SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING GAMING, COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

NAG

Vol. 16
Issue
SEVEN

PC / PLAYSTATION / XBOX / NINTENDO

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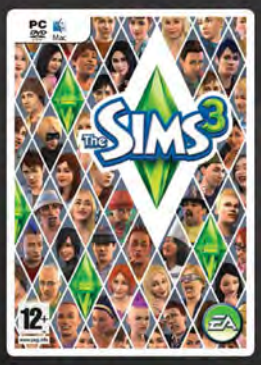






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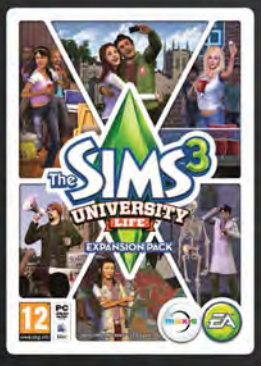














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NAG'S GUIDE TO A LITTLE SHOW CALLED GAMESCOM
It's like Oktoberfest, but with games! Although there's still loads of beer, so really it's just an Oktoberfest where somebody might occasionally pick up a video game controller. Absorb all the juicy information in our useful guide to Gamescom, and it'll totally be like you were right there with us. *Wunderbar*!

46 CALL OF DUTY: GHOSTS
As part of our ongoing quest to ensure that you never forget about Call of Duty, ever, we've got another info-filled feature for you to dissect. This time, we were given the opportunity to go hands-on with the most heavily evolved multiplayer component *COD*'s seen since the original *Modern Warfare*.



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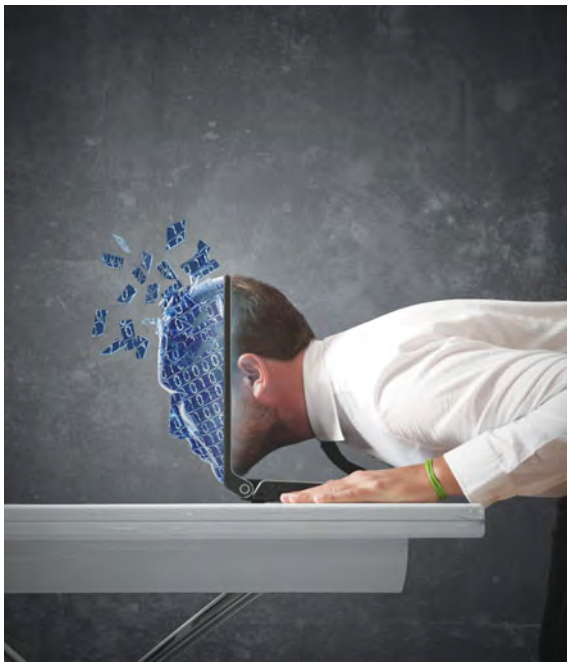
*Release dates. availability and prices subject to change at the discretion of the supplier. While stocks last.

Welcome to gaming

Each year at rAge we pick up a bunch of new crazy fans, casual readers and/or people somewhat partially interested in getting into gaming... maybe. Most of them have no real clue where or how to start but came out of the show inspired and wanting more. It might have been *Disney Infinity* or *Skylanders* that first nudged open the door of possibilities (or at the very least to get young Timmy a little "safe" gaming for Christmas). It might have been something more traditional like the possibility of driving a F1 car around Monza, playing soccer in the next *FIFA* tournament or even the idea of getting sniped on the battlefield. Yesterday in the office I received a call from a guy who wanted to know which type of Xbox he needed to buy to get the most out of *GTA V*. He was new to gaming and although I knew I should have warned him that starting with that particular game was a quick route to addiction and the possible end of his social life, I didn't. Instead I wished him good luck in Los Santos. It doesn't really matter what brings people into gaming. It's an industry that seems to grow organically because it speaks directly to the kind of people that have always been born to live in it. People that love science fiction and fantasy, people who dream of a different realty where they can be the hero or they save the day or in some cases where they are the bad guy. Sometimes it's for none of these things; sometimes you just want a different view. The average gamer is someone who is smarter than most, has a vivid imagination and who is always seeking new experiences. Eventually, given enough time (like the next twenty years), it's going to be very hard to tell the difference between reality and the virtual world. Those thrills we seek now behind our screens with a controller or keyboard in front of us are going to feel very real; we're going to feel the wind on our skin or the burn of a red hot gun barrel or even the pain of losing someone close to us. The brain always seeks new experiences and enjoys the odd thrill and rush of adrenaline. Those of us who choose to live careful and ordered lives will be able to do those things we dare not do in reality. This seeking of new thrills and experiences without the dangers is perfectly answered with gaming, now and especially in the future. In some ways it's almost a direction we're naturally evolving into. The daring conclusion I'm suggesting here is that playing games, visiting virtual worlds and making up our own rules in an environment without consequences is just a step toward where were going to end up evolving as a species. It's a scary thought and perhaps it's already happened and this life we're living now is simply a simulation to entertain us in our otherwise safe boring real lives. Ideas like this have been explored in movies and books before, extreme examples intended to shock and thrill. I think the reality of it will be a lot different. We'll willingly accept insertion into a virtual world where we can live with the danger of death lurking around every corner. We'll do this because in our real world there will be no death or risk or anything exciting anymore. The game of life will be something everyone will want to play.

IT'S HERE

I was struggling a little for something to talk about this issue and the above is about as good as it's going to get.



