicts beware), which you can collect to upgrade Kat's powers.





88

You could call *Gravity Rush* many things: a "killer app" for the Vita, an emboldened statement for "games as art", or a "conceptual tour de force" with its story. All of the above, if you're so inclined, or just "a good game with ample charm" will suffice.

PLUS

Endearing protagonist / Bold movement mechanics / Lofty idealism in narrative / Powerful music

MINUS

Unnecessary (can disable) motion controls / Perhaps too complex a story / Unpolished side-missions

DETAILS

Platforms
PS Vita
Genre
Action adventure
Age restriction
12
Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
None
Developer
SCE Japan Studio (Project Siren)
Website
bit.ly/N9VN7w
Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment
Distributor
Ster Kinekor Entertainment

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Look & Listen
For the Fans

Rune Factory: Oceans

Say what?

Good role-playing games always offer a lot of content. After all, that's what fans of the genre want... lots to do. But there is such a thing as too much; not in terms of the player, you understand, but rather in the way that the game presents itself, and the various activities. *Rune Factory: Oceans* is one of those games.

The game tells the story of Aden and Sonja, two friends living on Fenith Island. Then, one day, they inexplicably get unstuck in time and space, and a whole lot of complicated stuff happens, and they have to save the day for some reason. See, inexplicable is a key word here, because the game does little to elaborate on what appears to be a fairly complex plot. If you're happy running around killing stuff without needing to know why you are killing stuff, great. The rest of us want a plot.

The game is fairly pretty, although the graphics do feel a little dated, and it makes use of that annoying combination of speech and reading in communicating its plot – when it bothers to, that is. It is a fairly fun game, although not on top of the JRPG pile, that will provide a fair amount of enjoyment – as long as you don't take it seriously. It doesn't bear up well under heavy scrutiny. NAG

- Ramjet

DETAILS

Platforms
PS3
Genre
Role-playing game
Age restriction
12
Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
None
Developer
Marvelous AQL
Website
ww.risingstar games.com
Publisher
Rising Star Games
Distributor
Silver Screen







55 **If you need a role-playing fix that is uncomplicated and long, here it is... but don't try to understand what the hell is going on.**

PLUS
Not bad on the control side / A good long distraction
MINUS
Confusing plot / Feels dated

Remington Super Slam Hunting: Africa

PONY

Fish in a barrel

The days of games being poorly ported back and forth between platforms are a thing of the past, thanks to the power of current generation consoles. Oh, but wait... there is one console that doesn't meet the spec of the HD devices. Now I am not trying to denigrate the Wii (I enjoy the platform and, besides, enough other people do it for me not to have to throw in my two cents). I am saying that porting from it is not a good idea.

Remington Super Slam Hunting: Africa is a game that came from the Wii to PC. Those who know their stuff will immediately see an issue there; graphics that don't meet the grade, and a modified control scheme that really is overly simple. Replacing movement control with mouse control simply doesn't work.

And it's not really a hunting game. The stealth and planning that other titles use is replaced by a sort of wildlife shooting gallery on rails, in which the player automatically moves from location to location and mows down scores of animals, like a drunken Yank shooting groundhogs in a corn field.

The overly simplistic game dynamic, combined with controls that are no challenge at all, might imply that this is a great game for youngsters. But does one really want to have the kid gunning down scores of animals, pixelated or not? NAG

- Ramjet

DETAILS

Platforms
PC
Genre
Hunting simulator
Age restriction
12
Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
None
Developer
eV Interactive
Website
www.mastiff-games.com
Publisher
Mastiff
Distributor
Silver Screen



30 **If moving along on rails in a quasi-African environment while mowing down scores of animals represented in sub-par graphics is your thing, go for it!**

PLUS
Quick mindless violence fix

MINUS
Poor Wii port / Controls too easy

Mario Tennis Open

Served up

When a game latches the *Mario* name onto it – or, rather, when a game is allowed to be based on that popular Nintendo franchise – one would expect that the developers would take full advantage of the quirky, often zany universe that was popularised by the Italian plumber and his insatiable need to rescue female royalty named after squishy fruit.

If you are after a 3DS tennis game in which the characters all happen to look like those from the *Mario* universe, then *Mario Tennis Open* will suffice. However, if your tastes lean towards a *Mario* game in which tennis happens to be the activity of choice, you may be disappointed. While the *Mario* characters are all present, the expected special powers and buffs that one might expect from using a particular character are not. They all feel pretty much the same, which is most unlike games of this sort.

The game is friendly enough to players of all skill levels. For example, the player can handle the movement themselves, or have the AI take care of it, while they just need to concentrate on shot timing and placement. But this cannot be blocked in multiplayer, so your opponent might beat you while taking the easy road... hardly sporting.

There is an upgrade system, too, but it is a little confusing and can only be applied to the player's Mii character. Overall acceptable, but not awesome. NAG

- Ramjet

DETAILS

Platforms
3DS
Genre
Sports
Age restriction
3
Multiplayer
Local
4 players
Online
4 players
Developer
Camelot
Website
www.nintendo.com
Publisher
Nintendo
Distributor
Core Group



50

A passable tennis game, but this really isn't a *Mario* title – no power-ups or other quaint stuff like that.

PLUS
Fairly good tennis action

MINUS
Mario theme is just window dressing

Steel Battalion: Heavy Armor

PONY

Heavy, man...

The need for a hardcore game using the Kinect has been mentioned many times. In answer to that, From Software have come up with *Steel Battalion: Heavy Armor*, a game that utilises both the 360 controller and the Kinect to make the player experience the hard work involved in running a massive battle mech in a time where all microchips have been destroyed. And hard work it is.

We do need to remember that From Software also created arduous tasks like *Dark Souls* and *Demon's Souls*, so difficult is obviously what they think belongs in games. But this seems to come at the expense of fun. Hitting anything in *Heavy Armor* is so difficult that if you do get a lucky shot in you will likely spend the next fifteen minutes fist-pumping and running around the room in mad celebration.

This extreme difficulty, combined with the fact that the Kinect controls are simply awful, makes for a gaming experience that is more work than it is ultimately worth. If you want to really get down to the nuts and bolts, and feel like you are actually trying to wrestle a giant machine through combat, feel free to try this one out. But the likelihood is that the frustration the experience provides will be too much for any but the most tenacious or stubborn gamers to deal with. NAG

- Ramjet

DETAILS

Platforms
360
Genre
First-person vehicle combat
Age restriction
18
Multiplayer
Local
None
Online
4 players
Developer
From Software
Website
www.capcom.com
Publisher
Capcom
Distributor
Ster Kinekor Entertainment



40

If you like your gaming with a masochistic edge, then the hard work involved in this one might appeal to you.

PLUS
Getting a hit feels very satisfying

MINUS
Too difficult / Nasty controls

TECHNEWS

KNOWYOURTECHNOLOGY

Bluetooth

Managed by the Bluetooth Specialist Interest Group, Bluetooth is a proprietary open wireless technology standard used for exchanging data over short distances using a short-wavelength transmission (2.4-2.48GHz) from fixed and mobile devices. It can create personal area networks with very high levels of security over which data can then be transferred. The latest iteration is Bluetooth v4.0 which is available on the latest smartphones and devices.

NFC

Near Field Communication is a set of standards for smartphones and similar devices which allows them to establish radio communication with each other by touching them together or bringing them into close proximity. The standards use radio frequency identification (RFID) to facilitate this process. NFC can be used for contactless transactions, data exchange and simplified setup of more complex communications such as Wi-Fi.

Wi-Fi Direct

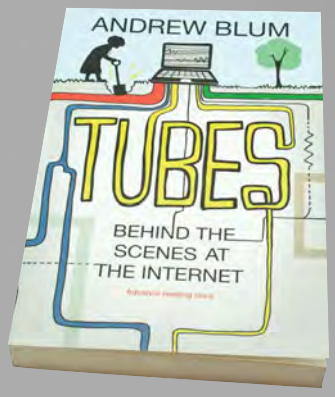
A Wi-Fi standard that allows devices to connect to each other with no need for a wireless access point. Wi-Fi direct uses an automated setup system which simplifies the setup process and requires only a pin or other identification means to establish a secure connection.

Wireless Energy Transfer

The transmission of electrical energy from a power source to an electrical load without a physical connection. Wireless transmission is useful in cases where interconnecting wires are inconvenient, hazardous, or impossible. The problem of wireless power transmission differs from that of wireless telecommunications, such as radio. In the latter, the proportion of energy received becomes critical only if it is too low for the signal to be distinguished from the background noise. With wireless power, efficiency is the more significant parameter. A large part of the energy sent out by the generating plant must arrive at the receiver or receivers to make the system economical.

TUBES BY ANDREW BLUM

Andrew Blum, a correspondent at *Wired* magazine, went on a two-year journey to "find" the Internet. This book explains where it is, how it got there, what it looks like, how it works, and what happens when it breaks.
R190 | www.penguinbooks.co.za



GIOTEK TX-2 THROAT MIC

Inspired by a concept used in military aircraft, this throat mic for the Xbox 360 offers optimum voice clarity by detecting sound directly from your neck. It's a great alternative to traditional headphones.
R179 | www.btgames.co.za



DID YOU KNOW?

The world's first commercially available hot water cooled supercomputer was recently announced. The new LRZ "SuperMUC" system was built with IBM System x iDataPlex Direct Water Cooled dx360 M4 servers with more than 150,000 cores to provide a peak performance of up to three petaflops, which is equivalent to the work of more than 110,000 personal computers. This revolutionary new form of hot water cooling technology invented by IBM allows the system to be built 10 times more compact and substantially improves its peak performance while consuming 40 percent less energy than a comparable air-cooled machine.

GIOTEK EX-02S BLUETOOTH HEADSET

A funky looking PS3 headset that features noise-cancelling technology and two earhooks so you can switch from your left to your right ear with ease.
R249 | www.btgames.co.za





HAVIT 3D GAMEPAD HV-G82

Featuring eight directional buttons, twelve fire buttons, and two analog sticks, this gamepad can be plugged into a PS2, PS3 or a PC.
R199.99 | www.comptronics.co.za



CM STORM TRIGGER

The Trigger mechanical gaming keyboard sports Cherry MX switches, 18k gold plated USB plugs with braded cable, five macro keys with 64KB on-board memory for profile storage, and anti-ghosting 6-key rollover.
R1,199 | www.sonicinformed.co.za

"Ultimately Electronic Arts, at some point in the future - much like your question about streaming and cloud - we're going to be a 100% digital company, period. It's going to be there some day. It's inevitable."
EA Games president Frank Gibeau

Analysts have predicted that we're heading toward an all-digital age, and EA intends to speed up the process by actively moving toward that goal itself.

#8

BY THE NUMBERS

World records for 3DMark11 and 3DMark03 were broken eight consecutive times at the MSI MOA (Master Overclocking Arena) 2012 EMEA Qualifiers, which took place in June. The MSI HD 7970 Lightning graphics card is what competitors used at the event.

DREAMMACHINE

There are no changes in the Dream Machine this month. The only thing worth watching out for is the pricing as the rand-dollar exchange rate is not favourable right now, so these rigs are likely to cost a little more than they have in the past. If you're looking at getting either of these, now would be a good time or consider substituting some of the components with alternatives from the same vendor and family.



Cooler Master Silent Pro M2 1500Watt PSU
R3,300 / www.sonicinformed.co.za



GIGABYTE GV-N680OC
R7,429 / www.gigabyte.com



Plextor M3 Pro 256GB SSD
R4,999 / www.goplextor.com



Seagate Barracuda 3TB
R1,799 / www.seagate.com



Cooler Master COSMOS II
R3,399 / www.coolermaster.com



ASUS VG278H 3D Monitor
R8,999 / za.asus.com



Logitech G19
R1,599 / www.logitech.com



Roccat Kone [+]
R899 / www.sonicinformed.com



Roccat Alumic
R319 / www.roccat.org



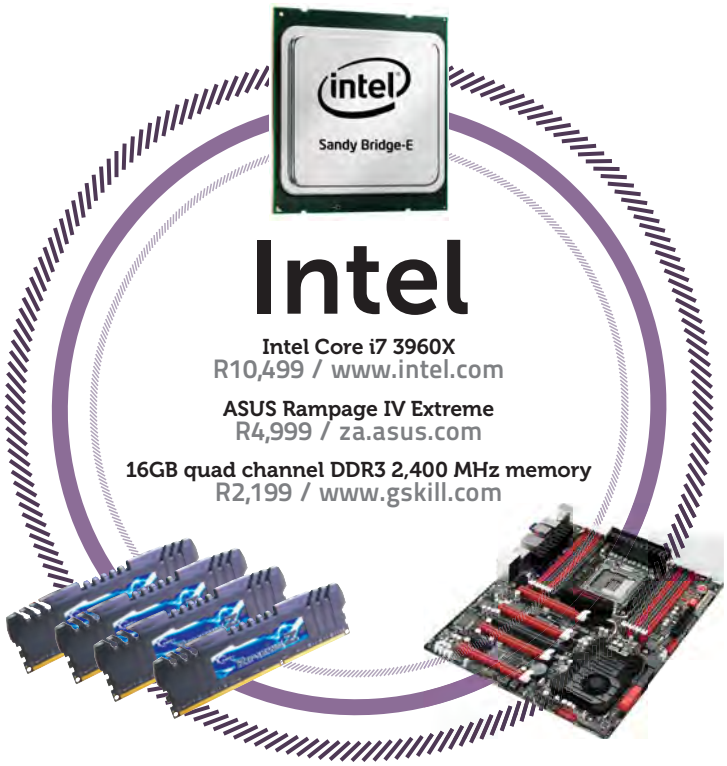
Asus Xonar Essence STX
R1,399 / za.asus.com



Logitech Z-5500 Digital
R3,699 / www.logitech.com



CMStorm SIRUS
R1,199/ www.sonicinformed.com



Intel

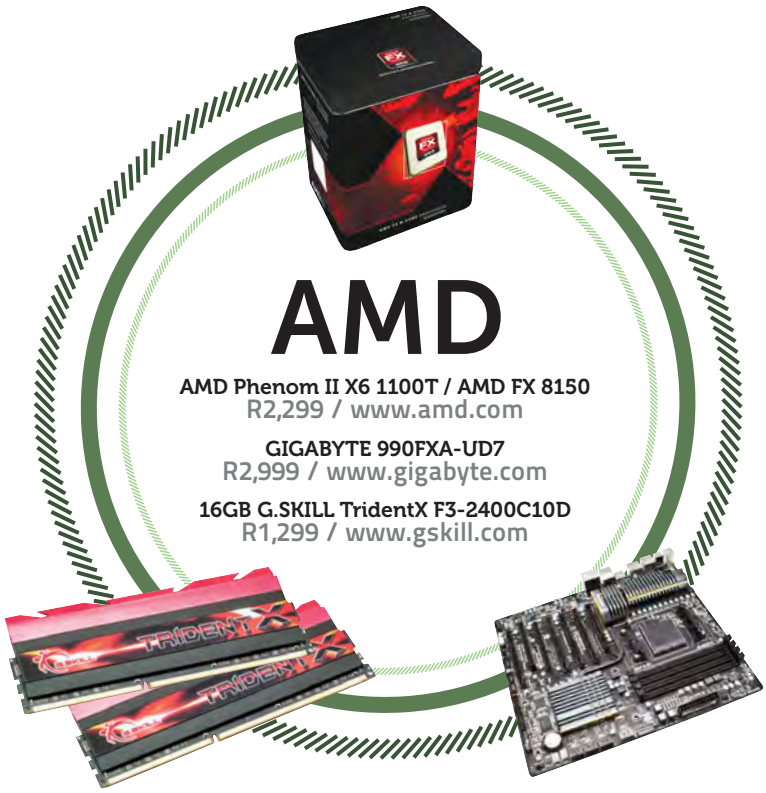
Intel Core i7 3960X
R10,499 / www.intel.com

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

16GB quad channel DDR3 2,400 MHz memory
R2,199 / www.gskill.com

Intel Dream Machine price:

R56,736



AMD

AMD Phenom II X6 1100T / AMD FX 8150
R2,299 / www.amd.com

GIGABYTE 990FXA-UD7
R2,999 / www.gigabyte.com

16GB G.SKILL TridentX F3-2400C10D
R1,299 / www.gskill.com

AMD Dream Machine price:

R42,637



Hardwired

To be continued at a later date

I'll not be going back to the beginning of where this started, but suffice to say I'll continue form where I left off in the June issue of *NAG*.

To prove exactly what I had been saying, Apple in the USA was recently granted its injunction against Samsung's Galaxy Nexus, which effectively bars Samsung from selling the device pending an appeal. I'd argue that just about everyone in the know realizes that Apple will continue to sue as much as possible and drag as many companies into litigation until one or more cases stick.

This is but one example of a failed patent and judicial system that is tasked with ruling over contexts and technologies which were not only unavailable at the time the laws were written, but for all intents and purposes, were unimaginable. So scholastically the person ruling over the validity of these law suits is ill-equipped to be doing so by virtue of not having a thorough or a fundamental understanding of what it is that he or she may be ruling over.

> "We now have offered to us ideas such as 'freemium' game which is not only an oxymoron, but even more, make it clear that the idea of you paying perpetually is where we are most likely being steered"

It is this easily exploitable ignorance by the systems we have in place that ultimately diminishes our freedom in exchange for monetary gain for those in the position to exploit these. It has seemingly not dawned on us that technology changes not only how we do things, but the relationships we have with technology. These technologies are so pervasive in our everyday life that we take them for granted and easily forget that they would have been impossible if every breakthrough's merits were squarely measured against their financial implications for an individual or entity.

This short sightedness will not only lead to disastrous consequences, but ultimately works to deter from any true ingenuity. Let's not forget that most of the technological breakthroughs that we enjoy today at the time of realization had no practical application. To stifle intellectual progression by means of calling upon the patent and justice system is, I would argue, morally detestable. Ultimately, companies like RAMBUS who, from inception, had no intention of producing any product or component are kept alive only because they have thousands of patents which are so vague, that they could cover just about any and everything that could be called the transmission of data on an electrical circuit that can store a charge. Even in the wording of that you can appreciate how precarious the entire premise of some of these patents is.

The drive for all of this is purely the drive to commercialize any and all things. Even the idea of our games is being undermined by the seemingly insatiable need to fill coffers over and above all things. The platitudes that many a game developers offer as a means of deflecting the obvious do little to veil this. We now have offered to us ideas such as "freemium" game which is not only an oxymoron, but even more, make it clear that the idea of you paying perpetually is where we are most likely being steered. It's a worrying trend and one that, as stated earlier, will only end in disastrous consequences.

- Neo Sibeko

Wii U

Hands ON E3 from the expo floor

Website www.nintendo.com **RRP** TBA



Available in time for Christmas 2012, in either black or white, is Nintendo's Wii U console. We got some hands-on time with it at E3, and came away wanting more. It's an intriguing and unique gaming experience and, if supported by the right mix of gaming titles, which it looks set to do, could just be the next big thing in gaming.





The Wii U's optional Pro controller.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

1 It has a 6.2-inch, 16:9 aspect ratio LCD touch screen. The GamePad also includes motion control (powered by an accelerometer, gyroscope and geomagnetic sensor)

2 Inputs include a +Control Pad, L/R sticks, L/R stick buttons, A/B/X/Y buttons, L/R buttons, ZL/ZR buttons, Power button, HOME button, -/SELECT button, +/START button, and TV CONTROL button

3 It has a front-facing camera, a microphone, stereo speakers, rumble features, a sensor bar, an included stylus and support for Near Field Communication (NFC) functionality

4 It is powered by a rechargeable lithium-ion battery

NON-GAMING FEATURES

5 Video chat using the built-in camera; Internet browser; can be used as a TV remote

ACCESSORIES

The Wii U can support two Wii U GamePad controllers, up to four Wii Remote (or Wii Remote Plus) controllers or Wii U Pro Controllers, and other Wii accessories such as the Nunchuk, Classic Controller and Wii Balance Board.