We're now 21 days, 11 hours, 50 minutes and 24 seconds... 23 seconds away from rAge, it was my dumb idea to put that countdown clock on the website and now it mocks me. Mocks me with all the rAge things I haven't been doing while getting this issue ready for the printer. It's such an exciting show this year with both the new consoles making an appearance and more of the stuff we all love in one place for an amazing weekend. I'll see many of you there I'm sure and I hope you enjoy it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.
Phew. NAG

-RedTide
Editor



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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.

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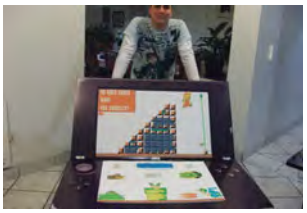
Letter of the Month October 2013

From: Clinton Matos
Subject: Do video games make you smarter?

As a lifelong gamer and confessed geek, I have had to explain and defend my hobby on numerous occasions. I have always wished someone would try to educate the masses so they do not dismiss gaming as a waste of time with no inherent benefits. After being chosen to participate in the national Eskom Science Expo, I decided that that person would be me.

So the simple hypothesis was born: do video games make you smarter? Such a lofty question would need to be busted or confirmed by quite a bit of research and experimentation. So I was out to see the relationship between playing video games and the marks high school students received in maths and English. Over two years of working and just over a hundred unique participants, what did I find? Well, I'm not going to bore you with standardised experimental procedure and raw data, so here's what I found: gamers scored 12% higher in mathematics and 4% higher in English when compared to non-gamers!

With this discovery I took to the expo. The reactions I got were so gratifying and made the entire process worth it. Everyone who read my results was genuinely impressed and learned something new that day. Most importantly, almost everyone gained a new appreciation for video games that day. While I may not have introduced anyone to video games like the Ed's letter suggested last month, I hope I at least changed a few negative perceptions about our favourite past time. I included a picture of my display for the expo: a monolithic Nintendo 3DS with



my ugly mug in the back ground to show scale.

Epic project and thanks to some science you proved that games make people smarter. In my case I will agree with the English mark improvement but to be honest my mathematics sucked hard at school. I believe they invented lower grade back in the eighties largely thanks to my work in the subject. Well done for giving thousands of school kids an amazing excuse to play more games. You sir have been knighted by NAG. Enjoy your free stuff – you've earned it. Ed.

From: Juan-Pierré
Subject: Why do games get old?

As a kid born in the 90's, games have (and always will) play a great role in my life. I got introduced to gaming for the first time when I watched my father play DOOM on windows 95 and whenever he played I would stay up late (9 o'clock) just watching him in action. Whenever I did manage to get a chance in front of the white PC box of majestic wonders, as I couldn't read yet I knew exactly how to start up the beast and get DOOM running. I never got far because I always chose the face with all the blood never knowing it was the game's difficulty setting and not a bad ass looking skin [*LOL, this is classic, Ed*]. I have owned TV games, a PS1, a new PC and finally a PS3, now only as a teenager not much has changed. I still stay up late (1 am) watching my dad play Ghost Recon and we co-op Call of Duty all the time but you can only play a game that long before it gets "old." The other day I was playing my Fallout 3, which I saved up for a long time, and suddenly nuking the residents of Megaton just wasn't fun anymore... I couldn't understand what had happened. After all those hours and quests I have been through, after all those epic fights the best game I have ever played was, "old." That's when the question hit me "why do games get old?" Is it because you have bought, stole, killed, done and conquered everything that game had to offer? Maybe it got boring doing the same thing over and over again. Or maybe, the worst of all is happening... we get over gaming! Well you can scratch that last one, I know I will grow old and game straight into my retirement home and game on until my real life is game over. After days and days of thinking not only could I not answer the question but even more questions came out of camping, like, "why do I want to go and play Fallout, but as soon as the game is done loading I'm bored?" Why do old games like Counter Strike and DOOM feel more fun than the best game I have ever played and finally what makes a game so special that no matter what, it remains your number one" Oh well, I guess I'll have to insert a coin to continue with my gaming life and hopefully one day come across a game that I will be able to play forever.

What a complex set of problems you think you have. Your overall attitude is good in that you will keep playing games until you drop and start stinking. Now we just need to figure out why you're bored of the things you love. My guess is that you're gaming on autopilot; you know the controls, the enemies and the world inside out but there's no real challenge. There's nothing new to experience and so you've grown bored. I had a moment like this with Battlefield 3 the other month. Got tired of killing people and doing what I always did. How I fixed it was trying something new. I decided for the next round I was only going to get C4 kills and the second I committed

to that I was hooked again and found the fun. So, if you can't find a way to enjoy your old games then try some new ones – especially the indie scene. Good luck, Ed.

From: David
Subject: Dedicated to The Game

So Multitap had come out for PlayStation. This boomerang-like object allowed four people to play simultaneously, even if they didn't like you, because you bought the last and first Multitap in your one-horse town. My best thing would be to invite three friends over and we would play Barbarian, Speed Freaks and the WWE game at the time. The problem was my 5 year old sister loved to play too. She just HAD to play with us. No GTA police siren could scream like she could if she didn't have a controller in hand. So my sister and three friends played on my PlayStation, with my controls, on my Multitap (you get the idea. I could go on but it's painful) while I sat by and watched, agitated.

She just wanted to be part of the excitement, the process. She loved it. Nothing compares to playing games with friends. Something I wasn't doing. What was the point if *I* wasn't playing? I had an idea. I discovered that my dear sister was simply button bashing. Disconnected from the screen, she just loved the vibe.