THE GAMES

Aliens: Colonial Marines, Assassin's Creed III, Batman Arkham City: Armored Edition, Darksiders II, Game & Wario (working title), *Just Dance 4, LEGO City: Undercover, Marvel Avengers: Battle for Earth, Mass Effect 3, New Super Mario Bros. U, NINJA GAIDEN 3: Razors Edge, Nintendo Land, Pikmin 3, Project P-100* (working title), *Rabbids Land, Rayman Legends, Scribblenauts Unlimited, SiNG* (working title), *Sports Connection, TANK! TANK! TANK!, TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2* (working title), *Trine 2: Director's Cut, Wii Fit U, Wii U Panorama View* (working title),*Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2013, ZombiU.* NAG

TECHNICAL

Weight
1.5kg
CPU
IBM Power-based multi-core processor
GPU
AMD Radeon-based high definition GPU
Storage:
Wii U uses an internal flash memory. It also supports SD memory cards and external USB storage
Media
Wii U and Wii optical discs
Video output
Supports 1080p, 1080i, 720p, 480p and 480i. Compatible cables include HDMI, Wii D-Terminal, Wii Component Video, Wii RGB, Wii S-Video Stereo AV and Wii AV.
Audio output
Uses six-channel PCM linear output via HDMI connector, or analog output via the AV Multi Out connector
Networking
Wii U can access the Internet via wireless (IEEE 802.11b/g/n) connection. The console features four USB 2.0 connectors – two in the front and two in the rear – that support Wii LAN Adapters.

PROS
- Will be compatible with all Wii software and accessories

CONS
- Wii U games won't support two Wii GamePads at launch

Corsair Vengeance 2000 Wireless 7.1 Gaming Headset

HARDWARE

Supplier Frontosa
Website www.frontosa.co.za **RRP** R1,699



The most remarkable aspect of Corsair's Vengeance 2000 wireless headset is its build quality. It's fantastic in that regard: it feels robust enough to withstand the punishment of dragging the headset to LANs, and its padded headband and ear cups (which are covered with microfiber) are lined with memory foam to make it one of the most comfortable headsets around. It looks good too.

Being wireless, you'd expect this set to be heavy. Yet, while it may not be the lightest set we've ever tested, it's certainly not heavy. Setup is as simple as plugging in the USB transceiver, hitting the power button and adjusting the volume (the power button and volume dial both rest on the left ear cup). Sound quality is fantastic, although not the best we've ever had the pleasure of listening to. The lower frequencies tend to produce some distortion at higher volumes when listening to music, for example. For movies and games, however, it offers a brilliant sonic experience, the virtual 7.1 surround sound doing a decent job of helping you locate the action. And in terms of volume, this headset is more than adequate. The noise-cancelling microphone, which can be rotated and tucked away when not in use, works as required.

The deciding factor will be the price. This is not a cheap headset, its price rivalling that of the best wired gaming headsets out there. You're essentially paying for the (admittedly awesome) convenience of wireless, and for what is easily one of the best-built headsets available right now. The overall quality is outstanding, if you can stomach the price. **NAG**

- Dane Remendes

8

SPECS
Frequency response
20Hz – 20kHz
Speaker diameter
50mm
Impedance
32 ohm at 1kHz
Sensitivity
105dB (+/-3dB)
Wireless range
up to 12 metres
Battery life
approximately 10 hours

PLUS
- Good sound quality
- Robust design
- Comfortable

MINUS
- Pricey

BOTTOM LINE
The Corsair Vengeance 2000 is an excellent wireless headset, one of the best we've ever tested.

Havit HV-MS249 gaming mouse

Supplier Comptronics
Website www.comptronics.co.za **RRP** R429.99



I'd never even heard of Havit before getting my hands on the peripheral manufacturer's MS249 gaming mouse. I didn't expect much, even though the mouse comes packaged in a budget-belying box that's leaning towards the fancy side, even though it's covered in badly translated pseudo-English. Packaging aside, the mouse itself is a truly decent offering.

The design of it is a bit odd. The bottom end of the mouse drops off quite sharply (making it less than ideal for resting your palm on it) and is narrower than the top end, which means that unless you naturally grip your mouse claw-style, it takes some getting used to. Still, lefties will appreciate the ambidextrous design, and the narrower bottom end does result in less fishtailing than tends to occur with bulkier mice.

Functionality is fairly standard for a mouse in this price range. There are no drivers to worry about installing, and all the mouse's features are hardware driven. Adjustable DPI can be toggled through predefined increments of 600, 1,200, 1,800 and 2,500 by pressing a button beneath the scroll wheel. The back and forward buttons are placed with ambidexterity in mind next to the left mouse button.

While it'd be nice to have greater control over some of the MS249's functions via driver software (particularly the double-tap toggle), I like the plug and play nature of it. While it might be priced slightly too high compared to other, similarly functional mice from more recognised brands, it's nevertheless a respectable option for gamers on a budget. **NAG**

- Dane Remendes

7

SPECS
Resolution
600-2,500 dpi
Polling rate
500Hz
Cable length
1.2m
Number of buttons
8 (non-programmable)

PLUS
- Plug and play
- Functions as required

MINUS
- Might be uncomfortable for some
- Short cable

BOTTOM LINE
Havit's MS249 is a decent choice for gamers on a budget.

HARDWARE

Dell XPS 13

Supplier Dell
Website www.dell.com **RRP** R18,999



With ultrabooks battling tablets in the realm of portable dominance, Dell has entered the arena with this i7-powered ultrabook beast: the XPS 13. It's a brilliantly designed and constructed piece of technology, obvious from the moment you take it out of its packaging that it's something special: but it comes bearing a hefty price tag that'll make your wallet want to shoot itself in the face.

The device oozes premium quality. Its display is covered in Corning Gorilla Glass, which will protect your screen from the scratches that come with the excellent portability such a lightweight and thin portable PC provides. The chiclet keyboard is a pleasure to use, as is the touchpad covered in soft-touch material. The base of the ultrabook is made of carbon fiber, keeping it cool to the touch no matter how much stress you give it. The lid is made of machined aluminium. It's definitely one of the most impressively made ultrabooks out there right now.

The performance, too, is excellent. It'll even be able to play some of today's less stressful games with ease at low settings – the *Resident Evil 5* benchmark spat out an average frame rate of 35.2 at the lowest possible settings, which is totally playable. Watching HD movies and listening to music is a pleasure too, its vibrant display never skipping a beat and the decent speakers providing adequate audio.

It comes at a price though – at R18,999 for the i7 version (the i5-equipped XPS 13 costs R14,999), it's a massive sum of money to pay. Granted, most ultrabooks are hellishly expensive: but it'd be nice if 1,500 dollars didn't somehow translate into the price you see above. Still, you get what you're paying for here: absolute quality. NAG

- Dane Remendes

SPECS

CPU
Intel Core i7-2637M (1.7 GHz)
GPU:
Intel HD graphics 3000
RAM
4GB DDR3 1,333MHz
Storage
256GB SSD
Display
13.3-inch HD WLED (1366 x 768) / edge-to-edge Gorilla Glass
Connectivity
1 x USB 2.0 + 1 x USB 3.0 / mini DisplayPort / Wi-Fi 802.11a/g/n / Bluetooth 3.0
Battery
6-cell Li-Polymer

PLUS

- Excellent performance and design

MINUS

- Expensive
- No card reader

BOTTOM LINE

If you can afford the range-topping performance it provides, Dell's XPS 13 is an excellent ultrabook.





MSI R7870 HAWK

HARDWARE

Supplier Corex **Website** www.msi.com **RRP** R4,399

Pitcairn based graphics cards come in all forms from all kinds of vendors. The performance is well and truly familiar to you by now. Regardless of the factory overclocks, the performance is predictable and, as with all graphics cards, it gets better with each successive driver update.

At the time of writing we couldn't test with the official 12.7 Catalyst drivers which offer sizeable performance gains, but even with Catalyst 12.6 drivers, the Radeon HD 7870 offered impressive numbers which, as we've said in previous 7870 reviews, compromises the HD 7950, as the performance is just too close to warrant the price hike.

So this isn't about the HD 7870 performance but rather, much like the card itself, is about the extreme overclocking this card brings with it. Sure enough we appreciate the game performance, as it's noteworthy even after all this time, but we'd argue any HD 7870 can reach these clock speeds. So why then spend so much more on the HAWK edition from MSI? Well it's simple really; no other HD 7870 will come close to the overclocking headroom of this card without significant modifications to the PCB and a sleuth of overclocking software that isn't necessarily available to the public.

From the PCB design, component choice and cooling system, the HAWK stands above the competition. Sure enough it's not the quietest cooler there is when you adjust the fan speeds upwards of the 70% mark but once again, the people who would look to this graphics card are unlikely concerned with such.

This card is actually best when cooled using exotic cooling methods, as that's where your hard earned cash will pay off. Using MSI's Afterburner program we were able to complete a single run of 3DMark11 at an incredible 1,290MHz, which is much higher than any other 7870 we've tested to date has been capable of. For gaming stability however, you can be sure to reach 1.2GHz without adjustment to the GPU voltage. As the HD 7870 uses a 256-bit bus, memory overclocking seems to benefit the card a lot, and from the reference 4.8GHz memory clock (effective data rate) we managed a scorching 6.4GHz, which boosted the memory bandwidth by a massive 51.8GB/s. Needless to say, this is the highest memory overclock we've ever achieved on any HD 7870. Paired with the increased GPU clock, our Heaven Xtreme benchmark result was within striking distance of the reference HD 7970. In game benchmarks, the overclocked settings actually managed to beat the reference HD 7970 at 1920x1080 in *Just Cause 2* and *Hard Reset*. This is fantastic value against the HD 7970, especially if you're planning on overclocking where you'll have a lot more fun with the R7870 HAWK than you will a reference HD 7970.

We must mention though that this card could not get a perfect score despite it being the best HD 7870 you can get your hands on. This has nothing to do with MSI, but rather the fact that HD 7870 cards are, in general, expensive. Given that MSI has rebuilt this card from scratch and kept nothing but the actual GPU, one can understand the steep pricing. If you can get it at this price and a little lower, give the HAWK some serious consideration, as it really is peerless in its class. NAG

– Neo Sibeko

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SPECS

Core
1.1GHz Pitcairn (28nm)
Processors
1,280
Render outputs
32
Memory
3,072MB GDDR5 4.8GHz (153GB/sec)
API
DirectX 11.1 / OpenGL 4.x / OpenCL 1.X

PLUS

- GPU-Reactor
- Overclocking headroom
- Performance

MINUS

- Pricing for all 7870 GPUs from all vendors is unfavourable

BOTTOM LINE

This is without question the best Radeon 7870 money can buy.

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: ASUS GEFORCE GTX680

Hard Reset DX9 1,080p 4xAA	64.2 99.6
Just Cause 2 DX10 1,080p	114.62 155.72
3DMark11 Extreme	2,202 3,343
3DMark Vantage	28,406 39,722
Unigine Heaven Xtreme	1,567.359 1,871.607

ADATA XPG Xtreme 16GB 2133MHz DDR3

Supplier ADATA **Website** www.adata.com **RRP** R2,399



ADATA is one of the more familiar brands when it comes to high-end memory. Much like the competitors, they have SSDs flash drives and the like, but the primary business is still DRAM, and this is obvious based on our experience with the XPG memory.

The XPG line is targeted at gamers and enthusiasts and, with this kit in particular, those making use of the Z77 platform. 2,133MHz isn't an impressive speed by any stretch of the imagination, but fortunately this memory has some great overclocking headroom which we will speak about later. The memory might be rated at 2,133MHz, but the XMP settings for this kit defaulted to 2,200MHz at the same timings. We weren't sure if this was our particular sample of it or whether it holds true for all the memory.

Needless to say the memory had no problems operating at this speed, and we'd go so far as to say this makes the kit a little more attractive than it otherwise would be. Given that this set was outfitted with Samsung ICs we had high hopes for the maximum speed one could reach, and we're happy to report we weren't disappointed. It's worth noting that results will vary, but we're confident that just about every respectable Z77 board will allow 2,400MHz. In our case we were able to reach speeds as high as 2,600MHz with 11-13-13-31 timings. At this frequency and timings the performance was much better and, with such overclocking headroom, we'd really recommend this set to the budding overclocker that is on a budget but wants to stay competitive.

As for the gamers, keeping the RAM at 2,400MHz should be easy enough, and the best part about it is that you'll not need to adjust any voltages, but your timings will have to change to 10-12-12-30. Not much of a sacrifice given that you're effectively running the memory at 267MHz higher than the rated speed. If you're on the X79 platform, consider getting two of these kits, as they'll cost you less than regular 4x 4GB kits, but most likely offer better performance.

For a budget set, you couldn't do much better than the ADATA XPG 16GB 2,133MHZ kit. NAG

- Neo Sibeko

8

SPECS
Density
16GB (2x 8GB)
Voltage
1.65V
Timings
10-11-11-30
XMP
Yes 1.3

PLUS
- Overclocks surprisingly well

MINUS
- High default timings

BOTTOM LINE
Impressive 2,400MHz RAM built for the Z77 platform that offers incredible overclocking headroom.

Evetech high-end gaming PC

Supplier Evetech **Website** www.evetech.co.za **RRP** R19,999

Last month we reviewed Rebeltech's high-end prebuilt offering, and now, undaunted by the prospect of competition, Evetech is back and they've decided to put together a similarly-specced machine for a few thousand rand less. Let's see what sort of impact that price difference has on performance.

Dominating the front of the chassis is a six-channel fan speed controller that is a welcome addition, given how noisy the Corsair H100 cooling system can get. The case provides excellent air cooling and all-round fantastic cable management; once we got our hands on it, it felt less impressive. A couple of the plastic panels were prone to unclipping without much force, and the massive vent that covers the top panel is an unnecessary extravagance – we'd much prefer a simple mesh covering that'd better cover the radiator fans and would provide a more subtle look.

It's the performance that is the most important bit, and this Evetech machine delivered exactly the kind of benchmark scores we expected. Most remarkable of the lot was its 3D Mark 11 Extreme score of 3,563 – over 200 points higher than the Rebeltech machine, along with average frame rates of 103 and 84.3 in *Hard Reset* and *Lost Planet 3* respectively. Our office productivity benchmark, PC Mark 7, spat out a score of 6,122 – 200 points lower than Rebeltech's, which we chalk up to the decreased RAM and slightly slower SSD.



Overall, this Evetech machine is an excellent performer and well worth the price you'll pay. The addition of a Blu-ray writer is most welcome, and there's always potential to add in another 8GB of RAM should you feel the need later on. After that, however, you'll need to ditch the lot and get a new set. NAG

- Geoff Burrows

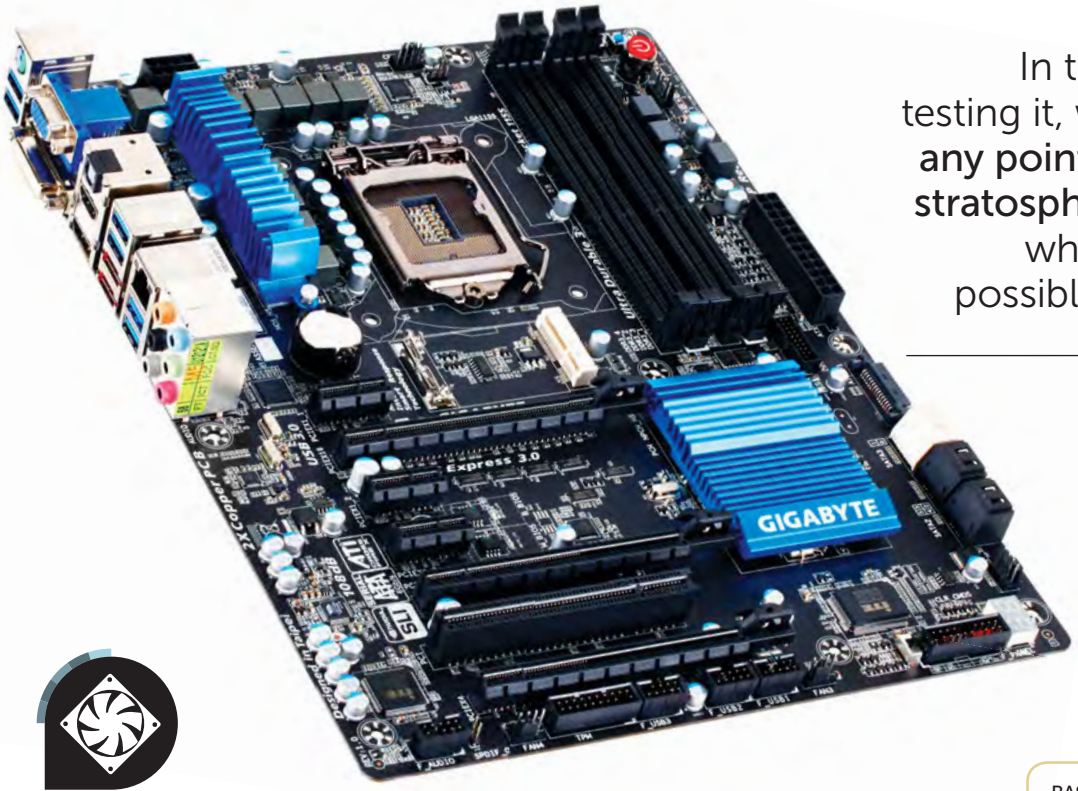
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PLUS
- Excellent performance

MINUS
- Chassis styling won't suit everyone

BOTTOM LINE
Evetech proves that it's happy to stay competitive while offering high-end hardware that's built with the same care and attention to detail you'd expect from them.

SPECS
CPU
Intel Core i7-3770K OC to 4.6GHz
Motherboard
ASUS P8Z77-V PRO Z77
RAM
Corsair Vengeance 8GB (2x 4GB) DDR3 1,600MHz
GPU
GIAGBYTE WINDFORCE GeForce GTX 680 OC
Storage
Corsair Force GT 120GB SSD, 1TB Seagate Barracuda HDD
Optical drive
LiteOn 12x Blu-ray writer
PSU
Corsair HX750 750W
Chassis
NZXT Switch 810



In the time we spent testing it, **we were never at any point unable to reach stratospheric RAM speeds** which wasn't always possible with the UD5H.

HARDWARE

GIGABYTE Z77X-UD3H

Supplier Rectron **Website** www.gigabyte.com **ERP** R1,977

We previously reviewed the Sniper 3 board and the UD5H from GIGABYTE and as such, the UD3H was very familiar to us as there usually aren't many differences between a single family of mainboards from any vendor. In fact, it's hard to tell the UD5H apart from the UD3H and, only when you look at the PWM area, can you, see the differences. Sure enough, the UD5H has a plethora of features including dual-LAN connectivity and the like, but as far as the basics are concerned these boards are the same.

At about R600 less than the UD5H, you'd think the UD3H sacrifices a lot to come in at under R2,000 but oddly enough, it doesn't. In fact we'll let you in on a secret and tell you outright that this is the fastest Z77 board from GIGABYTE. The differences in performance between this model and the UD5H are not pronounced at all, but the UD3H is by far easier to tweak, overclock and more consistent. In the time we spent testing it, we were never at any point unable to reach stratospheric RAM speeds which wasn't always possible with the UD5H.

Not only were the RAM speeds higher than on the UD5H, the tolerance for very tight configurations was much wider. It's as if GIGABYTE saved the best for the cheapest in the range. It has dual switchable BIOS, POST LED, voltage measuring points, clear CMOS, power and reset buttons on the board. An additional SATA power connector for 3-way graphics configurations (16x 8x 8x) and mSATA connectivity. When you factor in all of this you realize that it's amazing that GIGABYTE has managed to package all of this into such an affordable board. In fact you've essentially been stripped of nothing useful from the UD5H board.

Instead, you gain by way of the fastest Z77 board we've tested to date, if not the easiest to work with. There's not much else to say about this board other than that it's a board that every overclocker should have in their arsenal if they are serious about breaking world records. This is especially true if you have another board to tackle multi-GPU configuration records which is a minority of overclockers. For the rest, single card runs are order of the day, and you're unlikely to find a faster motherboard than this. Sure, we could do with direct Bclk controls on the board, but we suspect these will be reserved for the OC edition Z77 board, if it ever makes the light of day.

Even if it doesn't though, this board is plenty enough as it is, and we'd go so far as to say the only two boards you need from the GIGABYTE Z77 line-up right now is the G1.Sniper 3 for serious gamers/power users and the UD3H for the overclockers. Between those two boards they represent the best of GIGABYTE motherboards.