So I swapped her control with a fifth control – a fifth, unplugged control. Never before had five people had so much fun playing a four player game. There we all sat, hammering our controls euphorically as only we understand. It was difficult to tell who out of the five of us was having the most fun. She was having fun too. In a way even gamers didn't understand, futuristic as we are. I may have felt a little bad. The comfort I can bring myself is: As long as you're having fun and not hurting anyone.

This made me laugh so hard I almost sprayed my screen with milky oats. I also told a bunch of people in the office about your "evil" plot to make your sister happy and they also laughed. Well done, you masterfully found a way to keep her entertained, you happy and three of your mates in the game. I hope she appreciated what an awesome brother she has. Ed.

From: Dennis
Subject: Pride(less) gaming

While I was on Teamspeak chatting to friends I was playing Borderlands 2 without them for they were playing Warframe, a game they all recently discovered.

During the time I was playing I was listening more than talking and noticed something which piqued my interest. They had just started the game and have only played a few hours and they were already talking about farming items/parts and money and where the best places are to do this, as well as the best strategies to take on boss's in boss fights that they have not experienced yet. I asked where they were getting all this information from and they told me "Warframe guides". I don't know about you guys but is that not somewhat a pride(less) way to play a game, using (essentially) someone else's character? I am quite proud of my characters in games because I know they are unique with my own idea on how they should be, is this not a big part of games now days? How can people still proudly say, "I have a LVL 10000 mega death knight" if they just used someone else's methods to get there? I would like to see people play games using their own ideas and methods. Who knows it might make the game a lot more fun.

Yes, guides are like cheating but, it's cheating light – you know... not really but kind of cheating. This is how it's justified. When you're talking about how you got your level 1,000 paladin to where he is today you can make up whatever story you like. The Internet is a great place to stash away pride and take all the credit for someone else's effort and planning. It's still work end of the day and if you want to bore yourself to death fighting swamp rats in the sewer because it gives you .036% more XP for each swipe – then knock yourself out. In Elite *I found a great trade route all by myself, which I later discovered was pretty common, but while I was doing it I felt like I broke the game and that felt good. If I had have done it using a guide that great memory would be tainted and that's not worth it. Ed.*

ON THE **FORUMS**

The NAG forums; never go alone. You'll be sorry, and by never we mean never: **www.nag.co.za/forums**

Q: What game or thing in a game scared the cp out of you?**

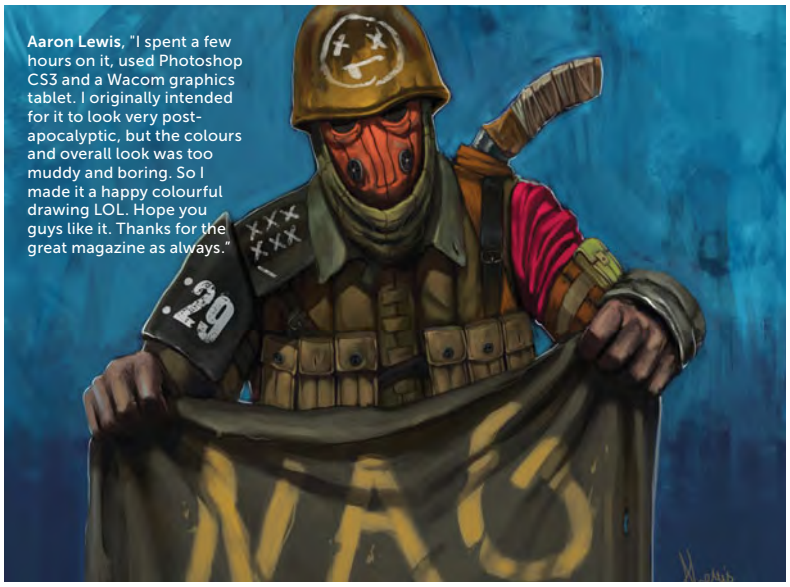
"Resident Evil. The first one. Walking down the first corridor, not knowing what to expect from the game, zombie-dogs burst through the windows. My controller burst from my hands. Zombie-dogs had their way with me. Popped the disc out."
nukehead

"The soul crushing mediocrity of a minimum wage job stamping passports on the border of a dysfunctional country, only to realise this is what I chose to do with my free time on a weekend. Papers, Please, is a strange game..."
Goraan



"That part in F.E.A.R. Yeah, you know which one. The ladder part. If that wasn't enough to stop me playing the game, the part where that fat guy walks past the window in the office building did it"
Stalker

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.



Aaron Lewis, "I spent a few hours on it, used Photoshop CS3 and a Wacom graphics tablet. I originally intended for it to look very post-apocalyptic, but the colours and overall look was too muddy and boring. So I made it a happy colourful drawing LOL. Hope you guys like it. Thanks for the great magazine as always."

PRIMA INTERACTIVE

This months fan art winner recieves a *Minecraft XBox 360 Edition* valued at R249, 800 XBox Live Points valued at R140 and a 3 Month Gold XBox Live Membership valued at R150. Sponsored by the awesome people at Prima Interactive.



From: Arno
Subject: I'm a hoarder

The other day I was going through my NAG collection when I noticed something. All my NAGs from May 2010 (RDR as cover) to October 2011 (Borderlands 2) were missing. I almost lost it. But this got me thinking. I find myself year after year pre-ordering COD Collector's Edition or GTA V Collector's Edition or BioShock Infinite Songbird Edition and so on and for what? I played with the MQ-27 Quad Drone from Black Ops 2 for one evening and left it. And the hat and bag you get with GTA V... probably won't use that either. The Songbird I got with BioShock is just sitting on my rack full of games and other merchandise. Why do we as gamers collect gaming momorabilia? [*You shouldn't bring your mom into any gaming chat because she probably been through them all already with you as a COD player, Ed*] Is it for the sake of collecting? Is it because we are fanatic about games? Or maybe just because we like showing off? Why do we pay so much extra for items we will never use? I will most likely continue my habit of buying the more expensive edition of games but I just can't put my finger on the reason why.