If you're in the market for an overclocking board, this is the one you should be looking at. Particularly if you're an experienced overclocker who doesn't need pre-configured profiles and the like. The difference in performance between this board and its competitors is staggering depending on which benchmark you are running, and it could be anything from hundreds to thousands of points, which as every serious overclocker knows, is the difference between a top three result and a top fifty result. From where we stand however, this board is near impossible to beat at this price and, as such, it is deserving of a perfect score. NAG

- Neo Sibeko

10

SPECS

Chipset
Intel Z77

Memory
4x 240-pin DDR3

CPU support
Intel Core i7 SNB/IB (LGA1155)

Slots
4x PCIe 3.0 x16, 3x PCIe x1, PCI

PLUS
- Incredible performance
- Overclocking prowess

MINUS
- Nothing

BOTTOM LINE
Possibly the best overclocking board in GIGABYTE's entire Z77 range.

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: ASUS Rampage IV Extreme

3DMark Vantage CPU	33,013 / 46,760
Cinebench 11.5	9.42 / 13.43
AIDA 64 Copy	28,585MB/s / 20,396MB/s
3DMark03	114,239 / 127,025

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MSI Z77A-GD80

Supplier Corex **Website** www.msi.com **RRP** R2,969

Some time ago we reviewed the MSI Z77A-GD65. The board was fairly impressive, capable of some great performance paired with great features and had a very attractive selling price. At the time we wondered what MSI would do for the GD80 that would warrant it over the GD65. Well, we finally have an answer and, sadly, it's as we had expected.

You see, the real enthusiast or power-user board is the Big Bang which we have yet to hear anything about. The GD65, as stated in a previous review, was a mid-range but potent motherboard. This however leaves the GD80 in no-man's land. The feature it has over the GD65 is not, in our opinion, worth the additional commitment in monetary terms. Sure enough, Thunderbolt is going to be an important feature going forward, but as it stands, there just aren't many devices which support this connectivity method. One would think that the GD80 would support 3-way SLI perhaps, but sadly this is not the case. Where multi-GPU configurations are concerned, it's identical to the options available on the GD65.

This isn't a bad motherboard at all; in fact by virtue of being similar to the GD65, it makes it a worthwhile purchase. Sadly it's not what we may call a more affordable Big Bang board or a refined GD65. It's somewhere in the middle and, other than Thunderbolt support, it's not really anything we've not seen before. Having said that, in our testing we did notice better or at least more reliable voltage delivery where the CPU voltage reading was concerned. On the GD65 we had massive vDroop initially, but on the GD80 it was relatively solid, and this is a welcome change.

Should you be in the market for an MSI Z77 board, the GD80 would serve you well, but we'd ask you to seriously consider the Z77A-GD65 or, if you can wait for it, the Big Bang board, which is sure to impress as previous boards have.

- Neo Sibeko

7

SPECS

Chipset
Intel Z77

Memory
4x 240-pin DDR3

CPU support
Intel Core i7 SNB IB (LGA1155)

Slots
4x PCIe 3.0 16x, 2x PCIe 1x

PLUS
- Thunderbolt connectivity
- Easy to overclock
- Build quality

MINUS
- Not better than the GD65 in any meaningful way
- No mSATA connectivity

BOTTOM LINE
A competent board from MSI, but we still prefer the GD65.

"This isn't a bad motherboard at all; **in fact by virtue of being similar to the GD65**, it makes it a worthwhile purchase."

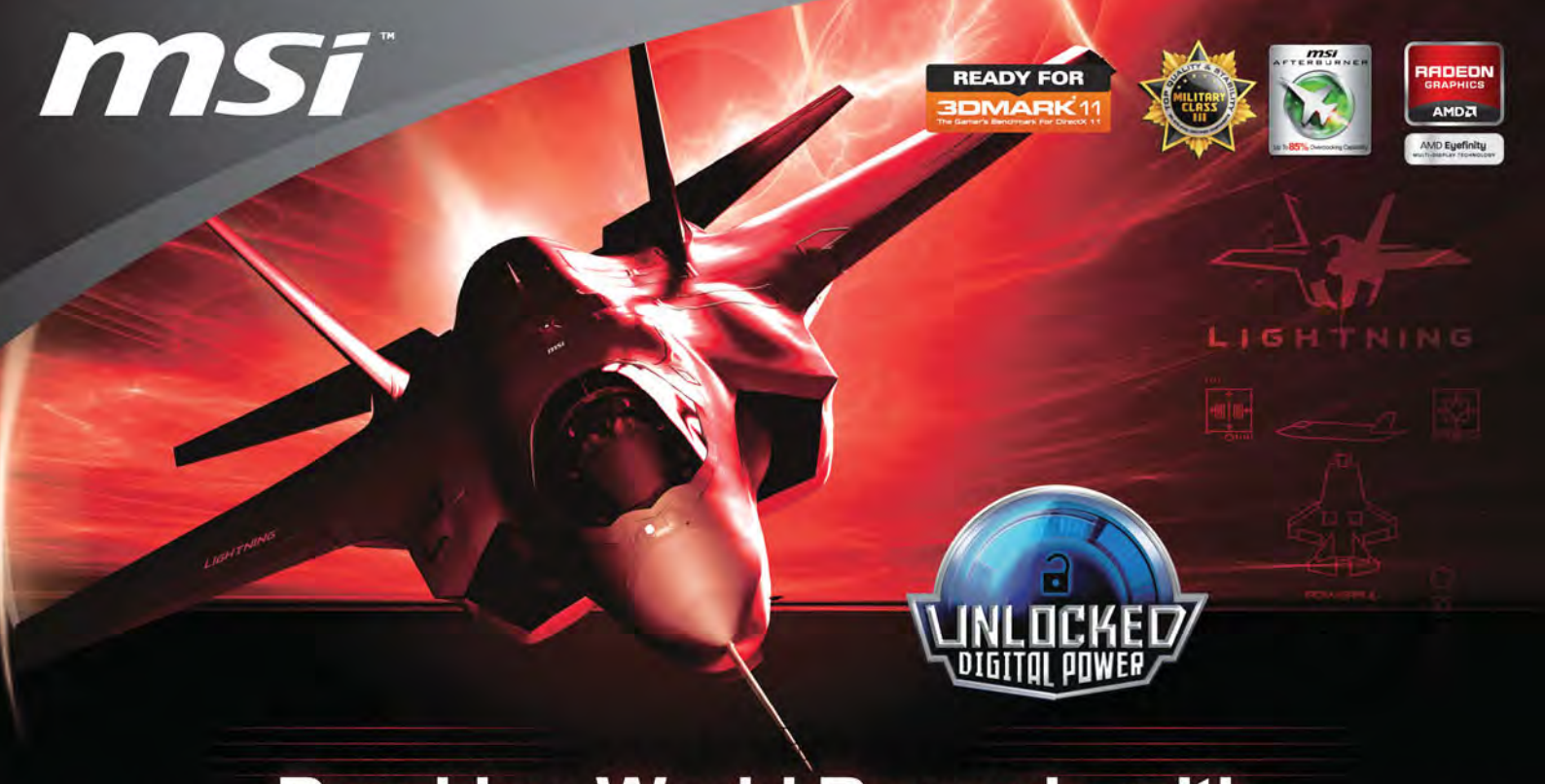
BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: ASUS Rampage IV Extreme

3DMark Vantage CPU	32,669 46,760
Cinebench 11.5	9.41 13.43
AIDA 64 Copy	28,433MB/s 20,396MB/s
3DMark03	112,613 127,025

msi™

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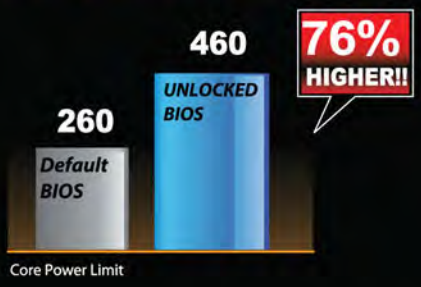
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- Higher PowerTune Range

◆ *Comparison of PowerTune Range*

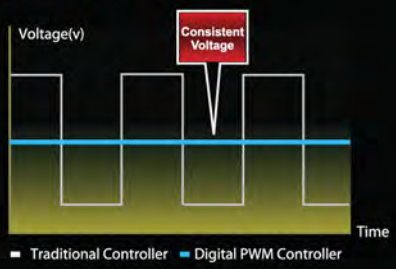


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◆ *Voltage Comparison*

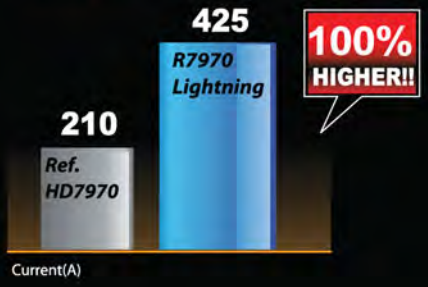


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- Independent Memory Power
- LPL (Lightning Power Layer)

◆ *Comparison of Current Output*



R7970 LIGHTNING

- AMD Radeon HD 7970 GPU
- 3GB 384bits GDDR5 Memory
- GPU Reactor
- Twin Frozr IV Thermal Design
- Military Class III Components
- 3X3 OC Kits
- Mini DisplayPorts x4 / DVI x2
- Eyefinity 6 Ready



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SPECS
CPU
Quad-core 1.4GHz ARM Cortex-A9
GPU
Mali-400MP (Exynos 4212 Quad)
Memory
16GB built in, up to 64GB SD
Display
Super AMOLED (720x1280) 4.8"
OS
Android OS v4.04 (Ice Cream Sandwich)
Size
136.6x70.6 x8.6mm



Samsung Galaxy S III

HARDWARE

Supplier Samsung **Website** www.samsung.com **RRP** R7,199

If you felt that referring to smart phones as "super phones" was premature last year, then you'll certainly be compelled to give the new distinction some serious consideration now in 2012. With phones like the HTC One X and the Samsung Galaxy S III, the name smart phone somehow doesn't adequately describe today's mini computers parading as phones.

Compared to the original Galaxy S, a true milestone for the company after what could only be described as lamentable prior attempts, the S III is, for all intents and purposes, four times as powerful or, more appropriately, four times the phone that the Galaxy S was. It's hard to quantify this in numbers, as phones have long stopped being about the hardware they contain and more about the overall user experience.

In phone terms, the hardware grossly overpowers the software, and adding even more power to the phones has increasingly diminishing returns. Samsung seem to be aware of this and, for example, the GPU in the S III is the familiar Mali-MP400 from the previous S II. That does not translate into equal benchmark scores though, partly because the entire chipset is different. The previous dual-core A9 based 1.2GHz CPU has been replaced by a quad-core variant operating at a healthy 1.4GHz. The display and, as a result, the phone itself, is a lot bigger, but surprisingly not much heavier than the S II it replaces. At 4.8" inches, the Galaxy S III has the largest display in all super phones.

As is typical with Samsung phones, the display is pristine and downright amazing to behold. It's the super AMOLED type, but not the "plus" version as featured on the S II. You'd suspect then, that next to its predecessor, the S III fails to deliver, but this is not so. In fact one could argue it's at worst equal to or better than what is offered on the S II. Part of that is largely a result of the display resolution. While the screen may have increased in size, the pixel density has increased even more to an impressive 306 ppi, vs. the 217 ppi of the S II. So what you lose out in brightness and colour reproduction, you make up for in image clarity and precision. Overall, it's a step in the right direction, and it definitely helps sell the phone as the most advanced on the market right now.

PLUS
- Superb performance
- Very responsive
- More features than you can imagine

MINUS
- Even bigger than the S II
- Won't appeal to everyone aesthetically

BOTTOM LINE
The smart phone market is definitely saturated with super phones, but currently, this is the one to beat.

Feature-wise, it's really pointless for us to go into each one, as the list is exhaustive. What Samsung have done with Touch Wiz in combination with Google's ICS 4.04, is truly remarkable. Especially given that Samsung's chief competition in the form of the iPhone have always had the upper hand in user interaction and intuitiveness. We wouldn't say that that Samsung has matched that experience with this phone, but it's getting there, and when you add all the advanced features like NFC, eye-tracking, active noise cancelling and such, you're left with easily the best, or at least, the most advanced phone on the market right now.

Aesthetically it won't be to everybody's liking as the rounded edges do make it look a little retro sometimes, especially next to the S II which was one of the most attractive smart phones of its time. That aside, this phone is near perfect when it comes to Android phones and we would not hesitate to recommend it – it's brilliant.

NAG
– Neo Sibeko

9

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COMPUTEX TAIPEI 2012

COMPUTEX TAIPEI is one of the largest computer trade show of the year, second only to CES in Las Vegas, and as always, COMPUTEX never disappoints, and this year NAG was fortunate enough to attend. Vendors of all sorts from motor manufacturers to brand new entries in the DIY market; everyone who was anyone was there. New products, components, software; you name it, if it's in any way related to consumer computing, it was there. In four days we tried to cover every square inch of the trade floor, but because of the sheer size of the expo and the fact that it was spread over two sides of the city, it became near impossible to get through it all. However, we covered the fun stuff and brought you just a little of the excitement present at the expo. In the span of four days we collected several kilograms of goodies, lanyards, key chains, USB flash drives, umbrellas, mugs, DVDs, shirts, coupons all kinds of things, and in the end we had over five kilograms of freebies (most of which were flyers, we must add). This is but a brief glimpse of the vendors and manufacturers that made it to the show.









1 TRENDNET

Amongst the many highlights of the show were TRENDnet, showing off their next generation 1,750Mbps Dual Band AC1750 Wireless router. It isn't a typo but indeed real. The outfit was promoting their new 1.75Gbps 802.11ac router and adapter, sure to be a hit for those who stream high bandwidth data across wireless networks. Launched simultaneously was the world's smallest 500Mbps powerline adapter featuring secured and encryption technology without needing any software on either side. Add megapixel IP cameras to the mix, TRENDnet easily becomes one of the most innovative vendors at the show in communications technology. We'll no doubt be taking a look at some of their announcements in future issues.

2 YAMA

YAMA chassis were there as well, showing off some of the models we've previously had for review here at NAG, and other new models as well.

3 DON BALENA

For the more serious type, DON BALENA was showing off a vast range of notebook bags to suit everything from ultrabooks to gaming notebooks. If it's a portable computer of any type, DON BALENA had the bag to fit it.

4 MSI

Component side, things became even more exciting with MSI showing off their latest graphics cards. Despite the reluctance by some to say it, MSI is without question the number one graphics card manufacturer for overclockers on the planet. We've yet to be disappointed by anything in their HAWK or Lightning range and, from what MSI were showing off, their VGA cards will continue to get better. As if the R7970 Lightning (to be reviewed in the September issue of NAG) was not enough, the GTX 680 Lightning made its debut, built around the same "military class II" components and single minded purpose of delivering the best visual experience money can buy. It's not just talk either, as we witnessed one of the GTX 680 Lightning cards reach speeds above 1.9GHz, something that should make the enthusiasts sit up and pay attention.

Not only did the graphics cards receive great attention, but the motherboards are starting to make waves in the right circles. If the boards at the show were anything to go by, there's going to be some stiff competition in the mainboard market in the coming twelve months.

5 GIGABYTE

GIGABYTE was out in full force as well, occupying an impressive booth and several other presentation rooms across the city. Everything worth showing off from the vendor was on display, from upcoming X79 motherboards, Z77 boards, graphics cards, gaming peripherals, chassis and just about everything else housed under the GIGABYTE brand. It was all there. Of particular interest to us was the UP series of motherboards, and in particular the GA-Z77X-UP7 which looked to be the grandest Z77 motherboard to date. Featuring an impressive and unheard of 32-phase VRM design, 4-way SLI, dual-gigabit LAN with teaming support and host of other

> "Add Megapixel IP cameras to the mix, and TRENDnet easily becomes one of the most innovative vendors at the show in communications technology."





MSI had all kinds of interesting technologies, from new graphics cards to Thunderbolt motherboards.

features, it was easily one of the most impressive components from GIGABYTE. Where gaming peripherals are concerned, we'd warn all gaming peripheral vendors to watch out as GIGABYTE is very serious about their peripherals and they are more than impressive. We'll have these reviewed in an upcoming issue of *NAG* as well.

6 ADATA

ADATA, amongst many other memory vendors, was there showing off the latest high density Z77 modules, from the value to the XPG extreme performance series, tailor made for enthusiasts and power users. We were even treated to some performance numbers from the latest SSD range, which was nothing short of remarkable.

7 ASUS

ASUS, as always, was there in a grand style, with the most interesting booth of the entire show. Themed mostly around their ROG products, ASUS had everything worthy of the ROG brand in and around the stand. From the Phobos sound card, to their mighty X79 ZEUS motherboard, featuring two built-in GPUs. We kid you not; each GPU has its own VRM; PCIe power adapters we can assume are connected via a bridge chip. No word on this ever becoming a retail product, but for showmanship as always ASUS is number one.

One of the highlights of the stand was the MAXIMUS V family, from the familiar MAXIMUS V GENE to the incredible MAXIMUS V EXTREME (to be reviewed in the next issue), easily the best looking motherboard family on the show.

8 ASROCK

ASRock, was purely about overclocking this year, promoting their latest Z77 OC Formula board, with their in-house celebrity and former world #1 overclocker Nick-Shih, and prolific German overclocker SuicidePhoenix. In fact, the actual boards are signed by Nick Shih, which may not mean much to buyers but does create some celebrity for not only ASRock, but Nick himself. At the booth they concentrated purely on overclocking and, in the duration of the show, managed to break a few records, including the Super Pi 32M and PiFast record using the OC Formula.

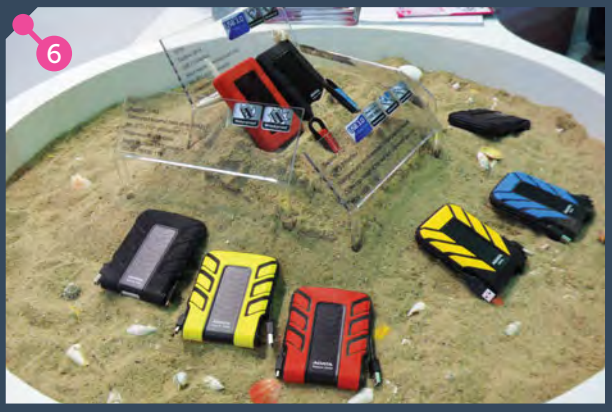
9 ECS

ECS, not to be outdone by any other motherboard vendor, easily had the most dramatic presentations and shows at their booth. The entire stand was themed around their Golden boards and upcoming graphics cards. The push to gain gamers' confidence at ECS is admirable and from what we saw, especially where the graphics cards are concerned, looks promising. As a multi-faceted company though, ECS had other components and products on show, including the very impressive AIO touch screen computers which not only looked good but performed particularly well, featuring sensitive multi-touch technology, hot swappable drives and screw less chassis.

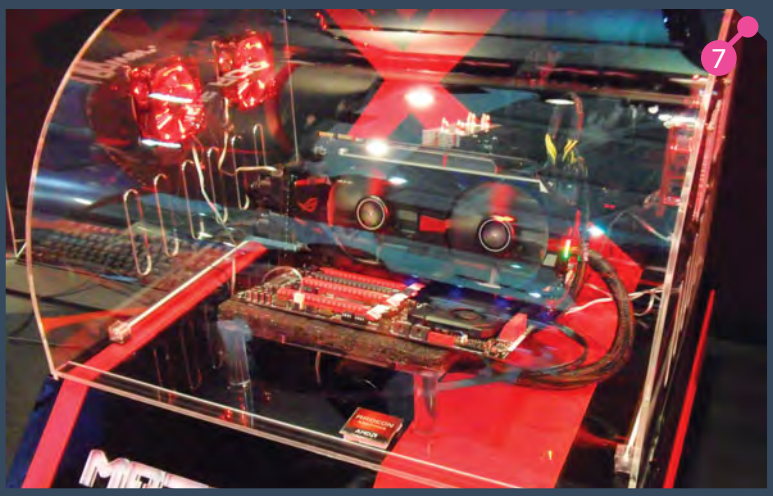
10 G.SKILL

This was probably the most visited booth in all of COMPUTEX, or at least in Nangang. Not only did G.SKILL have the world's best overclockers at their booth daily, but





ADATA introduced some rugged SSD drives, for use in hazardous environments, where normal SSDs would not cut it. Interesting colours to say the least.



Nick Shih's first pure overclocking motherboard as ASRock's finest. It looked very promising and we'll be putting it under the microscope soon.





ASUS Taichi, a sort of refined version of the transformer and one that looks impressive enough to have the CEO introduce it at the trade show.



"ECS, not to be outdone by any other motherboard vendor, easily had the most dramatic presentations and shows at their booth."



"Not only did G.SKILL have the world's best overclockers at their booth daily, but each day had a different vendor and their chosen champion attempting to break all kinds of records using G.SKILL memory."



each day had a different vendor and their chosen champion attempting to break all kinds of records using G.SKILL memory. Amongst the honoraries were Hiwa, PRO, Peter Tan (Shamino from ASUS), HiCookie (from GIGABYTE), Duck-san (from Japan), Vince "K|NGP|N" Lucido (from EVGA), Elmor (from MSI), Dino (from GIGABYTE), Fred Yama, Massman (of HWBOT, who with every passing year turns eerily into a certifiable Tom Cruise stunt double) and other well known individuals from the overclocking circles. With hundreds of litres of LN2 being used up daily, there was always something to be seen at the G.SKILL booth. We would go as far as to say, despite the booth babes' best efforts, they could not deter onlookers from the smoke and numbers. As always, no LN2 show is complete without some dangerous trickery with LN2 consumption and Coca-cola.

Suffice to say G.SKILL memory was used in all records broken at the show, which was no less than eight, making G.SKILL the most used memory for record attempts. Something we gathered the vendor was very proud of.



"Suffice to say G.SKILL memory was used in all records broken at the show, which was no less than eight, making G.SKILL the most used memory for record attempts."



11 SAMSUNG

Samsung was there in full force showing some of the most beautiful ultrabooks we'd ever seen. Not only were they packing some serious wallop in terms of power, but the designs were nothing short of amazing. This was not only limited to ultrabooks, but the record breaking Galaxy SIII was there along with other mobile devices and displays. Samsung had one of the busiest stands at the show and rightfully so, as it was amongst the slickest there.



12 FORD

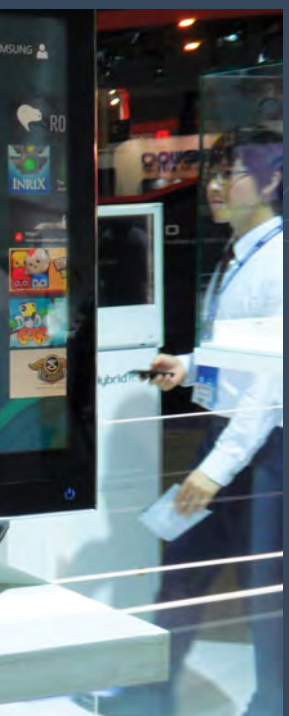
Ford was there as well, showing off SYNC powered by Microsoft in their latest Ford Focus. A technology which literarily allows you to issue out instructions to your car in an intuitive and natural way, like no other technology to date has allowed. Connectivity was obviously the key selling point, and in that regard SYNC allows the connection of almost any mobile phone and digital media player to their Focus via Bluetoooth and USB connectivity, while allowing steering wheel and voice command to manage SYNC's features.

Overall, COMPUTEX TAIPEI 2012 was bigger and better, with many vendors pulling out all the stops to wow the crowds and do something a little different from the rest. Their successes varied, but overall it was an impressive showing and we've no doubt that COMPUTEX 2013 will be an even better show. We didn't manage to get around to every single booth at the expo as there was literality hundreds, and by the end of the trade show we'd seen more components than most people will ever get to see in their lifetimes. From the presentations, free goodies, foods, vendor parties and competitions, COMPUTEX 2012 was easily the most interesting in a very long time. PC gaming is on the rise and all things related to it are too. We anticipate eagerly what the next six months will bring for us because, from what we saw, it's looking to be the most exciting time in computing in a while.

We'd like to thank our sponsors TRENDnet, MSI and Compuseed for making this trip possible. We will see you again in sunny Taipei in 2013. NAG

– Neo Sibeko







ABOVE
Samsung's challenger to the ASUS transformer looked incredible and packs some serious wallop in a small form factor.

LEFT
No trade show would be complete without Samsung's award winning screens, in this particular case, showing of the upcoming Windows 8 interface.

RIGHT
Ford had a full dashboard from their latest FORD Focus with Microsoft Sync technology.

"Overall, COMPUTEX TAIPEI 2012 was bigger and better, with many vendors pulling out all the stops to wow the crowds and do something a little different from the rest."



GG



So you want to be a gaming journalist?

Anyone might legitimately accuse me of outrageous literary snobbery. I mean, I've actually read *Paradise Lost*[1]. I drop words like "superlative" and "proselytise" just because I can. I deliberately employ an unnecessarily obfuscatory style to shut out indolent readers. I occasionally use semi-colons[2]. I hide my Dan Brown books when people come over.

The point is, I'm a lover of writing and language and all things wordy. Some people like cars, I like assonance and complex metaphors and sentences that begin with a capital letter and end in a full stop[3]. I have a degree in English and Latin, with minors in classics and etymology, and I can explain exactly what metonymy is without looking it up because I can figure out exactly what it is just by the name. My handwriting is illegible, I have existential crises on an hourly basis, and there's half a bottle of French absinthe in my freezer.

That's why I'm a writer.

I'm a *gaming* writer because I also love games, so it just makes a practical kind of sense when you think about it. The important thing about it, though, is that gaming journalism is – quite in spite of the ambiguous word order – a writing job first, and a gaming job second. Kind of like how rocket science is actually mostly about science, not gibbing stuff with rocket launchers.

I'm often asked by people how to get a job as a gaming journalist, and most often, it seems, by the sorts of people who perhaps don't realise that writing is in fact the first thing on the job description. Or even the second. Or anywhere else at all. Instead, there's this pervasive perception that being a gaming journalist is all about lying on the couch in your undies, pressing buttons on a controller and shoving pizza into your face, and then cashing a pay cheque at the end of the month.

And really, that's only, like, maybe 95 percent of the job. I say "maybe" because after counting that out on my fingers twice to be absolutely sure about it, I've worked out it's probably closer to 5 percent. I was always better at English than maths, although I maintain that story sums are much better with a shocking narrative twist at the end than some drab, predictable number:



Q. *John is twenty years older than Mary, and in five years' time he will be twice her age. How old is John now?*

A. *John died in the war, and is now just a personified aspect of Mary's guilty psyche as she struggles to come to terms with what happened that day on the farm with little Tommy from next door and Daddy's wood chipper.*

So my advice to all would-be gaming journalists is to make a list of two things you're really passionate about. If writing isn't one of those things, it's time to reconsider your career prospects. [*Everything she says here is true. Everything, Ed*]

NAG

- Tarryn van der Byl

[1] In the bath, natch.

[2] I'll also ~~use~~ exhaust an entire muster of synonyms rather than employ the same word three times in the same sentence, even if it means promoting increasingly unconventional alternatives.

[3] And footnotes. They're like the free sachets of hot sauce in a bag of chips. They're not strictly essential, but they leave a bit of zing on your palate afterwards.

Extra Life

By Scott Johnson – ©2012 All rights reserved – ***Myextralife.com***



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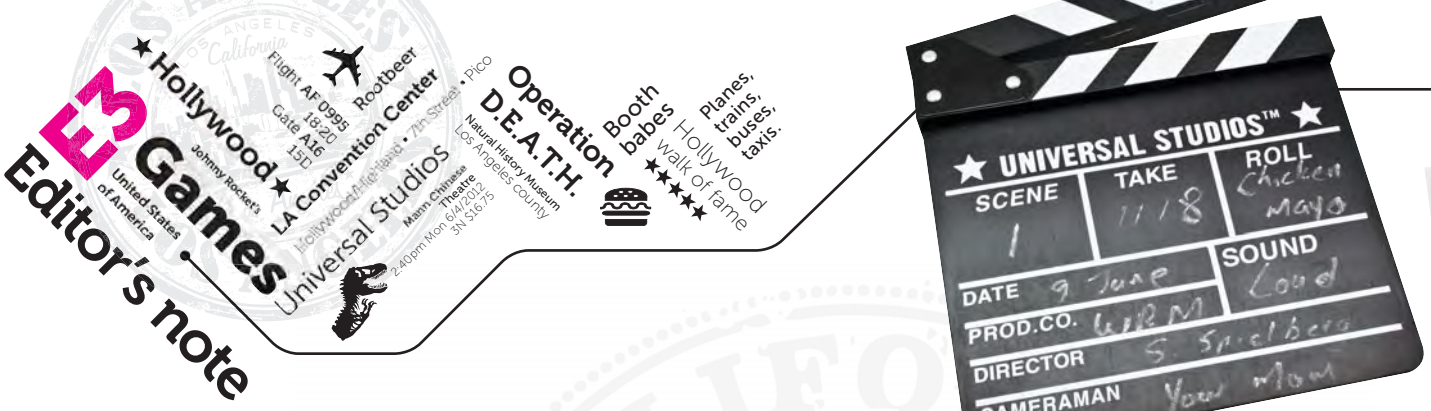


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THREE IDIOTS ABROAD AND A FISH TACO

By
Geoff Burrows (words), Lauren Das Neves (words), Dane Remendes (words) & Chris Savides (art direction)

INT. FLIGHT KL591. JUNE 09, 2012, 16:00. DARK.
The MUTED ROAR of jet engines. The scene begins with a tight shot on a pair of feet clad in black socks. It slowly pans up, revealing an off-white blanket wrapped tightly around the seated figure. We see a belt lashed around his waist. His arms are bound within the cloth, folded across his chest. The camera continues to pan up, revealing the man's head – the only thing that's visible outside of the blanket. His neck is securely hugged by an inflatable air pillow. His eyes are covered with a sleeping mask.

The camera cuts across the aisle. CHRIS (AKA SAVAGE) is seated next to LAUREN. He turns to her while pointing at the figure.

CHRIS
Hah, look at Geoff. He looks like Hannibal Lector, strapped up like that.

LAUREN
I think Geoff has taken so many sleeping tablets and melatonin that he could sleep through an attack by Hannibal Lector.

CHRIS
LOL Geoff, you so silly.

LAUREN
(LAUGHS) Like that crazy chick on the bus, when we were coming back from Venice Beach.

GEOFF
I'm still awake, by the way. Also never speak of Venice Beach ever again. What a mission.

LAUREN
What? It only took, like, two hours on five different busses to get back.

CHRIS
And a taxi ride. I honestly thought we'd never make it back to the hotel. The route looked so f*@%ing short on the map.

GEOFF
And apparently Inglewood is a place where you don't want to end up. I think we narrowly avoided rape at least seven times.

LAUREN
I'm just glad that we bought those hoodies at the beach. That place was cold.

GEOFF
Man, such strange weather in LA. When we went to Universal the next day, I boiled. My nose is actually peeling from sunburn.

CHRIS
I never burn.

GEOFF
Must be your Greek blood.

LAUREN
I wonder if it's Geoff's British blood that makes him so terrified of rollercoasters.

GEOFF
"Terror" is maybe a bit much. I'd say that rollercoasters and I just have an understanding.

EXT. UNIVERSAL STUDIOS THEME PARK – JURASSIC PARK RIDE. MIDDAY.
GEOFF, LAUREN and CHRIS are standing in a queue to enter the Jurassic Park ride. The queue winds back and forth until it goes off-frame. The three are standing close to the front.

CHRIS
I think we might've jumped the queue.

LAUREN
Yeah, those people look like they've been here for a while.

GEOFF
I also have no idea where they came from; our queue started, like, just back there. Right?

They look around in the attempt to figure out the queue system when a PARK ATTENDENT, wearing a brown InGen uniform, calls them forwards to join in the next group. He points towards a raft.

GEOFF
Wait, is this a water ride?

LAUREN
Yes, Geoffrey. You will get wet.

GEOFF
That might explain that splashing, screaming sound I hear every few minutes.

CHRIS
You getting scared?

GEOFF
I'm just starting to think that it's a good thing we put the camera and stuff away in the lockers.

CHRIS
It's not too late for you to join them.

The PARK ATTENDENT seats LAUREN in the front row, CHRIS behind her and GEOFF two rows back.

LAUREN
Guys? Why am I in the front? Oh no, I'm going to get so wet.









GEOFF
This is starting to seem a little bit more fair.

EXT. JURASSIC PARK RIDE EXIT. SHORTLY AFTER.
We see the three walking out of the gift shop attached to the ride's exit. LAUREN hustles to the nearest sunny spot, takes off her cap and wrings it out. Water falls to the floor. Her shirt and pants are soaked.

LAUREN
I told you.

CHRIS
That wasn't so bad; I'm barely wet at all. How was it, Geoff?

GEOFF
I'm mostly dry, but I think I hurt my back from straining against the seat so hard.

CHRIS
(LAUGHS)

LAUREN
Come, Savage, are we going on the Transformers ride now?

CHRIS
Ja, let's go check it out. You keen, Geoff?

GEOFF
Ooo, I don't know. All that Jurassic Park ride did was basically re-affirm why I don't like rollercoasters.

The scene fades.

INT. AIRCRAFT CABIN. SHORTLY AFTER. DARK.
An AIR HOSTESS walks past, checking on the passengers.

CHRIS
I swear; I shouldn't have chosen this movie. That hostess must think I'm some sort of perv.

LAUREN
What are you watching?

CHRIS
It's called Shame. It's about a dude who's a sex addict. Every time someone walks past my screen it's showing some raunchy three-way.

GEOFF
I watched John Carter earlier, it's not bad.

CHRIS
Yeah; it's a Disney movie but it's pretty good. Not too kiddy.

LAUREN
Oh my god, remember those Epic Mickey Oswald bunny ears that we tried to get at E3? I swear I tried every day to get a pair. I wanted to get one that said NAG on it.

GEOFF
Those queues were mental.

LAUREN
We should've just gone on the first day, as soon as we went in. That was the only time I saw the queue any shorter than wrapping around the entire Disney booth.

INT. E3 MEDIA ROOM. Day 2, 13:00.
We see the three seated on beanbags in the crowded media room. They're eating pre-packed lunches. They look tired.

GEOFF
It's so good to eat some veggies.

LAUREN
You should've gone to the 2K stand earlier; they had all sorts of healthy snacks, hey Savage?

CHRIS
Ah man, it was awesome there. I don't even remember what game we went to go see.

LAUREN
Have you got any decent swag yet?

GEOFF
I've got a couple of things. Got a Borderlands shirt earlier and a Spec Ops shirt yesterday which I basically lied my way into getting.

CHRIS
Hah! What did you do?

GEOFF
I saw a bunch of people playing Spec Ops but I had already played it; I just wanted the shirt. So I went to that bus thing that they had and the chick was, like, "Did you play our demo today?" and I said "Yup. Size medium please". Blatant lie.

LAUREN
You're definitely going to hell for that.

GEOFF
It's worth it for a free shirt.

The scene fades.

INT. AIRCRAFT CABIN. SHORTLY AFTER. DARK.
RESHOT FOR PRODUCT PLACEMENT

LAUREN
(LAUGHING)

What an awesome trip.

CHRIS
Sometimes it's fun to be a games journalist.

GEOFF
It's always fun to be a games journalist.

CUE HAPPY FAMILY MUSIC

CHRIS
It's not so fun when you don't have the sponsors willing to send us on these trips.

LAUREN
Yeah, big thanks go out to BT Games and Megarom. Without them, this supplement would never have been this epic.

CHRIS
Woo! Thanks BT and Megarom. You rock!

Roll credits.

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NAG's Best of E3 Awards 2012

Every year, gaming publications and websites will tell you all about what the favourite games were from E3. They'll organise them according to genre or booth babe count or the eccentricity of the lead developers' moustaches, but nobody takes the time to tell the readers about the carpets, the snacks and the couches of E3! It's a shame, really, so we've decided to do just that, plus some stuff that you might actually find useful.

BEST DEMO: TOMB RAIDER

Tomb Raider has impressed us in the past but Crystal Dynamics' behind-closed-doors demo of the game took that to the next level. It might've sparked a bit of controversy from the sensationalists, but we thought it was a deep, moving, and engaging presentation.

BEST HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE: ZOMBIU

Seeing *ZombiU* and playing *ZombiU* are two entirely unique experiences. It was frightening and challenging, and took us all by surprise. We loved every second of playing this game and can't wait to get some more time with it.

BEST CARPET: ACTIVISION

Never before have we felt something so soft, so spongy, so comfortable, so soothing to our aching feet, as the carpets at Activision's booth. We could've lied down right there and died happy.

BEST BOOTH: STAR WARS 1313

Behind closed doors, in a LucasArts meeting room, by prior appointment only, we sat on wooden benches for what felt like five minutes, watching screens all around us scroll the same dull grey course image over and over. The presentation room was designed to be the inside of your ship as it descended slowly into the depths to level 1313. And only then did the team at LucasArts come into the dimly lit and air-conditioned room to do their presentation.

BEST BOOTH BABE: JESSICA NIGRI (LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW)

Jessica began as a semi-pro cosplayer who took a liking to the skimpy outfits of *Lollipop* star Juliet Starling, but it wasn't long before Warner Bros. picked her up as their official model for the game. Of all the booth babes at E3, Jessica looked like she actually wanted to be there. She's also very easy on the eye.

BEST COUCHES: BLACK OPS II

Behind a dark wall there was a dark room. Inside that dark room there was a gigantic TV straddled by a pair of mammoth speakers. Impressive, sure, but nothing can beat the feeling of sinking into the plush leather couch in the *Black Ops II* presentation room when you've spent the last six hours on your feet.

BEST SNACKS: 2K GAMES

Broccoli! Cauliflower! Carrots! With dip! There's a dire lack of food that won't kill you in the US, and you can only imagine the kind of snacks that float around at a gaming convention. We embraced the veggies and our bodies thanked us for it. It's the little things.

BEST PRESS CONFERENCE: UBISOFT

The press conferences at E3 are practically moot at this stage, but we have to hand it to Ubisoft: they did a fantastic job. The presenters were daring, cheeky (rude, even), and they had fun, which is more than we can say for the army of grey suits that ran the other conferences. Also, we loved the general knowledge trivia questions on the big screen relating to Ubisoft games while we were waiting for the conference to begin.

BIGGEST CHEAPSKATES: THQ

The publisher has been in financial dire straits for a while now, and because of that they decided to hold back at this year's E3, having only a few isolated meeting rooms in the secure upstairs areas of the show. That didn't stop them from sending out packs of promo girls to sweep through the show floor with *Darksiders* and *Metro* logos on key body locations, though. Oh THQ, you're so sneaky.



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Assassin's Creed III

Developer: Ubisoft Montreal / **Publisher:** Ubisoft / **Genre:** Action adventure
Release date: October 2012 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3 / Wii U

Quick fun fact: despite only having been announced earlier this year, development on *Assassin's Creed III* actually began almost immediately after the release of *Assassin's Creed II* – way back in 2009 – by a team of senior Ubisoft developers who did not work on *Brotherhood* or *Revelations*. Now, nearly three years later, Ubisoft's most popular franchise is set to get a true sequel, set in an all-new timeframe and starring an all-new Assassin-garbed protagonist.

Set in America before, during and after the American Revolution (1753-1783), we join Connor Kenway, half-English, half-Native American Assassin ancestor of present-day protagonist Desmond Miles. Our new protagonist's true Native American name is Ratonhnhaké:ton. We're not going to try to teach you how to pronounce it, because to try is to stare into the very face of madness. But trust us: it's bad-ass. And so is Connor.

The game is built in the new Anvil 2.0 engine, and features changing seasons and a day-night cycle. The changing seasons will have an effect on gameplay: for example, when it snows during winter, characters will have difficulty moving on the ground. This shouldn't be a problem for Connor, who is able to dart along the branches of trees and bound across rooftops. Obligatory improvements to AI, animation, combat and stealth will all feature. New combat options include the ability to use an enemy as a human shield. Period-authentic weaponry like pistols will be available for use, and players can use tomahawks, bows and even the bayonets of muskets as weapons against their enemies. Dual wielding weapons will also be an option.

Locations to visit in the game include Boston, New York and the Frontier. The Frontier will reportedly be 1.5 times larger than the series' depiction of Rome seen in *Brotherhood*. Wild animals will star in the game for the first time, and can be hunted and killed, their pelts skinned and sold for varying amounts. While combat and stealth have supposedly seen complete redesigns, Connor's fluidity of movement has been greatly improved. Connor can leap over moving objects (carts, horses and such), and can even propel himself from one victim to the next when performing air assassinations.