Are you a Leo star sign by any chance? I had this chat with Tarryn the other month and she also hordes piles of this stuff. She calls it her treasure. We both had a laugh and moved on. I also have a few collector's editions but I'm very selective in what I want. Having said that I do also have a pile of things I've wanted but I know I will never use. It's a good question. Does anyone out there have any insight into this craziness? Ed.

From: Ash
Subject: Gaming: good or bad

I was recently told by my Muay Thai coach that gaming is bad for me, and that I should stop doing it. I was shocked that anyone would say anything like that. He said that he bets my performance at work has dropped dramatically and that I look tired. Which brings me to my point, gaming: good or bad. All gamers have heard the stereotypes about how we don't have a life or we are nerds or some other sort of thing that usually is untrue. From my personal experience I can say that gaming has been nothing but good. It helped me a lot with my history and language classes in school, and doubled my efficiency at the office. My decision making skills have improved almost uncontrollably.

The stereotype that pained me the most was that gamers are not sporty. Now I have been practicing Muay Thai for more than 10 years, and I found that after I had been gaming for a while, my reaction times improved by so much, that I started to dominate any bout I was involved in.

So, all I can say is that gaming has been nothing but good for me since the start and most of the stereotypes are, in fact, untrue. Keep on being awesome and can't wait 'till rAge.

I say if anyone questions your gaming lifestyle ever again, karate chop them in the neck and make a necklace using their vertebrae. Ed.

From: Not stated
Subject: complain about the demos

I will like to just get to the damn point here I have always bought the NAG almost never missed a month and could not wait to play the demos and guess what happened this month when I wanted to install the demo it needed internet that a lot of people even don't have especially in South Africa so now I can't play the demos any more I wish to ask your guys to please don't do this to everyone or else you are going to lose a lot of clients please at lease make your demo's offline or else you will lose your best client.

Yes, we're well aware that the Internet is required for some of the demos. The reason for this is simple. Those demos require the Internet and there's no version anywhere on the planet of those demos that will work as standalone files. When we do find a version that doesn't require connectivity we use those ones. It's not us; it's the rest of the gaming industry. We're really sorry. Ed.

THE SHORTS

Extracts of n00b from NAG letters

"Now days uninspired shooters are as common as rubbish."
- Jared

"NAG is awesome double green oh sorry double a for a double dose of awesome"
- Jonah

"5 weeks to go can't wait these 5 weeks is going to be very long but I really hope that you guys will have the Xbox 1 and PS4 there"
- Jahn

"Being an avid reader and collector of NAG Magazine I am really starting to grow tired of this lame story where every second letter in your In-box section is someone who is complaining about sequels."
- Jacques

ON TWITTER

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Johannes Meintjes
I might not have a computer anymore but that's not an excuse to stop buying the @nagcoza :P

X NiTRo DeMOn X
@nagcoza My brother cut out pictures in my NAG magazine. Haven't spoken to him ever since :/

Louwrens
@nagcoza dudes the forum is hacked... Please fix it

Nico Lemmer
@nagcoza @rAgeExpo NAG LAN 2013! I'm so excited, I could kick a chicken and bathe in butterflies! Got a ticket 2min before it was sold out!

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Your industry is bad and you should feel bad

Over the last few years it has become increasingly easy to get depressed about the gaming industry. Don't worry – I'm not going to be wearing an Eeyore tail for the entirety of this column.

So, the gaming industry – yeah, we've *seen stuff*, man. I mean, I could probably just fill up the word count requirements of this column by simply listing the depressing gaming stuff that's happened so far this year. *SimCity* and *Aliens: Colonial Marines* spring to mind as two grimace-laden examples of PR suicide, but those are just games; when I say "depressed about the gaming industry", I *mean* the industry. Those of you with an interest beyond that of the finished product will know what I'm talking about: the sexism that still finds its way into every nook and cranny of the gaming scene even though the industry is constantly scrutinized and criticised for allowing it; embarrassing blunders like the "rape joke" during Microsoft's E3 press conference that probably wasn't a rape joke but still got treated like one anyway; Hideo Kajima deliberately including "erotic" female characters in *Metal Gear Solid V* so as to boost figurine sales and add to lonely creeps' cosplay fap-banks; death threats sent to *Black Ops II* developers after they gimped a sniper rifle by slowing the rate of fire *by fractions of a second*; the recent furore caused by Penny Arcade's Mike "Gabe" Krahulik after he said pretty insensitive things about transgender people. That last one has actually caused a number of journalists and industry professionals to start boycotting PAX Prime.

All of this happened recently; the oldest example here happened about six months ago. We could go back even further to one of my personal favourites: when developer Nival thought it'd be a great idea to promote their then upcoming MMORPG *Prime World*, by having a jumping castle at E3; people then queued to bounce for 30 seconds with a booth-babe wearing very little. So classy!

It seems like becoming despondent towards the gaming scene is pretty common. Hey, there's even a thread on the NAG forums dedicated to it that's aptly titled "The Decline". If you ever feel dangerously close to spontaneously combusting from a glut of positivity and happiness, that thread will even you out in nanoseconds.