As with previous games in the series, historical figures will be incorporated in what promises to be an intriguingly complex and beautifully detailed narrative. George Washington, General Charles Lee and Benjamin Franklin (who's rumoured to be this third game's gadget provider – the equivalent of Leonardo da Vinci from former games) will all populate the game's plot. There'll apparently be appropriately substituted mechanics for many franchise-favourite features, like the purchasing and improving of shops. And just in case you're wondering: no, it's been stressed that former series protagonists Altaïr Ibn-La'Ahad and Ezio Auditore Da Firenze do not feature in this third game.

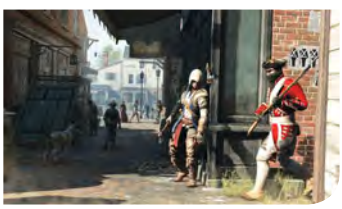
Simply put, this game looks absolutely fantastic. It looks like a true evolution of the series, rather than the iterative slump it was accused of having fallen into with *Revelations*.





"Locations to visit in the game include Boston, New York and the Frontier. The Frontier will reportedly be 1.5 times larger than the series' depiction of Rome seen in *Brotherhood*."





FUN FACT
2,133.6 meters of Velcro were used at E3.







Aliens: Colonial Marines

Developer: Gearbox Software / **Publisher:** SEGA / **Genre:** First-person shooter
Release date: 2013 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3 / Wii U

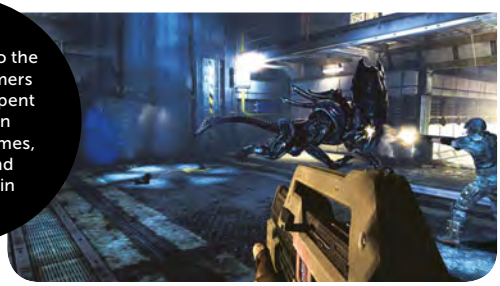
If you don't love the *Alien* series, you have no nerd-soul. And if you have no nerd-soul, you make us sad. Based specifically on the *Aliens* movie (the second film in the franchise, which was directed by James Cameron), *Colonial Marines* is Gearbox Software's (*Borderlands, Brothers in Arms*) take on this renowned xenomorph-littered universe. It's a horrific FPS that puts you in the role of a United States Colonial Marine, and you'll get all the toys that come along with that: the iconic flamethrower, pulse rifle, smartgun, sentry turrets and more will all comprise your arsenal. Also, motion trackers and the ability to weld doors shut.



As you play and murder Facehuggers, Chestbursters and more (including xenomorph types exclusive to Gearbox's vision), you earn experience points, used for upgrading weapons and purchasing skills. You'll also be able to customise your character's experience. All of this carries over into the game's other modes – which, in addition to drop-in/drop-out co-op for up to four players online or two players split-screen has been hinted might include competitive aliens versus marines multiplayer.

The story is said to deliver a true sequel to James Cameron's film, although it takes place after the events of *Alien 3*. It's being considered canonical to the franchise, and is seen from the perspective of Corporal Christopher Winter, member of a search and rescue team sent to investigate the *USS Sulaco* and find Ellen Ripley and the rest of the missing marines who'd been dispatched to LV-426.





FUN FACT
According to the ESA, consumers in the USA spent $24.75 billion on video games, hardware and accessories in 2011.

Borderlands 2

Developer: Gearbox Software / **Publisher:** 2K Games / **Genre:** Role-playing shooter
Release date: September 2012 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3



Much has changed on the lawless planet of Pandora. Following the events of the first *Borderlands*, five years prior, a man by the name of Handsome Jack has all but taken over the planet after he claimed the wealth of the Eridian Vault for himself and embarked on a campaign to eradicate the original colonists and industrialise the planet. Players will once again choose their destiny from a pool of four unique characters, and will attempt to rid Pandora of Handsome Jack and stop him from discovering an ancient evil named "The Warrior" which is located somewhere on the planet.

Brick, Lilith, Roland and Mordecai will make a return, but only as NPCs that the players will occasionally encounter during certain missions. Instead, four entirely new characters are available, each with their own unique and new abilities as well as those based on the original character classes. Salvador the "Gunzerker" is similar to Brick but gains the ability to dual-wield any combination of guns. Maya is a siren, much like Lilith, but has a new ability called Phaselock. There's also a commando named Axton who uses turrets for defence, and a stealthy character named Zer0 who replaces Mordecai but prefers to stick to close-range backstabs and critical hits while cloaked.









Hitman: Absolution

Developer: IO Interactive / **Publisher:** Square Enix / **Genre:** Third-person shooter / stealth
Release date: November 2012 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3

FUN FACT
There are 2,556 different brands of Root Beer, of which we tried at least 14 .

Agent 47 has been betrayed by those he trusted, and, now hunted by the police and the agency that once employed him, he's been forced into the epicentre of a conspiracy in search of the truth. It's pretty standard stuff, really; you know – a walk in the park for our seasoned killer who's now on his fifth title. The *Hitman* series has come a long way over the years but many feel it's fallen behind the times, with other stealth action titles like *Assassin's Creed* and more recently the *Batman: Arkham* series taking over. Now IO Interactive is getting ready to take back the crown with *Absolution*; they've even gone and built a whole new game engine to make sure that they get this one just right.

Most of the gameplay you're no-doubt familiar with by now will make a return, but IO is keen to make the game more accessible with a greater focus on gunplay and action. Make no mistake, however, the gameplay that we've seen shows as many stealthy antics as we'd expect to find, but by improving the combat mechanisms and adding in the new Instinct Mode, there's hope from the devs that new players will pick up the title and have a poke around.

Instinct Mode is one of the new tools available to Agent 47. Now a seasoned veteran, he's capable of predicting enemy movements and can take a pretty good guess at where they're standing, even when they're out of sight. While in this mode, a regenerating Instinct metre will deplete, so you won't be able to use it forever, and those looking for a more hardcore experience have the option to disable this feature entirely.



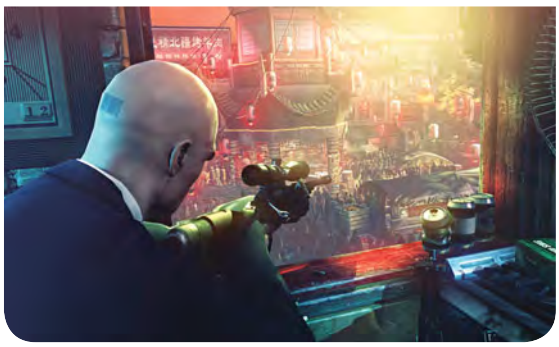
"Agent 47 has a huge variety of tools at his disposal to deal with his targets, as well as goons, thugs, bodyguards and other unfortunately-employed individuals."



Of course, the real meat of any *Hitman* title is the hit – taking down one or multiple targets in the most (or least, if you're eager and don't mind a fire fight) stealthy way possible. Agent 47 has a huge variety of tools at his disposal to deal with his targets, as well as goons, thugs, bodyguards and other unfortunately-employed individuals.

It's in the hit that players will have access to a playground of options. Do you patiently stalk your target, learning their movements and habits, and wait for that perfect time to wrap a garrotte around their neck? Do you don the clothes of the chap he's supposed to meet and lure away your target to a quiet room, where you wait for him to turn his back on you while you slip a kitchen knife into his neck? Maybe you're more straight-forward, and prefer to walk right up to your target, pop off a couple of rounds into the cops standing by his side and finish the job with a quick twist of his neck; or perhaps you prefer the classic approach of finding a remote location, carefully setting up your high-calibre sniper rifle, holding your breath and taking that perfect shot. Whatever your taste in assassination, it looks like *Hitman: Absolution* will cater for you.







Crysis 3

Developer: Crytek Frankfurt / **Publisher:** Electronic Arts /
Genre: First-person shooter / **Release date:** February 2013 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3

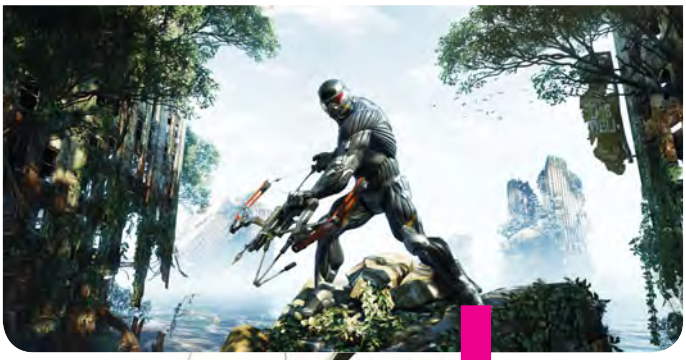
It's been 20 years since the events of *Crysis 2*, and the Earth is a very different place. CELL Corporation has become corrupted by an unknown entity and bent on world domination through power and technology. In an attempt to combat the rampant Ceph, giant domes were built around major cities to form massive greenhouses. These domes would serve two purposes: to encourage natural rainforest formations within the cities and allow the planet to take back the land, and to keep in the Ceph that populate the ruins.

Players will take on the role of Prophet, who's decided that he no longer wishes to serve the whims of his military leaders and takes matters into his own hands. He'll do battle against both the Ceph and CELL agents using conventional weaponry (well, conventional in the scope of *Crysis*) as well as ultra powerful "use and discard" Ceph weaponry.

Described by the developers as a "sandbox shooter", *Crysis 3* will give players even more options to engage their opponents. The stealth aspects, in particular, have been improved upon, and now players will be able to use a powerful compound bow to launch arrows while cloaked. There's also a lot more to do while out of direct combat, such as hacking turrets and doors to infiltrate areas and turn the enemy's own defences against them.









FUN FACT
In the 1940s, the iconic Hollywood sign's official caretaker, Albert Kothe, destroyed the letter "H" after crashing into it while driving drunk.

Darksiders II

Developer: Vigil Games / **Publisher:** THQ / **Genre:** Action adventure
Release date: 2012 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3 / Wii U

Darksiders II's story runs in parallel with that of the first game. When War, one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, is accused of unleashing the apocalypse early, stripped of his powers by the Charred Council, and sent back to Earth on account of his crimes, his brother Death does not take kindly to the news. Refusing to believe that War would do any such thing, Death rides forth to the Nether Realms, a place somewhere between Heaven and Hell, to search for a way to prove his War's innocence.

And that's where we come in, stepping into Death's impossibly angry boots as he travels across a number of city hubs and clears out a great many dungeons with his irrefutable bad-ass-ness. All-new environments add up to a game that is reportedly double the size of its predecessor in terms of places to explore – and *Darksiders* was already filled with exploratory opportunities, so this is impressive. The city hubs will feature NPCs who'll hand out quests for you to undertake, and it's said that one of these city areas will feature more dungeons than the whole of the original game did.

Moreover, the game has a bit of action RPG flair attached to it for good measure, as enemy encounters drop loot like armour pieces – which, when equipped, power up Death's deadly Wrath abilities. Also, being a Horseman of the Apocalypse, Death's got access to his own horse, just as his brother did. Its name is Despair.









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Tomb Raider

Developer: Crystal Dynamics / **Publisher:** Square Enix / **Genre:** Action adventure
Release date: March 2013 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3

When we first saw Crystal Dynamic's fresh take on the *Tomb Raider* series, we were impressed and intrigued, but the gritty visuals, panicky quicktime events and cursing protagonist was just the beginning. Crystal wanted to create a believable character that was more focused on survival than treasure hunting and, hopefully, would encourage the audience to spend less time finagling the camera into boob close-ups and more time immersed in Lara's intense new adventure. Clearly with those hopes in mind, Crystal's E3 presentation of *Tomb Raider* further helped to carve out the story of a young lady desperate to survive on an island filled with things that are trying to kill her.

There was a range of gameplay on display at the show, both during Microsoft's press conference (during which the first DLC was announced as a timed exclusive for the 360) and at Square Enix's booth, behind closed doors. To put at ease those players who might think that *Tomb Raider* has become nothing but a series of quick time events and dialogue, there was plenty of action on display. While she'll start off unskilled and uncertain, Lara will grow into a combative and agile explorer. A new weapon, the increasingly-popular bow will ensure that the young Lara spends some time coming to grips with killing (both animals and humans) the old-fashioned way before she gets to use those fancy pistols the series heroine is famous for, and it'll go a long way to increase the player immersion that is so easily shattered when a character becomes more powerful than you'd reasonably expect.

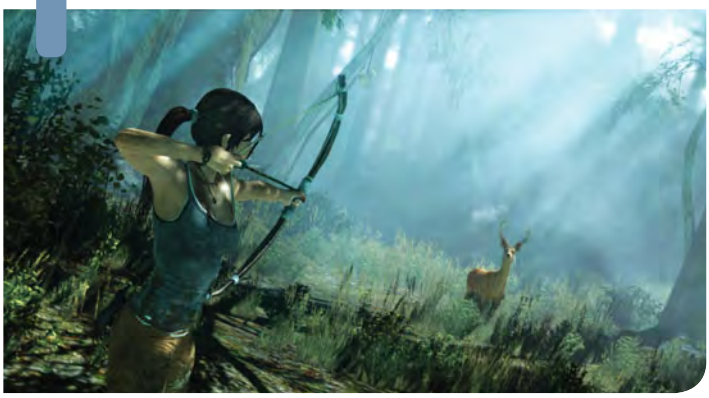
But Lara will be powerful; it'll just take a while. When she does eventually get to that level of prowess we all know so well, she'll be able to leap giant gaps, slide down zip-lines, and make use of her environment while in combat. Crouching behind cover is the best way to avoid a quick death (essential during a night-time stealth sequence we caught a glimpse of), and that oil lantern dangling precariously over a bad guy's head is practically begging to be shot down.

While she's not in combat or jumping about, Lara will be able to explore the island on which she and her friends were marooned. At first the space which you have access to will be limited by Lara's gear, but as she finds and upgrades items to help her reach new locations, she'll be able to explore freely. There's even a hint from the developers that there'll be activities to keep you entertained outside of the main game, such as hunting animals for XP which is used to improve Lara's survival and gear skills. It certainly looks like we're going to have a whole lot to do in this upcoming *Tomb Raider*, so perhaps the recent news that it's been pushed back to March 2013 is in fact good.



FUN FACT
Nine inventors have stars on The Hollywood Walk of Fame. As of May 23, 2012, the Walk consists of 2,472 stars.







"Lara will be powerful; it'll just take a while. When she does eventually get to that level of prowess we all know so well, she'll be able to leap giant gaps, slide down zip-lines, and make use of her environment while in combat."



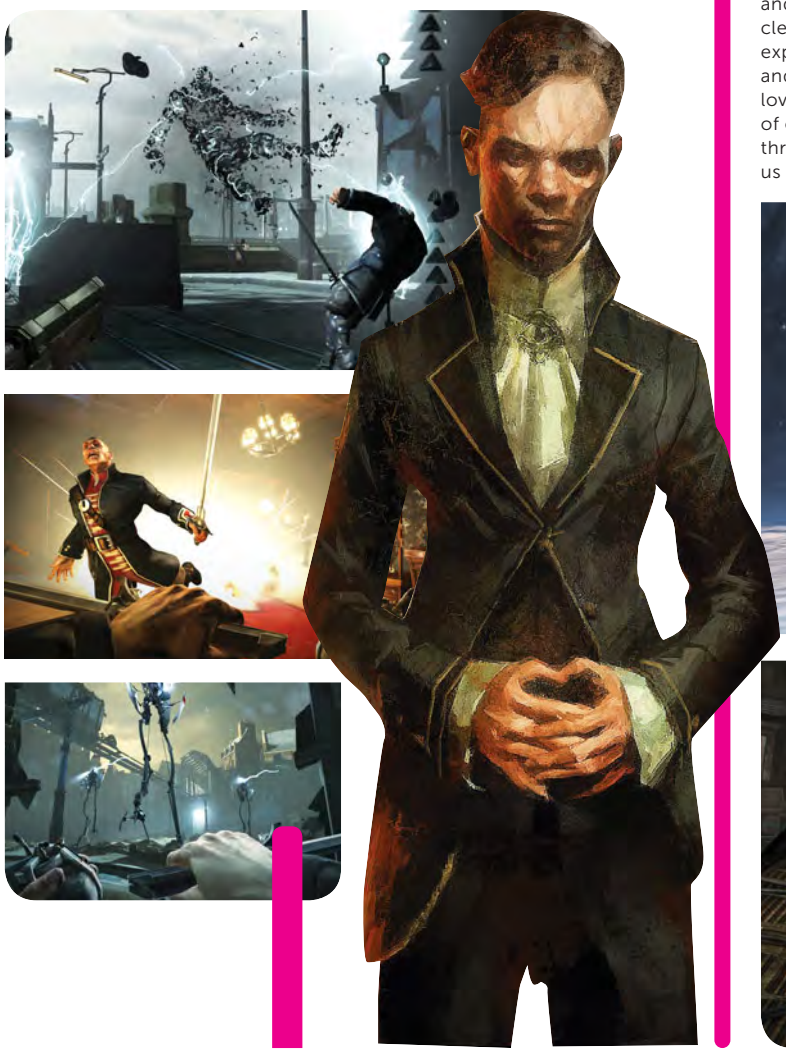
Dishonored

Developer: Arkane Studios / **Publisher:** Bethesda Softworks / **Genre:** First-person action adventure / **Release date:** October 2012 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3

You are Corvo Atano. Formerly a renowned and loyal bodyguard of the Empress, your life was full of win and an abundance of precious whale oil. That is, until you were framed for her assassination by the Lord Regent and the Empress you were sworn to protect died in your arms. Now, you seek vengeance against the Lord Regent using your skills as a marksman, swordsman and silent infiltrator – as well as your powerful supernatural abilities.

Dishonored promises to be a massively immersive exercise in player choice, born of the minds of Harvey Smith (co-designer of *Deus Ex*) and Raf Colantonio – founder of Arkane Studios, who worked on *Arx Fatalis* and *Dark Messiah of Might and Magic*. Stealth will play a pivotal role in the game, but it'll still be your choice whether or not to actually be stealthy. Either way, when stealth isn't an option, you'll have access to swords, daggers, guns (like pistols and muskets, to match the Neo-Victorian/steampunk setting) and a range of powerful magical abilities to fend off foes. Some of these abilities include freezing time for a limited period, summoning rats to overwhelm enemies, and short-range teleportation.

It looks like a potent mixture of *Thief*'s stealth elements, *Deus Ex*'s simulation aspects and *BioShock*'s political intrigue and powerful supernatural abilities. It might not be set in a fully open world – but it certainly looks to provide a powerful choice-driven narrative regardless.



Dead Space 3

Developer: Visceral Games / **Publisher:** Electronic Arts / **Genre:** Survival horror
Release date: February 2013 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3

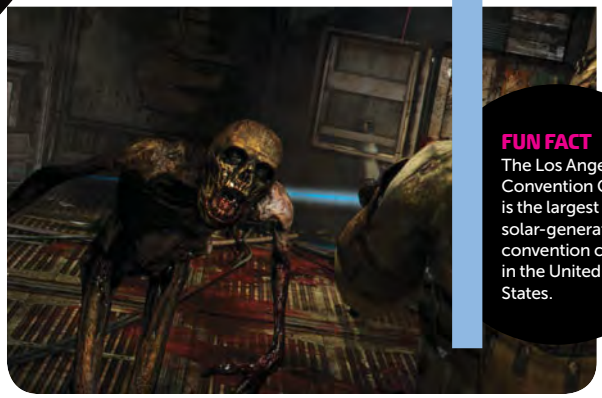
As the *Dead Space* series has grown and improved, so have the abilities of its protagonist Isaac Clarke. No longer a lowly engineer, Isaac has become more capable in combat, less terrified of his opponents and a bit more brazen in his approach to encounters with the Necromorphs. To facilitate this shift, the series will undergo a few changes of its own. There'll be a greater focus on action and combat, and Clarke has been given a few new moves to deal with the Necromorphs and the firearm-wielding Unitarians – humans who believe that the Necromorphs are the next evolution of mankind and will die to protect them.

With this in mind, the developers have been quick to discount claims that the series will lose its edge, and art director Ian Milham states clearly that "The *Dead Space* experience that people know and love is intact." While we'd love to believe him, the inclusion of optional two-player co-op throughout the campaign leaves us a little sceptical. A second player will take on the role of new character John Carver and while in this mode, players will be treated to new cutscenes and character developments, so those of you who are interested in such things would do well to give the game at least two play-throughs.