The dejection is obviously a normal reaction from anyone who enjoys video games and the coupled culture. What we often overlook, however, is that these very real issues that are bogging us down are not exactly unique to the video game industry. Except maybe the death threats to developers for altering the effects of in-game guns – that one is pretty much all ours. The other stuff though – the sexism, the inappropriate jokes whether intended or otherwise, the flippant rantings of narrow-minded bigots – those happen everywhere no matter what industry you're looking at. That obviously doesn't excuse the issues from happening in the first place, but it does point towards this being a greater human problem rather than a "gaming industry" problem.

What's uplifting, however, is how vocal the gaming industry's audience is becoming regarding these issues. I like to think that that's because the kind of audiences video games attract are invariably full of intelligent people who don't stand for rubbish like this. I *like* to think that, but then I spend 30 seconds on a multiplayer server and realise that in fact no, not everyone in video gaming audiences is intelligent – there are some poster-children out there for the benefits of euthanasia.

- Miklós Szecsei -

Oculus rivalry: Sony may be working on its own VR headset



Well, here's an interesting development: rumours are spreading fast (having originated at Eurogamer, who, surprise surprise, cite an "anonymous source" for the info) that Sony is working on its own virtual reality headset. The headset, which is reportedly intended for use with the upcoming PlayStation 4, was originally meant to be revealed at Gamescom this year but its appearance was pulled from the show at the last minute.

Eurogamer's source claims that the VR device has already been demonstrated internally at Sony, using PS4's upcoming racer *DriveClub*. In the demo, players had the ability to look around the cockpit of a car and explore the view from behind the windscreen using the headset's capabilities. Naturally, the device is being hailed as a rival to the Oculus Rift, which has gathered a cult following of developers, press and public who fiercely believe that it'll change gaming forever once it's finally out in the wild. Obviously, with the immense hype surrounding Oculus Rift, it was inevitable that one of the big dogs would want a share of the attention. Using *DriveClub* developer Evolution Studios to spearhead the technology makes sense too, since they previously played a huge role in the push for 3D on the PS3.

It's being said that the device will be shown at TGS next year, and will be made available for purchase in 2014. If the rumours prove to be true, this won't be the first time Sony's dabbled in headsets. They've already got two models on the shelves: the TMZ-T1 and T2. They're meant to combine virtual reality and 3D capabilities, but they're hugely expensive (costing more than the PS4 itself) and don't work as well as the Rift for gaming. If the rumours prove true, we're assuming Sony will have found a way to lower the price to be far more attractive than that of the abovementioned T1 and T2.

Plants vs. Zombies 2 successfully invades the App Store

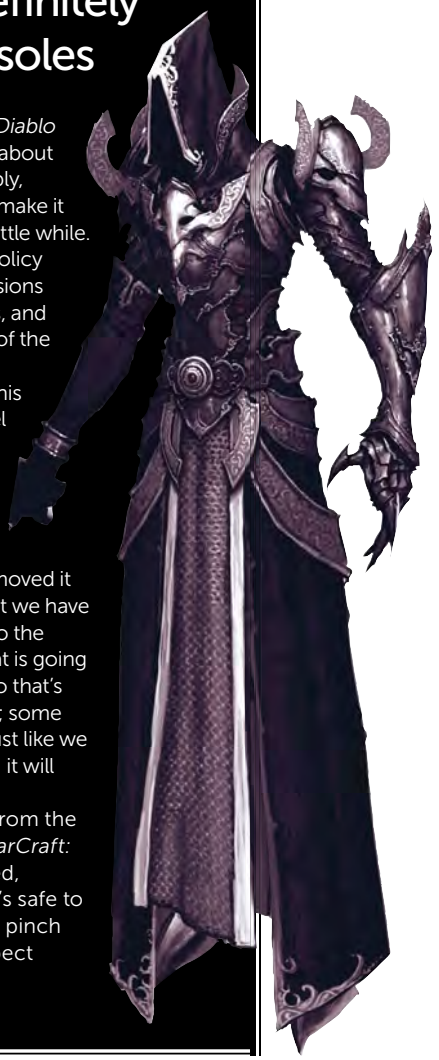
The sequel to PopCap's ridiculously addictive game about doing intensively strategic gardening to defeat waves of zombies is available right now, exclusively on iOS devices. It launched on August 15th, and by August 20th it had already been downloaded 16 million times, with players collectively logging over 25 million hours of playtime in that period.

This made it "the most successful mobile game launch" in publisher EA's history, with the game topping the App Store in 137 countries and nearly doubling the company's previous record for day-one downloads. Since then, the game has easily surpassed



25 million downloads, meaning that it's already exceeded the total lifetime downloads for the original *PvZ* – although this can also be attributed to the fact that the sequel is free to play. While it's currently exclusive to iOS devices, it's coming to other platforms later this year.

The Reaper "definitely" coming to consoles



The recently-announced *Diablo III: Reaper of Souls* (read about it in this issue) will probably, almost definitely, okay, maybe, make it over to console; it'll just take a little while. Blizzard remains firm on their policy to treat the console and PC versions of the game as separate entities, and that extends to their treatment of the expansion pack.

"Obviously we wanna bring this expansion to console," said level designer Matthew Burger, "we don't exactly know how we're going to do it yet."

"We're going to treat the expansion in the same way we treated *Diablo III* when we moved it onto console, which means that we have to make sure that it is adapted to the console ecosystem in a way that is going to play the best way possible. So that's going to require some changes; some additions, some subtractions, just like we did with the original game, [but] it will definitely come to console."