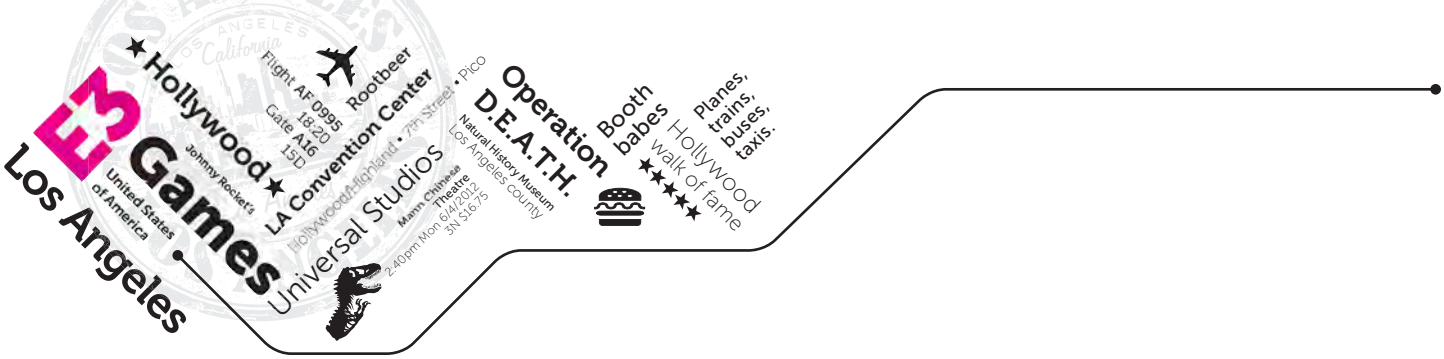








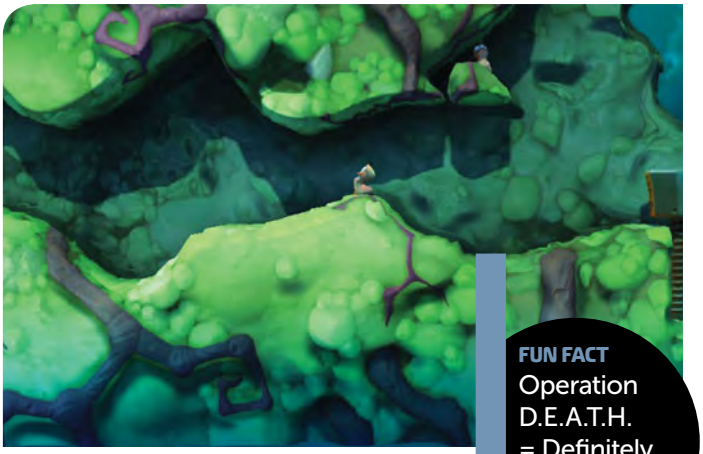
FUN FACT
The Los Angeles Convention Centre is the largest solar-generating convention center in the United States.



Worms: Revolution

Developer: Team17 / **Publisher:** Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment
Genre: Turn-based strategy / **Release date:** September 2012 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3

It's *Worms* in 3D! Plus loads of new innovations that will make your siege on the enemy team more intense and strategic than ever before. A new class-based system comes into play where you start your campaign with a standard (Soldier) worm and, as you progress and unlock levels, you have access to all four classes in the game – Soldier, Scout, Scientist and Heavy. In total there are sixteen worms to unlock, four in each class. Then there's the new water physics element that adds a really unique dimension to the game when you're planning your next move. Using your water gun or water bomb you can fill up a hole that your enemy worm is sitting in, or use the force of the water to woosh your enemies in a certain direction. Worms will slowly loose health when stuck in these water pockets. The new engine which has been built from the ground up, along with the addition of physics objects, gives you the ability to manipulate objects within your environment, which creates an entirely new gameplay experience.





FUN FACT
Operation D.E.A.T.H. = Definitely Eat All The Hamburgers





Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

Developer: Platinum Games
Publisher: Konami
Genre: Action
Release date: 2013
Platforms: 360 / PS3

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance is what was born from the ashes of *Metal Gear Solid: Rising* when that title was doomed to be cancelled due to development troubles. Handed over to Platinum Games, the stealth elements have been removed and the setting has been changed to give Platinum more creative freedom – but Kojima Productions is still responsible for the plot – now set after *Metal Gear Solid 4* – and characters.

Players step into the cyborg ninja boots of Raiden, wielding his signature katana in a game that is purely driven by action, its foundation built on sword-fighting and a "free slicing" system that will allow you to precisely slash enemies, vehicles, objects and almost anything in the game world. Called Blade Mode, there are many ways to appreciate the slow-motion swordplay it facilitates – such as by slicing a falling enemy multiple times before his body hits the ground. Cutting through enemy cover, severing support columns to bring their structures down on enemies, targeting weak points on enemies and even deflecting enemy fire will all be made possible.

















Wonderbook: Book of Spells

Developer: London Studio
Publisher: Sony
Genre: Augmented reality
Release date: November 2012
Platforms: PS3

If you're wondering what *Harry Potter* novelist JK Rowling has been up to, she's been working on this original story for *Wonderbook*. Using advanced Augmented Reality technology in conjunction with your PlayStation Move peripherals, the game is played out through the use of an interactive book that brings the world of *Harry Potter* to life. The first story to be released, *Book of Spells*, will unfold over five chapters, where you will learn 20 spells by using the Move controller as your wand. Not only have all the spell descriptions been written by JK Rowling; revealed within the story through a mechanism of rewards called a Conundrum piece, are five original poems also written by her. There will be integration with the Pottermore website, so best you get practising your *incendio*, *expelliarmus* and *wingardium leviosa* spells young wizards.

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"Wonderbook: Book of Spells is the closest a Muggle can come to a real spellbook. I've loved working with Sony's creative team to bring my spells, and some of the history behind them, to life. This is an extrodinary device that offers a reading experience like no other."
J.K. Rowling on Wonderbook: Book of Spells

Far Cry 3

Developer: Ubisoft Montreal / **Publisher:** Ubisoft / **Genre:** First-person shooter
Release date: 29 November 2012 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3

Far Cry 3 is holding nothing back. If you thought you were in for another safari outing with a couple of guns and some explosions here and there, best you buckle up tight for the ride. We're talking pirates, islands, hallucinations, a topless girl with dreadlocks, tattoos, drugs and shipwrecks. Co-op mode offers up a four player experience that is entirely independent of the single player campaign. So much so, in fact, that it was developed by Ubisoft Massive. Features of co-op include a map editor as well as standalone missions, with the emphasis being on having to play together as a cohesive team to get through the objectives. If none of that excites you then multiplayer is where you might just get hooked. The focus here is very much on team support with the introduction of TSP (Team Support Points) where you're rewarded for helping your teammates. To unlock mega insane perks you'll have to rack up your TSP first, so skilled players will only have access to perks by helping weaker players.



Medal of Honor: Warfighter

Developer: Danger Close / **Publisher:** EA / **Genre:** First-person shooter
Release date: 23 October 2012 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3

It's the 14th game in the *Medal of Honor* franchise and a direct sequel to 2010's *Medal of Honor* game, and based on our hands on demo of the game at E3, easily makes it onto our must-play list of games for this year.

The new Frostbite 2 engine and a new story based on real-life missions of Tier 1 Operators from all over the world set the scene for an unforgettable single player campaign. Where it's set to shine is in the multiplayer. You can choose from 12 different classes, each of which has its own support ability, as well two perks which can be supportive or offensive. A new co-op feature called Fireteams will break teams into micro two-man teams where the two of you fight side-by-side in a multiplayer environment. If one of you dies you can respawn on the other person, or if the living teammate gets revenge the dead teammate's respawn will be instant. It's an interesting take in a multiplayer game where you're usually only focussed on keeping yourself alive, and now you're watching someone else's back as well.







FUN FACT
If your'e sitting in the front row of the Jurassic Park ride at Universal Studios, you WILL get completely soaked!



Battlefield 3: Armored Kill

Developer: Dice
Publisher: EA
Genre: First-person shooter
Release date: September 2012
Platforms: 360 / PC / PS3

Armored Kill will be the second of three themed expansion packs announced by EA at E3. The first one, *Close Quarters*, was released in June, and focussed on four tight indoor maps for infantry. *Armored Kill* will also feature four new maps but their focus will be on vehicle assault, so expect to see new drivable tanks, a new game mode called Tank Superiority, and the biggest map in Battlefield history, Bandar Desert. Five new vehicles will make their appearance in *Armored Kill*: two tank destroyers (M1128 Mobile Gun System for US and 2S25 Sprut for RU), two mobile artillery (M142 HIMARS for US and BM-21 for RU) and a quad bike. There will also be an AC-130 gunship with two gunner seats equipped with a 25mm autocannon and "a big cannon".

















Beyond: Two Souls

Developer: Quantic Dream
Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment
Genre: Adventure
Release date: Q1 2013
Platforms: PS3

With *Fahrenheit* and *Heavy Rain*, Quantic Dream proved that they can make a compelling interactive film. They can tell a strong story with a combination of classic film techniques and cutting-edge technology, but many people, including the developers, felt that they often missed the mark when it came to making an actual game.

Beyond: Two Souls aims to keep that storytelling prowess but take the action and interactivity a step further. Players will take on the roles of Jodie Holmes through 15 years of her life, as well as a spirit bound to her which she has named Aiden. This ghost is loyal to Jodie, and players can use it to possess certain characters to cause murder and mayhem or physically shield Jodie from harm. Jodie will often find herself in trouble, and throughout the game players will need to find ways to get her out of that trouble and maybe even figure out why she has the ability to commune with this spirit.

Call of Duty: Black Ops II

Developer: Treyarch
Publisher: Activision
Genre: First-person shooter
Release date: 13 November 2012
Platforms: 360 / PC / PS3

We're in the future, soldier! Pay attention! Just because it says *Call of Duty* on your mission briefing doesn't mean it's the same drill as last year, or the one before that, or before that! We're talking branching storylines, gameplay choices and sandbox-style missions. You're going to need to do some advanced weapon training before we deploy. That sniper rifle with a scope that can heat-sense through metal and concrete kicks like a mother, so man up! Now, let's talk about Strike Force, soldier! You'll be assigned a series of Strike Force missions. Do not fail these! Bring all those RTS skills you've learnt playing *Command and Conquer* and put them to good use to complete these missions. BE the Commander, then BE the soldier, then BE the weapon. Go go go! Why are you still standing here, soldier! You want to know about zombies? I'll tell you about zombies, soldier! It's what you will be if you don't GET A MOVE ON AND CLEAR OUT!





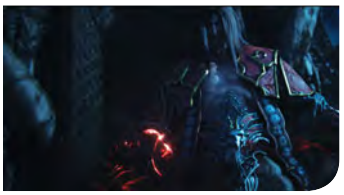












Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2

Developer: MercurySteam
Publisher: Konami
Genre: Action adventure
Release date: 2013
Platforms: 360 / PS3

Castlevania's third-person action-adventure reboot, *Lords of Shadow*, did well enough to warrant a sequel. Revealed with a spectacular trailer that brings back main character Gabriel Belmont (now a vampire) and shows him fending off a horde of attacking medieval warriors. Also, a giant wooden mech thing. Glorious, sure, but we don't actually know much else about the game. Dave Cox, the game's producer and head of product planning and development at Konami Digital Entertainment GmbH, says this about the sequel:

"We are pleased to announce the development of the conclusion to the *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow* saga, giving players an all-new gameplay experience within the *Lords of Shadow* universe. [It's] the most successful *Castlevania* game to be released in the franchise's history, and we are looking to provide series fans yet another nail biter, complete with Dracula's resurrection and the Belmont clan's desire for his final destruction."

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"How many times have you been watching an episode of South Park and thought 'I'd like to be able to watch this on my television, while hooked into my mobile device, which is being controlled by my tablet device, which is hooked into my oven all while sitting in the refrigerator'?"
South Park co-creator Trey Parker

Company of Heroes 2

Developer: Relic Entertainment
Publisher: THQ
Genre: Real-time strategy
Release date: 2013
Platforms: PC

We're headed to the Eastern Front of World War II in the sequel to Relic's excellent RTS title, *Company of Heroes*. With its campaign beginning in 1941, *Company of Heroes 2* hopes to broaden its depiction of the Second World War, promising to tell previously untold stories of the conflict, all centred around the Eastern Front, where 11 million Soviet soldiers are believed to have been killed. Promising remarkable detail in its visuals, its gameplay and its narrative, this sequel promises to uphold all of the ideals of its predecessor (and its expansions).

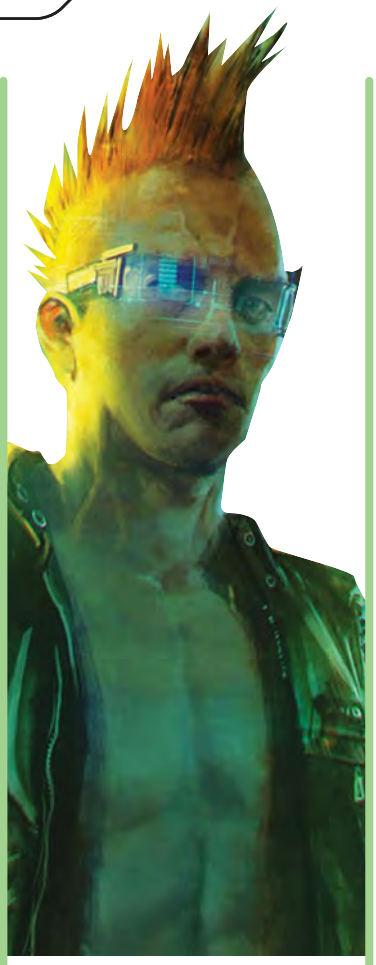
The new True Sight system means that any in-game obstruction – be it the leaves of a fallen tree or smoke billowing from a burning building – will block your troops' line of sight (and by extension your own) accordingly. Soldiers are smart enough to dynamically react to any situation, but it'll still be your leadership that ultimately leads them to victory. The AI has been enhanced in numerous ways. It's a game that is set to be brutally authentic, and we're impossibly excited for it.











Cyberpunk

Developer: CD Projekt RED
Publisher: CD Projekt RED
Genre: Role-playing game
Release date: 2013
Platforms: PC

The developers of one of the greatest RPGs in gaming's history are moving beyond the confines of Geralt of Rivia's fantasy universe – and into a dystopian, cyberpunk future based on the pen-and-paper RPG system created by Mike Pondsmith and called – surprise surprise! – *Cyberpunk*.

It will boast all the hallmarks that make *The Witcher* such a renowned series, like a winding narrative filled with difficult choices to be made set within a rich and engaging narrative. It's designed for mature players, and your choices will have far-reaching consequences. Select your character class from a range of options like deadly mercenaries and crafty hackers, and then outfit them with a powerful arsenal of weaponry and a vast range of cybernetic enhancements. Given its developer's pedigree, this is an RPG that's not to be missed.

DmC: Devil May Cry

Developer: Ninja Theory
Publisher: Capcom
Genre: Action
Release date: January 2013
Platforms: 360 / PC / PS3

Under the helm of a new developer (Ninja Theory, they who developed underappreciated gem *Enslaved*), the initial controversy surrounding playable character Dante's physical transformation has finally died down and given way to genuine excitement for what's looking to be an excellent entry in the lauded action series. As teenaged Dante, you're under attack from a seemingly sentient town called Limbo City that happens to be filled with demons. This should be fun.

Swords and guns allow for a multitude of unique attacks and methods of stringing together combos, while Dante also has access to his angel and demon powers for extra oomph. It's all set in a parallel universe to the previous *DMC* games, but it will provide all the frenetic action sequences, excellent combat and twisted wackiness that the series has become known for. Throw in a healthy dollop of humour, and this game is definitely one to look forward to for series fans, and action fans in general.











Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two

Developer: Junction Point Studios (Wii)
Blitz Games (PS3/360)
Publisher: Disney Interactive Studios
Genre: Action adventure
Release date: 18 November 2012
Platforms: 360 / PS3 / Wii

Mickey is back, and this time he brought a friend. Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, Walt Disney's first cartoon star, joins Mickey Mouse as they adventure through Wasteland, an alternate world filled with 80 years of forgotten Disney characters and theme park attractions. The jump-in jump-out co-op play has a unique element to it in that Mickey and Oswald both have their own specialities that are needed to complete levels: Mickey's paint brush and Oswald's remote control. The game is filled with Disney references throughout – some of the 2D levels are based on classic Disney animations, while other areas make use of Disney music. The Nintendo 3DS will get its own adventure in *Disney Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion*.



Need for Speed: Most Wanted

Developer: Criterion Games / **Publisher:** Electronic Arts / **Genre:** Racing
Release date: 30 October 2012 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3 / PSV

Burnout Paradise meets *Need for Speed* in an open-world racing game where evading the cops and getting to the top of the leaderboards by doing challenges are the order of the day. You're never just driving around looking for something to do - the minute one objective is complete you're given another and another and another. Be the first car to the starting line, jump the furthest over a bridge, take out as many signposts as you can in two minutes – the pace is intense and the driving is frantic. Takedown! Before you know it, beating your friend's scores online, via the Autolog 2 data tracking system in the game, suddenly becomes more pressing than having lunch. Hit the nitro! Even when you totally suck at doing something, there's a reward to be had, even if it means breaking the rules and smashing dramatically into your opponents before an event is about to begin. Carnage! If you want a break from the action you can drive around searching for jack spots. Finding these secret areas within the game will see you driving off in an exotic car each time a new hidden location is found. There's something for everyone.









NintendoLand

Developer: Nintendo / **Publisher:** Nintendo / **Genre:** Mini-game collection
Release date: Q4 2012 / **Platforms:** WiiU

NintendoLand is a theme park-styled collection of mini-games that will be available for the Wii U console at launch. The twelve mini-games are based on some of your favourite Nintendo franchises and will make use of a combination of the Wii U GamePad and/or Wii remotes, with some of the games supporting up to five players (four Wii remotes plus one Wii U GamePad). Only five of the games were playable at E3, so we gave them all a quick whirl. *The Legend of Zelda: Battle Quest* is a three-player action game where two players are swordsmen and the third is an archer and you have to fight your way into the Forest Temple; *Animal Crossing: Sweet Day* is for five players where four of you have to run around and eat 50 candies while the fifth player, who controls two guards, has to chase you down and stop you from getting those 50 candies ; *Luigi's Ghost Mansion* has four players running around inside the mansion trying to expose the ghost using flashlights with the fifth player on the GamePad being the ghost who's trying to catch them; *Donkey Kong's Crash Course* is a single-player nostalgic Nintendo staple that uses the GamePads tilt control functionality to move your cart around the screen; *Takamaru's Ninja Castle* is a single player ninja adventure where you use the GamePad to take out your enemies using throwing stars.



FUN FACT
Venice Beach is known throughout the world as a setting for films such as "Speed" with Sandra Bullock, and the popular "Baywatch" television series.











"It's really cool to see how this works and how much detail goes into it... I really think the technology is amazing, to be able to track your entire body. I was really blown away. I had to be a part of this."
Usher on Dance Central 3 for Xbox

Rayman Legends

Developer: Ubisoft Montpellier / **Publisher:** Ubisoft / **Genre:** Platformer
Release date: TBA / **Platforms:** Wii U

It looks like the *Rayman Origins* visual and gameplay style struck a chord with gamers, so much so that Ubisoft has decided to keep it up with the next game in the long line of *Rayman* titles.

Legends will feature the same up-to-four-players antics of *Origins*, with Rayman, Globox and the two Teensies as playable characters. Since this is a Wii U exclusive release, however, Ubisoft is experimenting with an interesting use of the GamePad to open up the game to a fifth, "asymmetrical" player. Expect to see this term used a lot with multiplayer Wii U games – it means that the GamePad player will have access to unique gameplay mechanisms used either (in this case) in conjunction with the other players or (in other games) against them.

The GamePad player in *Legends* will control a flying character called Murfy who can instantly teleport to any location on the screen (the scrolling of which is controlled by the main players) to deactivate traps and activate platforms, or lift or rotate objects around which the other players will run and jump. The result is seemingly simple for the most part but players looking to 100% each level will need someone with brains and lightning-fast reflexes in charge of Murfy.

Other than the addition of GamePad support, *Legends* looks to be just as rhythmic and twitchy as *Origins* before it. We can't wait.