Then again, this is coming from the same man who claims that *StarCraft: Ghost* is not officially cancelled, merely on hold, so we'd say it's safe to take everything he says with a pinch of salt, and certainly don't expect anything too soon.

Homeworld finds a new home



Rejoice, on ye lovers of *Homeworld*, it looks like we're finally getting a proper sequel. It begins with an indie crew going by the name of Blackbird Interactive which had been working on a spiritual successor to the series called *Hardware: Shipbreakers*, since Gearbox became the owners of the official licence following the dissolution of THQ and all its assets. But when Gearbox people met Blackbird people at a developers-only conference at PAX Prime, a deal was signed that would induct the game into the *Homeworld* brand.

The deal sees Gearbox essentially playing the role of publisher, as they've handed over a stack of financial and production resources in addition to the use of the licence.

"We're giving them the brand and the resources to make this happen," said Gearbox head Randy Pitchford. "Now, these guys are cooking and with the money they have now, they can grow the team."

And grow they shall – the team is already hiring new talent and has rebranded their project *Homeworld: Shipbreakers*, which is structured as a prequel to the series.





More aggressive, more furious - a sporty addition to the COSMOS series - the COSMOS SE. It features a classic supercar design with curved aluminum handles. Behind the front mesh panel are two 120mm blue LED fans with a LED on/off function. Liquid cooling is the name of the game. It supports up to 3 radiators at once – 120 & 280 & 360mm (rear/top/front). The expandability is also amazing – it fits all high-end components and up to 18 SSDs.

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The Game Stalker



Shivers

I'm really not much of a survival horror person. Sacrilege I know, but there you go. You can't blame all of it on the fact that I'm a woman either, as I know plenty of guys that have offered up a high pitched scream or two when playing *Dead Space* or *Alan Wake*.

But seriously, survival horror games freak me the f*** out! I've never screamed out loud, but I have to get up and walk away every fifteen minutes or so, I have that crawling sensation on the back of my neck, occasionally if it's really scary I break out in a cold sweat. I'm just not cut out for that. Weird considering I used to watch loads of horror films and read horror novels throughout high school. Games seem to take it to a whole new level.

> "I also remember actually being too scared to finish *Clive Barker's Undying*."

We can go on about the whole interactivity kick, of course that's why we find it that much scarier, but there's something about the combination of surround sound, a darkened room and a shaky trigger finger that makes for an especially scary experience that all too often results in random firing at things that may or may not actually attack you.

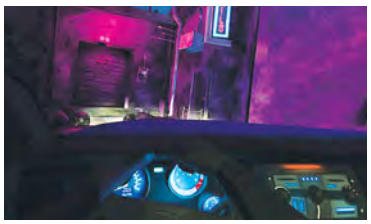
One of the games that completely freaked me out as a teenager was *Shivers* by Sierra Online. I don't think it was a very widely distributed game so you might not know of it (or even remember it if you're young) but it was set in a creepy old museum that was inhabited by evil spirits called "ixupi". Looking back I think there were all kinds of very un-politically correct colonialist references but at the time I wasn't thinking about any of that, I was concentrating on the fact that you could hear the spirits behind you as you moved through the museum and it was scary as hell!

I also remember actually being too scared to finish *Clive Barker's Undying*. I want to say I was a lot younger when I played it, but Googling the date now makes me a bit ashamed to say I was at university already when it was released. Ahem... moving on. Interestingly, while checking the date of the game for this column, I saw that it received the "Best game that no one played" award on Gamespot. This does not surprise me at all. Scary house. Evil spirits. Creepy undead family. No thank you. I played for about an hour and switched it off, trying to convince myself that one day I would come back to it. You see how that worked out.

Needless to say these past experiences have severely tainted my attitude towards survival horror games. The only one I've successfully managed to both finish and love every minute of (I've finished others but would not say I loved them!) was *Silent Hill 2*, and that was a combined effort on the part of me and my husband. I was too scared to play by myself, so he played and killed the monsters and I solved the puzzles. An extremely satisfying co-op experience, but I still struggle to play survival horror games for more than a couple of hours without freaking out. If I do it has to be in an environment that is contrary to the entire theme of survival horror. Day time. Lights all the way up. In game darkness levels as bright as they'll go. Does this defeat the purpose? Undoubtedly. Does it stop me screaming out loud? Hell yes!

- Pippa Tshabalala -

Precinct's crowd-funding reaches a bitter end



Following its failed attempt at drumming up Kickstarter funds, you may remember us mentioning the interesting approach to crowd-funding that *Police Quest* spiritual successor *Precinct* was adopting. Essentially, it was a long-term approach which employed a staged funding model. After reaching the first funding stage of $25,000, for example, the team would get to work releasing a playable proof of concept. At $90,000, they'd release a vertical slice of *Precinct* gameplay, and so on and so forth.

Unfortunately, while *Precinct* seemed like a grand idea with all its procedural police drama, after three weeks the proprietary crowd-funding campaign had only raised $11,961. And so, in a heartfelt letter to the community, producer Robert Lindley announced that the project was being canned.

"We put every effort into making a crowdfunding campaign work but we have decided to end the *Precinct* campaign effective today," wrote Lindley on the game's website. "Your generous support not only made Precinct a possibility, it also gave us the fire to try and make this work when the going got hard."

"We're fighters and fought our best. Unfortunately, our best wasn't good enough to overcome the challenges with crowdfunding *Precinct*. Our new approach attracted some terrific supporters and we are grateful. However, we simply don't have the momentum needed to meet the requirements of this project."