FUN FACT
Taking two melatonin tablets and also a sleeping tablet before a flight may lead to hallucinations.

ShootMania Storm

Developer: Nadeo / **Publisher:** Ubisoft / **Genre:** First-person shooter
Release date: 2012 / **Platforms:** PC

ShootMania Storm is what you get when *TrackMania* developers Nadeo put their collective mind to work on a first-person shooter focused on competitive multiplayer. Like the puzzle/stunt racing game that serves as its foundation, *ShootMania Storm* will be driven by creation, and the creations of its players.

The idea is to make the gameplay simplistic, but fun. Every player starts with the same weapon: a gun that fires orbs. More weapons can be obtained from various zones throughout maps, but the number of different weapons on offer will be kept to a minimum, so as to keep players focused on combat rather than collection. Weapons don't run out of ammo either, instead only overheating when used a lot, further enforcing the need to keep players fixated on the action at all times. Killstreaks and classes do not feature, and players are able to respawn at any time by hitting the Enter key – no respawn times here.

Meanwhile, the map-editing tools will allow for a range of different options to allow for maximum creativity: players are able to design structures, change the rules of elements within maps (like, say, making all the water on the map hazardous) and will even allow players to write their own code for certain aspects of the maps. The game will be part of ManiaPlanet, allowing you to share all manner of *ShootMania* stuff with other players, and it'll even allow you to create your own game modes.



FUN FACT
E3 2012 generated 30,000 total hotel room bookings and nearly $40 million in revenue for the city.



FIFA Soccer 13

Developer: EA Sports
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Genre: Sports
Release date: 28 September 2012
Platforms: 360 / 3DS / PC / PS2 PS3 / PSV / Wii

Fans of soccer have a greatly improved and more realistic gameplay experience to look forward to. EA Sports have added numerous innovations to this year's game – improved artificial intelligence, more precise dribbling with 360° mobility with the ball, ball control that eliminates near-perfect touch, physical play using a second-generation Player Impact Engine, tactical free kicks, and two new passing options. New features for the Football Club online network where fans connect, compete and share with their friends and others include an iPhone app that lets console players stay connected to the Football Club, as well as being able to earn rewards and extra content when certain milestones are reached. *FIFA Soccer 12* players will carry their Football Club Level and XP into *FIFA Soccer 13*.

















Forza Horizon

Developer: Playground Games / Turn 10 Studios
Publisher: Microsoft Studios
Genre: Racing
Release date: October 2012
Platforms: 360

The core *Forza* series is taking a back seat for a bit while Playground Studios (formed from the ashes of *Blur* developers Bizarre Creations, as well as employees from Codemasters, Ubisoft Reflections and Criterion) takes the wheel under the guidance of Turn 10.

Horizon will be an open-world game set in Colorado during the fictional "Horizon Festival". Players can cruise around the city and challenge AI opponents to instant races, and can even switch between day and night races at the press of a button. Despite these changes, the developers are adamant that the game isn't an arcade racer. It'll retain its simulation roots while attempting to open up the series to new players and give series veterans something fresh but still familiar with which to play.

Gears of War: Judgment

Developer: Epic Games / People Can Fly
Publisher: Microsoft Studios
Genre: Third-person shooter
Release date: 2013
Platforms: 360

You didn't really think that just because *Gears 3* was the end of the trilogy, *Gears* was done forever, did you? The fourth game in the series takes players back to the immediate aftermath of Emergence Day – the event that served as the basis for all these *Gears* shenanigans. The campaign centres on Kilo Squad, troops led by series regulars Damon Baird and Augustus Cole. Series newcomers Sofia Hendricks and Garron Paduck join Baird and Cole as they fight to save Halvo Bay from a menacing new foe.

Cooperative play for you and three friends via Xbox LIVE lets you fight the new Locust menace as the planet Sera teeters on the brink of total annihilation around you. Gameplay promises faster, more intense combat for both multiplayer and solo play. There'll also be a number of new multiplayer modes available – such as the new OverRun mode, which acts as a mix between the Horde and Beast modes from former GoW titles as five-player teams of COG soldiers and Locusts face off in class-based conflict.

















Grand Theft Auto V

Developer: Rockstar North
Publisher: Rockstar Games
Genre: Action adventure
Release date: 2012
Platforms: 360 / PS3

In a world where almost everyone has seemingly heard of the *Grand Theft Auto* series, you don't need to be told that this one is huge. Set in the fictional city of Los Santos (*GTA*'s version of Los Angeles and Southern California, which was previously one of the cities featured in *GTA: San Andreas*) and its "surrounding hills, countryside and beaches", the fifth game looks to be "the largest and the most ambitious game Rockstar has yet created." For a studio like Rockstar, that's a massive statement to make about a game that's been said to be a "radical reinvention of the *Grand Theft Auto* universe" and "a bold new direction in open-world freedom, storytelling, mission-based gameplay and online multiplayer." Hyperbolic shouting aside, there's not much else known about the game right now. But it's going to be huge. That is all.



"My character is like the Don King of that particular scene. I'm just in the background dancing. You gotta see it. It looks cool It's got my stage, my throne, my girls, low riders in the background, my sayings on the ground. It's like a party going on around a fight, because I am the life of the party."

Snoop Dogg on Tekken Tag Tournament 2

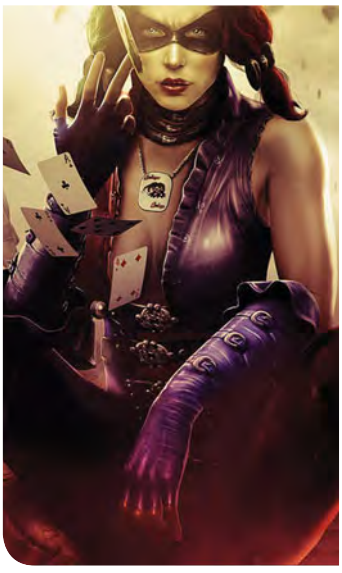
Injustice: Gods Among Us

Developer: NetherRealm Studios
Publisher: WB Games
Genre: Fighting
Release date: TBA 2013
Platforms: 360 / PS3 / Wii U

Super heroes and villains tend to spend more time smacking each other in the face than adventuring, so what better way to concentrate that action than with a game entirely dedicated to them smacking each other in the face? And who better to take on the development of such a game than NetherRealm – creators of *Mortal Kombat* and, more recently, *MK vs DC*?

Injustice will be entirely focused on DC characters – both the common type (including Batman, Flash, Superman, Wonder Woman and Harley Quinn) and some of the lesser-known guys like the hulking Solomon Grundy. It'll feature all of the regular fighting game mechanics you'd expect: combos, super metres, counters and the like – as well as a few usually reserved for side-scrolling beat-'em-ups. The themed environments will be a big part of the action, and will allow characters to perform all manner of interactions like slamming nearby cars on their opponents, pressing dangerous looking big red buttons to unleash laser beams, and knocking their opponents into new combat areas.











Just Dance 4

Developer: Ubisoft
Publisher: Ubisoft
Genre: Rhythm/music
Release date: 2 October 2012
Platforms: 360 / PS3 / Wii / Wii U

Get your groove on and just dance. It's your standard dance-fare sequel with a couple of fresh additions: Battle Mode, Alternate Choreographies, and Expanded Just Sweat Mode. In Battle Mode you go head-to-head in a six round dance off; Alternate Choreographies lets you unlock different dance routines of your favourite tracks; and Expanded Just Sweat Mode is an exercise and get fit workout that includes a calorie counter. There's a 40-track song list ranging from pop, rock, country and hip-hop. The Wii U has its own 5-player mode called Puppet Master where the player on the GamePad chooses the playlists and switches up the routines on the fly.

Lost Planet 3

Developer: Spark Unlimited
Publisher: Capcom
Genre: Third-person shooter
Release date: TBA 2013
Platforms: 360 / PC / PS3

Lost Planet 2 didn't exactly tickle our fancy, but after sitting through the demo of *LP3*, we're happy to say that we're tentatively intrigued. The third title in this series aims to have a greater focus on story and character development, with the player taking on the role of Jim, a colonist on the deadly but potentially lucrative planet known as EDN III. *LP3* is a prequel to the first game in the series, and will detail the early days of colonisation of the planet. As a result, players won't have access to the same level of military-grade hardware to deal with the alien menace that lives beneath the icy surface of EDN III, and will have to resort to more common engineering tools to keep themselves alive. All the while they'll attempt to learn the origins and secrets behind the organisation NEVEC during its rise to power and eventual rule over the planet.













Of Orcs and Men

Developer: Cyanide Studios
Publisher: Focus Home Interactive
Genre: Role-playing game
Release date: September 2012
Platforms: 360 / PC / PS3

It's not every day that you come across an RPG that requires you to play as the greenskins. They're usually there as token options, to give you the chance to play as the "bad guys", but that's not the case here. *Of Orcs and Men* is a game focused on the other side of the fence. Players will take on the role of two characters – a burly orc and a wily goblin – who set off together to slay the human emperor whose species has been culling and enslaving the orcs and goblins of the land.

We'll admit that it's a pretty heavy setting, but, despite its humour potential, *Of Orcs and Men* is a pretty heavy RPG. It'll have everything you'd expect from such a game, including deep conversation options and plenty of moral choices. Players can switch between the two in and out of combat to leverage their unique abilities against their enemies and other NPCs. It's one heck of an interesting idea and we can't wait to see if it pans out.



SimCity

Developer: Maxis / **Publisher:** Electronic Arts / **Genre:** Management simulation
Release date: 2013 / **Platforms:** PC

Not having seen a new release in almost ten years (we don't count *SimCity Societies*, because, well... gross), it's about damn time for the *SimCity* series to make a real comeback in the form of this ambitious-looking reboot. For those who've somehow never seen or heard of *SimCity*, it's a management sim that tasks players with planning and building a city, taking into account everything from smart road layout (and non-linear, curved roads will now feature) to building power plants that provide electricity for the Sims living in your burgeoning metropolis. And with the GlassBox simulation engine that this new *SimCity* is being built in, it might be the richest, most believable city building game yet.

"We try to build what you would expect to see, and that's the game," says system architect Andrew Willmott, explaining how visual effects like pollution, traffic and even economic breakdowns will be made more obvious within the engine. Zoom in on your city, and you'll be able to see individual Sims (your city's inhabitants) going about their choice of daily tasks. Individual buildings can be upgraded and modified, such as by adding smokestacks and more to a power plant to improve its power output.

Finite resources demand even more careful city planning, as you don't want your entire economy to depend on a single, non-replenishing resource. Multiplayer features allow regions to sustain many cities from different players, and players' cities will influence each other.







The Elder Scrolls Online

Developer: ZeniMax Online Studios / **Publisher:** Bethesda Softworks
Genre: MMORPG / **Release date:** 2013 / **Platforms:** PC

Much-loved RPG series *The Elder Scrolls* has traditionally allowed solo players to adventure through each individual title's cordoned-off chunk of the continent of Tamriel on their lonesome, with no other pesky players to deal with along the way. *The Elder Scrolls Online* aims to change all that, offering up the whole of Tamriel as the playground for a great many players to adventure through together. So you're able to travel from Morrowind to Daggerfall and then off to Skyrim for a spot of cold. And while MMOs may not be everyone's cup of meaty broth, it's a pretty big deal.

Described as having *World of Warcraft*-style mechanics (we can hear you groaning from here), the story is set in the Second Era of Tamriel, around 1,000 years before the events of *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. Three factions struggle for dominance and control of the Imperial City, while the obligatory "dark forces" conspire to obliterate the world. The three alliances (the Ebonheart Pact, the Aldmeri Dominion and the Daggerfall Covenant) make up the game's PvP component, in a huge three-way struggle for territorial control across all of Tamriel.

You'll still be able to create your character from the nine classic races, choosing from different classes as you do. There'll be opportunities for both solo and group questing. Points of interest will pop up on your map as you explore, which you can choose to investigate or not. If you expect more *World of Warcraft* than *Elder Scrolls*, you won't be disappointed.









FUN FACT
The LAX airport was originally named Mines Field and was a general aviation base during World War II.



Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Blacklist

Developer: Ubisoft Toronto / **Publisher:** Ubisoft / **Genre:** Third-person shooter / stealth / **Release date:** 2013 / **Platforms:** 360 / PC / PS3

Splinter Cell returns with a few new features and a lot less Michael Ironside. The game follows on from *Splinter Cell: Conviction*, after US President Patricia Caldwell pulls the plug on Third Echelon and orders all undergoing operations terminated. The corrupt agency is replaced by newly formed Fourth Echelon (see what they did there?) that officially doesn't exist. So, Third Echelon 2.0 really.

The team is founded and led by Sam Fisher, and the agency's primary mission is to ensure the complete termination of Third Echelon. While doing this, a group of 12 terrorists (who've had enough of the US' military presence across the world) reveals a terror initiative known as "The Blacklist" – a deadly countdown of escalating terrorist attacks on United States assets. It's up to Sam (and you) to stop the Blacklist countdown.

To aid in this, there's a new gameplay mechanic called "Killing in Motion" – similar to Mark and Execute – which allows you to highlight multiple targets and eliminate them fluidly in quick succession. Kinect integration for Xbox 360 allows you to use voice commands to call in air strikes, or to audibly distract enemies to slip past them. The action will be intense, but it's been highlighted that stealth is still a huge part of the gameplay. Sam Fisher's staple voice actor, Michael Ironside, has been replaced by Eric Johnson – who will provide his voice and also perform motion capture work for Sam. Sad face, because we love Michael Ironside.



FUN FACT
On average, Americans eat three burgers a week. We ate one every day.

PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale

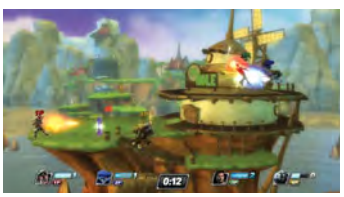
Developer: SuperBot Entertainment
Bluepoint Games
CE Santa Monica Studio
Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment
Genre: Fighting
Release date: Q4 2012
Platforms: PS3 / PS Vita

Nintendo's *Super Smash Bros.* proved that gamers enjoy taking popular characters and bashing the hell out of each other. It's a great idea, actually – so great that Sony has decided that they'd like to take the idea for themselves with *Battle Royale*. Players will choose their character from a pool of PS3 exclusive franchises (and a few others, like the Big Daddy from *BioShock*) including Kratos, Sly Cooper, Sweet Tooth, PaRappa the Rapper and Nathan Drake. Once done, you'll jump into a four-player battle for domination in which players attempt to eliminate their opponents – each time they do so, they'll gain a point and the slain opponent will respawn a few seconds later.

Expect lots of big, over-the-top action and ridiculous happenings. This is definitely one for a couch full of friends.

















Skylanders Giants

Developer: Toys for Bob / n-Space (3DS)
Publisher: Activision
Genre: Action adventure
Release date: October 2012
Platforms: 360 / 3DS / PC / PS3 / Wii

Skylanders: Giants, the sequel to last year's innovative *Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure* portal toy game, is shaping up to be a super fun romp through the Skylanders world. This time though, they're adding Giants: eight collectible figures twice the size of the main Skylanders, both in-game and in their toy form. Each Giant will represent one of the eight elements, and will be able to pick up scenery from the world and use it as weapons. All of your Spyro's figures, along with their upgrades and powers, will work in Giants up to level 15, and all your Series 2 figures will work in *Spyro's Adventure*. Cross platform play will be available since your XP and character stats are saved on your toy. In addition, players can look forward to eight new Skylanders launching with Giants, four of which will be LightCore Skylanders that have special powers and light up when you get close to the portal.





Sleeping Dogs

Developer: United Front Games
Square Enix London Studios
Publisher: Square Enix
Genre: Action adventure
Release date: September 2012
Platforms: 360 / PC / PS3

Initially conceptualised as *Black Lotus*, and then bought out by Activision and turned into a new *True Crime* title, the (hopefully for the last time) renamed *Sleeping Dogs* is once again free of any existing IP and sits happily with its new owners at Square Enix.

This is an open-world, free-roaming action game set in Hong Kong, with many similarities to the *GTA* series, but with an emphasis on hand-to-hand combat (similar to that of the *Batman: Arkham* series) as well as a solid cover/shooting system, and to tie it all together, the team has a few designers who've previously worked on the *Need for Speed* series, so expect a few similarities in the game's driving sequences. To top off all of those neat features, expect a ton of side activities to keep you occupied, such as stealing cars, singing karaoke, joining a fight club and even engaging in a little bit of illegal gambling at the local den.











Star Wars: 1313

Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts
Genre: Action adventure
Release date: TBA
Platforms: 360 / PC / PS3

Star Wars: 1313 is set during the original trilogy of movies and is being brought to life by the whole LucasArts gang including Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), Lucasfilm Animation and Skywalker Sound. Level 1313, the most dangerous part of Star Wars city-planet Coruscant, is where *Star Wars: 1313* takes place. You're a bounty hunter in a criminal underworld, so expect to see lots of bounty hunter weapons and gizmos. The gameplay is a combination of cover-based shooting and platforming all set in a gritty and darker side of the Star Wars universe than we're accustomed to. The entire game is rendered in real-time so it's hard to identify exactly when cut scenes end and gameplay begins. LucasArts are using motion capture as well as recording detailed facial expressions, so each of the actors in the game will be modelled off their real likeness along with their natural face, body and eye movement.

The Last of Us

Developer: Naughty Dog Interactive
Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment
Genre: Action adventure
Release date: TBA 2013
Platforms: PS3

We had seen snippets from *The Last of Us* before E3, but during the show, Sony gave us a better glimpse into the desolate and almost nauseatingly violent game world. Video game violence is nothing new, but *The Last of Us* uses it almost tastefully, to make a point: this is a desperate world. The game's playable protagonist, Joel, will do anything to protect himself and Ellie, the young lady who's taken to his side for safety, including hand-to-hand confrontation with some of the many bandits who prowl the post-apocalyptic cities of the game in search of easy prey.

There's more than just human enemies to worry about, however; the cause of all of this destruction stems from the zombie-like infected that now run rampant through the crumbling city streets.

Coming off the back of the undeniably tamer *Uncharted* series, Naughty Dog seems to be out to prove that they can craft a heavy and punchy survival game as well as anyone else. We can't wait.















Transformers: Fall of Cybertron

Developer: High Moon Studios
Publisher: Activision
Genre: Third-person shooter
Release date: 28/08/2012
Platforms: 360 / PC / PS3

Giant robots, massive weapons, and a new character called Grimlock. Also, Dinobots and a city-sized Autobot called Metroplex. Oh, and you get to play as both the Autobots and the Decepticons in the campaign. It's the biggest Transformers game yet where everything has been super-sized to the max – the battles, the characters, the environment. The new guy on the block, Grimlock, transforms into a dinosaur but needs to earn this transformation by building up rage. You also get to play the gigantically huge Metroplex in one of the sections where he helps Optimus Prime fight against the Decepticons. If multiplayer is more your thing, you'll be able to jump into Escalation Mode, which is essentially a horde mode four-player co-op where each player will pick one of the four preset classes available: Scientist, Infiltrator, Destroyer and Titan. Die hard fans will be thrilled to know that the original voices of Optimus Prime and Grimlock from the Transformers animated television series, Peter Cullen and Gregg Berger, will be voice-acting their respective characters in *Transformers: Fall of Cybertron*.



"E3 2012 focused and harnessed the passion, energy, and excitement for video games and propelled our industry into the global spotlight."