"Depending on the situation, we may decide to try again someday. The backing community are wonderfully supportive of Jim Walls making a new game. Likewise, our team remains passionate about *Precinct* and are hopeful there is a way to make *Precinct* a reality in the future."

Bethesda believes it may be too late to convince publishers to support Wii U

It seems the Wii U doom and gloom is set to continue, with Bethesda's VP of PR and publishing weighing in on Nintendo's neglect of third-party publishers. Hines believes that the window of opportunity to drum up more software support for the ailing console has already passed. Speaking with Game Trailers, he highlighted Bethesda's eagerness to get their games on every platform, but without having to compromise on the original vision for the game.

This is what's led to Bethesda's absence from Nintendo hardware – and Hines believes it's indicative of Nintendo's general stance towards third-party publishers. Whereas Microsoft and Sony support open lines of communication with publishers, involving them even during the hardware design process, communication with Nintendo is far more difficult.



"It's not that every time we met with [Microsoft/Sony] we got all the answers we wanted, but they involved us very early on, and talking to folks like Bethesda and Gearbox, they say 'here's what we're doing, here's what we're planning, here's how we think it's going to work' to hear what we thought – from our tech guys and from an experience standpoint."

"You have to spend an unbelievable amount of time upfront doing that. If you're just going, 'we're going to make a box and this is how it works and you should make games for it.' Well, no. No is my answer. I'm going to focus on other ones that better support what it is we're trying to do."

Mighty mighty man



After publically calling the Japanese game development scene in even worse shape than when he last complained about it, *Mega Man* co-creator Kenji Inafune has taken matters into his own hands and gone and started a Kickstarter campaign to give life to his latest creation.

It's called *Mighty No. 9*, and will in every conceivable way be a spiritual successor to the *Mega Man* series. Even the main character looks remarkably similar to Mega Man. At the time of writing, the campaign has blown past its goal of $900K and is just shy of $2 million. While it is initially aimed for launch on PC, the project needs just another $200K to see release on PS3, 360 and Wii U (which it's very likely to reach). If it climbs up to $3.3 million, the game goes next-gen.

The game's creation process will be documented by 2-Player Productions, the same team that brought us the many ups and downs of the development of *Broken Age*.

As it currently stands, there's no point in even trying to predict a release date, but we can say with a fair degree of certainty that it won't be out until at least 2015.

Infinity Ward dedicated to serve



The last few *Call of Duty* games have suffered from a distinct case of No Dedicated Servers Syndrome (formally known as IWNet-OhGodWhyCan'tIFindAGame-alitis), but thankfully those level-headed people at Infinity Ward have finally given in to popular demand and some healthy competition from the *Battlefield* series and announced that, at least on Xbox One and PC, *COD: Ghosts* will support dedicated servers for multiplayer games. The XBO version will use Microsoft's much-touted cloud service, but it's not yet clear what format the PC release – let alone current-gen consoles or PS4 – will use.

This move resonates quite strongly with us at NAG, who enjoy a good game of *COD* but get a little irritated by the lack of respect (get off my lawn!) that the multiplayer component has fallen into in recent years – the sort of behaviour that a regular, dedicated, locally-hosted server can go a long way to prevent.

Activision: We're not risk averse

Activision CEO Eric Hirshberg has retaliated against everyone who's accused the mega publisher of being unwilling to take risks. "I think there is a false narrative that all Activision wants to do is put out a *Call of Duty* every year, when in fact we've shown some real innovation and appetite for risk," he told CVG. "I think that publishers which have wider and 'more diverse' slates are far less risky than us, are far less creative. Just because you have a game in every genre does not mean you're creative."

Hirshberg pointed squarely at *Skylanders* to reinforce his point. "I feel like people breeze past that when they ask me about diversity. I don't know anyone that's taken a bigger bet on a less proven franchise based on their gut-instinct than we did with *Skylanders*."

Steam Greenlight has its first birthday, aims to streamline itself

On the 30th of August, Steam's Greenlight – which allows the community to vote for the games they'd like to appear on the Steam store – turned one year old. Happy birthday Greenlight! To mark the occasion, Valve approved 100 more titles that had been waiting in the approval queue.

This doubled as an attempt to stress-test the system by allowing all those developers to use Valve's backend tools simultaneously as they prep their titles for launch. Greenlight's been under fire for a while now, because it's far from a perfect system, one which bottlenecks the release of games and leaves developers trapped in Greenlight limbo for ages – but approving those 100 titles all at once aimed to prove just how far the service has come in streamlining its efficiency.





Asking for help

As an advocate of community engagement stuff, I've often told people to mosey along to places like Make Games SA when they want to start promoting and/or getting feedback on their games. We're at a bit of a sweet spot in the local industry – there are enough active devs around to pay attention to new members, but the scene isn't so big that fresh arrivals are regarded as parasites or something awkward like that.

Still, there's an enduring problem of people hopping aboard out of nowhere and asking for direct help on their projects. Grand ideas, high adventure and business goals are usually involved, and it's typically a person of skill set A who needs someone from skill set B to help them along.

> "When you're trying to inspire faith in an idea, you need either a reputation..."

I call this a problem not because it bothers the grander community, but because these ideas often come with little planning, support or show-and-tell from the people making the proposal.