Michael D. Gallagher, president and CEO of the ESA

Title	Platform/s	Genre
007 Legends	360 / PC / PS3	FPS
A Game of Dwarves	PC / PS3	Simulation/strategy
Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!	3DS / DS	Adventure
Agni's Philosophy	360 / PS3	Tech demo
Alien Spidy 3	60 / PC / PS3	Platformer
Angry Birds	3DS	Puzzle
Arctic Combat	PC	FPS
ArmA II	360	FPS
ArmA III	PC	FPS
Ascend: New Gods	360	TBS
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	PSV	Action adventure
Avatar Motocross Madness	360	Racing
BandFuse: Rock Legends	360	Rhythm/music
Batman: Arkham City - Armored Edition	Wii U	Action adventure
Battlefield 3: Close Quarters	360 / PC / PS3	FPS
Battlefield 3: End Game	360 / PC / PS3	FPS
Bellator: MMA Onslaught	360 / PS3	Fighting
Ben 10: Omniverse	360 / 3DS / DS / PS3 / Wii / Wii U	Action
Brick-Force	PC	Shooter
Bubble Guppies	DS	Adventure
Bullet Run	PC	FPS
Call of Duty: Black Ops Declassified	PSV	FPS
Carrier Command: Gaea Mission	360 / PC	RTS
Cartoon Universe	PC	MMOG
CastleStorm	360 / PC / PS3	Strategy
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow - Mirror of Fate	3DS	Action
Chasing Aurora	Wii U	Action
Code of Princess	3DS	Action
Continent of the Ninth Seal	PC	MMORPG
Copernicus (working title)	PC	MMORPG
Core Blaze	PC	MMORPG
Counter-Strike: Global Offensive	360 / PC / PS3	FPS
Dance Central 3	360	Rhythm/music
DanceStar Party 2	PS3	Rhythm/music
DanceStar Party Hits	PS3	Rhythm/music
Dark	360	Stealth RPG
Dark Souls: Prepare to Die Edition	PC	RPG
DC Universe Online: The Last Laugh	PC / PS3	MMORPG
Dead Island: Riptide	360 / PC / PS3	FPS/RPG
Dead or Alive 5	360 / PS3	Fighting
Deadlight	360	Action
Defiance	360 / PC / PS3	MMOG
Disney Princess: My Fairytale Adventure	Wii	Adventure
Divinity: Dragon Commander	PC	RPG
Divinity: Original Sin	PC	RPG
Dogfight 1942	360 / PC / PS3 / Wii	Flight
Dollar Dash	360 / PC / PS3	Action
Doom 3 BFG Edition	360 / PC / PS3	FPS
Dora & Team Umizoomi's Fantastic Flight	DS	Adventure
Dragon Ball Z for Kinect	360	Action
Dungeon Fighter LIVE: Fall of Hendon Myre	360	Action
Dungeonland	PC	Action
Dungeons & Dragons Online: Menace of the Underdark	PC	MMORPG
Dungeons & Dragons: Neverwinter	PC	MMORPG
DUST 514	PS3	MMOFPS

Title	Platform/s	Genre
Dust: An Elysian Tail	360	Action RPG
Dyad	PS3	Racing
Dynasty Warriors 7 Empires	PS3	Action
End of Nations	PC	MMORTS
Enemy Front	360 / PC / PS3	FPS
Epic Mickey: The Power of Illusion	3DS	Platformer
Ether Vapor Remaster	PC	Action
F1 2012	360 / PC / PS3	Racing
Fable: The Journey	360	Action
Family Guy: Back to the Multiverse	360 / PS3	Action adventure
Final Fantasy XIV Online	PS3	MMORPG
Fire Emblem: Awakening	3DS	Strategy/RPG
Firefall	PC	MMOFPS
Fist of the North Star: Ken's Rage 2	360 / PS3	Action
Foosball 2012	PS3 / PSV	Sports
Game & Wario (working title)	Wii U	Mini-game collection
God of War: Ascension	PS3	Action
Grimlands	PC	MMORPG
Guacamelee!	PSV	Platformer
Guardians of Middle-Earth	360 / PS3	MOBA
Guns of Icarus Online	PC	MMOG
Halo 4	360	FPS
Happy Wars	360	Multiplayer action
Harvest Moon 3D: A New Beginning	3DS	Strategy/adventure
Hawken	PC	Action
Hearts of Iron III: Their Finest Hour	PC	Strategy
Hell Yeah! Wrath of the Dead Rabbit	360 / PC / PS3	Platformer
Hybrid	360	TPS
Jet Set Radio	360 / PC / PS3 / PSV	Action
Joe Danger: The Movie	360	Racing
Just Dance: Disney Party	360 / Wii	Rhythm/music
Karaoke Joysound Wii	Wii	Rhythm/music
Kinect Nat Geo TV	360	Puzzle
Kinect Sesame Street TV	360	Puzzle
Knights of the Round Cable	PC	Puzzle
Legends of Pegasus	PC	Strategy
LEGO City Undercover	3DS / Wii U	Action adventure
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	360 / 3DS / DS / PC / PS3 / PSV / Wii	Action adventure
Lifeless Planet	PC	Action adventure
LittleBigPlanet	PSV	Action adventure
LittleBigPlanet Karting	PS3	Racing
LocoCycle	360	Action
Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon	3DS	Action adventure
Madden NFL 13	360 / PS3 / PSV / Wii	Sports
Magna Mundi	PC	Strategy
Mark of the Ninja	360	Action
Marvel Avengers: Battle for Earth	360 / Wii U	Action
Marvel Pinball 3D	3DS	Puzzle
Mass Effect 3	Wii U	RPG
Matter	360	Adventure
MechWarrior Online	PC	Action
Miner Wars 2081	360 / PC	Space sim
Mistborn: Birthright	360 / PC / PS3	RPG
Mugen Souls	PS3	RPG
Napoleon's Campaigns II	PC	Strategy
Narco Terror	360 / PC / PS3	Action
NBA 2K13	360 / PC / PS3	Sports
NBA Baller Beats	360	Sports
NBA Live 13	360 / PS3	Sports
NCAA Football 13	360 / PS3	Sports
New Little King's Story	PSV	RPG
New Super Mario Bros. 2	3DS / Wii U	Platformer

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"There's no one better at creating authentic sports video games than EA SPORTS, and we're excited to have a partner who shares our vision of deep, connected and multi-platform global game experiences."
UFC President, Dana White

"Well I actually got involved through my record company. Just having a big record such as "Good Feeling" makes the job much easier, so I mean, I'm definitely a video game, you know, fanatic."
Flo Rida on Just Dance 4

Title	Platform/s	Genre
NHL 13	360 / PS3	Sports
Ni no Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch	PS3	RPG
Nickelodeon Dance 2	360 / Wii	Rhythm/music
Nike+ Kinect Training	360	Fitness
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	Wii U	Action
Omerta - City of Gangsters	PC	Management sim
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	PS3	Action
Otherland	PC	RPG
Painkiller: Hell & Damnation	PC	FPS
Paper Mario: Sticker Star	3DS	RPG/platformer
Papo & Yo	PS3	Action adventure
Penny Arcade's On the Rain-Slick Precipice of Darkness 3	360 / PC	RPG
Persona 4 Arena	360 / PS3	Fighting
Persona 4: Golden	PSV	RPG
Phineas and Ferb: Across the 2nd Dimension	PSV	Action adventure
Pid	360 / PC / PS3	Platformer
Pikmin 3	Wii U	Puzzle/adventure
PlanetSide 2	PC	MMOFPS
Pokemon Black Version 2	DS	RPG
Pokemon White Version 2	DS	RPG
Port Royale 3: Pirates and Merchants	PC	Management sim
Pro Cycling Manager Season 2012: Le Tour de France	PC	Management sim
Pro Evolution Soccer 2013	360 / 3DS / PC PS2 / PS3 / Wii	Sports
Project Happiness (working title)	PC	Puzzle
Project P-100 (working title)	Wii U	Action
Quantum Conundrum	360 / PC / PS3	FPP
R.A.W.	360 / PC / PS3	Action RPG
Rabbids Rumble	3DS	Mini-game collection
RaiderZ	PC	MMORPG
Resident Evil 6	360 / PC / PS3	Survival horror
Retro City Rampage	360 / PC / PS3 PSV / Wii	Action adventure
Rift: Storm Legion	PC	MMORPG
Rise of the Guardians	360 / 3DS / PS3 Wii / Wii U	Action adventure
Risen 2: Dark Waters	360 / PS3	RPG
Rock Band Blitz	360 / PS3	Rhythm/music
Sacrilegium	PC	Survival horror
Salem: The Crafting MMO	PC	MMOG
Scribblenauts Unlimited	3DS / Wii U	Action adventure
Silent Hill: Book of Memories	PSV	Survival horror
SiNG (working title)	Wii U	Rhythm/music
Skulls of the Shogun	360	TBS
Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time	PS3 / PSV	Action adventure
Smart As	PSV	Puzzle/educational
Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2	360 / PC / PS3	FPS
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	360 / 3DS / PS3 PSV / Wii U	Racing
Soul Sacrifice	PSV	RPG
Sound Shapes	PS3 / PSV	Platformer
Spec Ops: The Line	360 / PC / PS3	TPS
Sports Champions 2	PS3	Sports
Sports Connection	Wii U	Sports
Spy Hunter	3DS / PSV	Racing
Star Trek: The Game	360 / PC / PS3	TPS
Starvoid	PC	RTS
Street Fighter X Tekken	PSV	Fighting
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	PSV	Puzzle
Tank! Tank! Tank!	Wii U	Action
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	360 / PS3 / Wii U	Fighting
The Dark Eye: Demonicon	360 / PC / PS3	RPG
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim - Dawnguard	360 / PC / PS3	RPG
The Last Guardian	PS3	Action adventure
The Last Story	Wii	RPG
The Lord of the Rings Online: Riders of Rohan	PC	MMORPG
The Secret World	PC	MMORPG
The Showdown Effect	PC	Action
The Unfinished Swan	PS3	Adventure
The Walking Dead: Episode 2 - Starved for Help	360 / PC / PS3	Adventure
Theatrhythm Final Fantasy	3DS	Rhythm/music
Thundercats	DS	Action
Titan Siege	PC	RPG
Tokyo Jungle	PS3	Action
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	360	Sports
Transformers Prime	3DS	Action
Trine 2: Director's Cut	Wii U	Puzzle platformer
War of the Roses	PC	Action
Warface	PC	FPS
Warhammer Online: Wrath of Heroes	PC	MOBA
When Vikings Attack	PSV	Action
Wii Fit U	Wii U	Fitness
Wizardry Online	PC	MMORPG
World of Battleships	PC	MMOG
World of Warplanes	PC	MMOG
WWE '13	360 / PS3 / Wii	Sports
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	360 / PC / PS3	TBS
Young Justice: Legacy	360 / DS / PS3 / Wii	Action
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2013	Wii U	Fitness
Zeno Clash II	360 / PC / PS3	FPS/action
Zone of the Enders HD Collection	360 / PS3 / PSV	Action
Zumba Fitness Core	360 / Wii	Fitness



FUN FACT
All our photos that we took of booth babes at E3 are on the DVD this month in the "E3 2012 Booth Babes" folder.



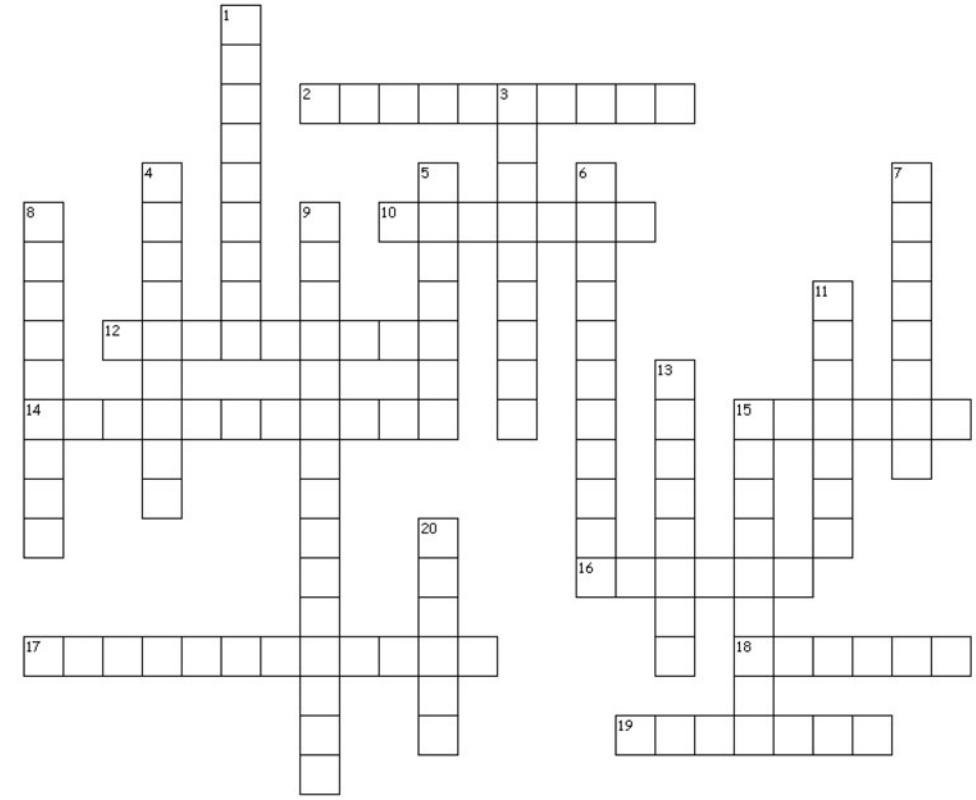
WIN!

Across

2. This new title pits players against each other in arena-style FPS combat.
10. Mr. Belmont's first name.
12. This space craft sets the scene for a terrifying alien-themed shooter.
14. This game mode allows players to take on an RTS-like point-of-view to control their troops for the first time.
15. This large and ridiculous creature often accompanies Rayman on his new 2D adventures.
16. An RTS changes to the perspective of this side of World War 2.
17. Using this, Agent 47 can see through walls and spot enemy patrol paths.
18. The surname of a secret warrior during the American Revolutionary War.
19. The upcoming MMORPG based on *The Elder Scrolls* franchise is set on this continent.

Down

1. These small squads are designed to turn the tide of multiplayer battles in EA's new military shooter.
3. This massive Transformer could be called as large as a city.
4. This fighting game from NetherRealm is sure to settle a lot of arguments about who'd win in a superhero battle.
5. This activity is often found in Hong Kong and makes its way into Square Enix's upcoming free-roaming action game.
6. These hellish creatures are Isaac Clarke's worst nightmare come true.
7. This technology drives every event in EA's upcoming city building simulation.
8. This platform holder has secured timed exclusivity for *Tomb Raider*'s first DLC.
9. This corporation is attempting to transform the planet's cities into massive greenhouses.
11. This system keeps track of your accomplishments as you cruise through the city.
13. The developers of *DmC* also made this underappreciated gem.
15. This is the title given to Salvador.
20. This character returns as the protagonist in an action game that's being overseen by Kojima Productions.



WIN this great E3 swag!

Holy chilled monkey brains – it's a crossword puzzle! We bet it's been a while since you've seen one of these. But this is no ordinary crossword puzzle – this is one is focused on gaming, and that makes it precisely one thousand times better than anything involving general knowledge or celebrity gossip.

But why is this crossword puzzle here? Well, it's here to give you the chance to win a big(ish) bag of 100% certified, NAG collected E3 swag. To stand a chance to win this fantastic prize, just complete this crossword puzzle and send us your answers. **Only submit your answers in the form of a numbered list**.

Once you've completed your answers, email them to us at **competitions@nag.co.za** before the 31st of August, along with your full name, daytime contact number and physical address. The winner will be randomly chosen from those who submit a fully correct set of answers and will be notified by email. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. This competition is valid for South African residents only. The prize is provided "as is" and cannot be exchanged for cash or other goods, this includes T-shirt sizes. Good luck!



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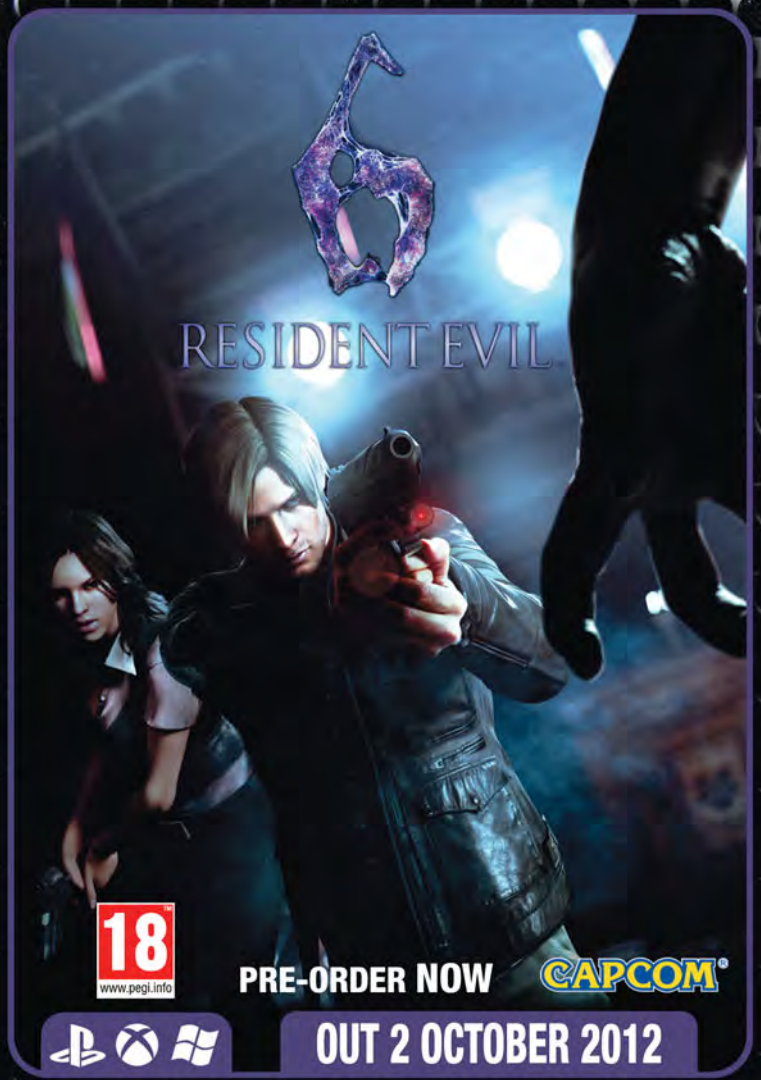
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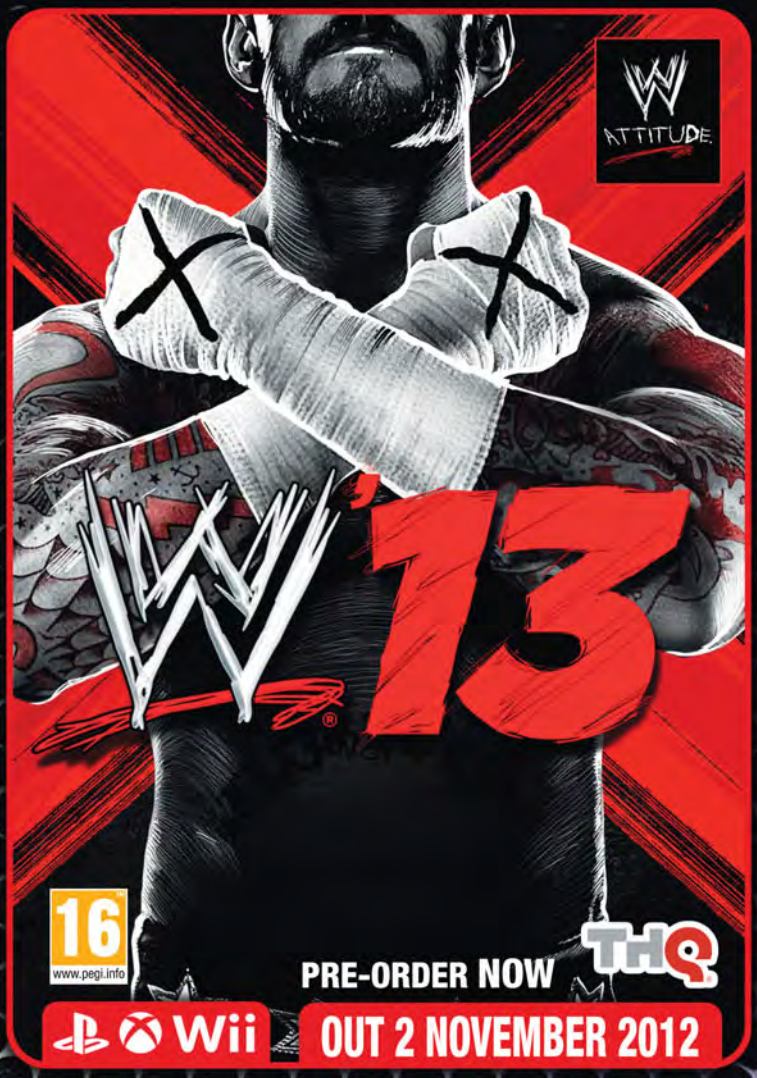

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