When you're trying to inspire faith in an idea, you need either a reputation (the community trusts and understands your involvement, usually because you've made games before) or a solid prototype (probably necessary even with the reputation). Unless you're pitching this idea to your buddies over lunch, people aren't going to hear about an idea from an unproven game creator and jump aboard based on promises that it's going to be cool and successful when you get around to building it (subtract a few hundred extra points if you refuse to tell anybody what the idea is in the first place for fear that it'll be poached or something).

Asking for a person's direct involvement with a project means asking for their trust. If you own a small business and can afford to pay someone a decent living wage, then okay – but game developers aren't notorious for seeking high salaries and they'll still have to assess your work on its merits. This means looking at how much effort you've already put in and getting a clearer look at your vision as you're willing to implement it.

This can be easy, or slightly more difficult. If you're a coder, you have absolutely no excuse for showing up empty-handed. As an arty/soundy/project-managery type, you'll still need to go some distance and it's strongly recommended that you pick the easiest game making tool to construct a prototype with. The world is already exposed to the horrors of programmer art, so a bit of shoddy coding isn't going to make your pitch worse than bringing nothing playable at all.

These aren't hard and fast rules, and sometimes people will hop onto a project for less than this. But if you want to maximise your chances of getting a team (or at least some useful feedback), showing folks what you can do will work wonders. They'll ask questions. They'll organise café meet ups. They'll tell their friends what they've seen you do. You'll be showered in glory, fame and respect forever.

... or maybe none of these things will happen, but you'll still leave a far better impression than a few paragraphs of text ever would. If you can accept that you may not get a bite the first time you enter a community – and stick around to contribute anyway – you'll still be one step closer to getting your dream team.

And even that is worth thinking about.

- Rodain Joubert -

Loaning and trading of downloaded games will return to Xbox One

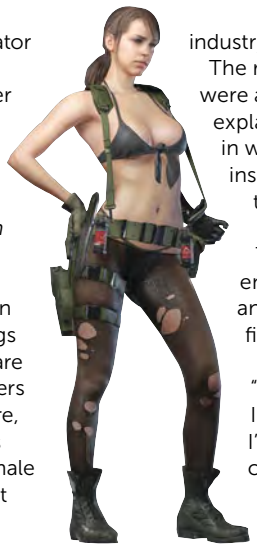


While Microsoft did away with plans to allow for "family sharing" of Xbox One games when they reverted their controversial DRM policies (along with the ability to trade downloaded games), they expect to reinstate the feature somewhere down the line. It's a good thing too, because it was one of the few features following the initial Xbox One reveal that actually made people happy.

Speaking with GameSpot, Microsoft senior director Albert Penello had this to say on the topic of reselling digital games: "We were trying to implement the ability to trade [and] loan digital games with your friends, which is something that no one else was doing. I believe in retrospect that people have calmed down and gone back and actually looked at what we said, people are starting to understand, 'Wow, they did want actually to allow me to loan and trade' which other digital ecosystems don't want to do. And so, yeah, I think we need to do that. That has to be part of the experience. Right now, we're focused on launch and we switched the program back to discs, because that's what customers wanted."

Penello added that "family sharing" – which was planned to allow users to share their Xbox One games with up to ten family member accounts from any Xbox One – was definitely a good idea, and Microsoft will revisit it "when the time is right". In other Xbox One news, the number of controllers that can be used concurrently with a single system has been bumped up to eight. Xbox 360 only allowed for four controllers to be connected simultaneously.

Hideo Kojima in hot water over Metal Gear Solid V's "erotic" sniper



Metal Gear Solid creator Hideo Kojima has revealed a character design for a female sniper called Quiet, who will be making an appearance in *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain*. The reveal caused quite a stir considering Quiet wears little more than a bikini, some torn stockings and combat boots. There are a few holsters and bandoliers thrown in for good measure, but the bottom line is she's the typically sexualised female video game stereotype that has drawn the ire of many industry critics.

The reveal renders of Quiet were accompanied by an explanation from Kojima in which he said he'd instructed designers to make the *MGS* characters more "erotic". This, he said, was to encourage cosplayers and promote the sale of figurines.

He later had to clarify: "'Erotic' wasn't really what I was trying to say. What I'm really trying to do is create unique characters. One of those is, of course, Quiet."

Voice of reason



In between running out of money and finally getting their lives together, the people at Double Fine Productions are churning ahead to get the long-overdue adventure game *Broken Age* out the damn door. They're doing so well, in fact, that it looks like they're nearing the post-production stage, at least on some parts of the game, and have assembled a team of voice talent to give life to the game when it finally launches at some stage in the future.

Along for the ride is Jack Black, who previously voiced the starring role in *Brütal Legend*, as well as voice acting veteran Jennifer Hale, who most recently played Naya in *Fuse*, Rosalind Lutece in *BioShock Infinite*, and Leah in *Diablo III*).

Details drop on the Dead Island MOBA



Publisher Deep Silver has lifted the lid on its recently announced multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) based on the *Dead Island* series. Rather than following the tried and tested formula laid down by the likes of *League of Legends* and *Dota 2*, *Dead Island: Epidemic* is taking the genre and putting its own unique, zombie-infested spin on it.

In development over at Stunlock Studios (who previously created *Bloodline Champions*, a MOBA-like which garnered quite a bit of critical praise but never really gathered a huge player base), the game is being dubbed a ZOMBA and will see twelve players divided into three teams of four. The game's maps are covered in capture points ripe for the taking, and groups of the undead act as creeps. Capture points shift dynamically as teams vie for control of them, forcing players to adapt as they battle the shambling zombies.

The real clincher, however, is *Epidemic*'s crafting system, which sounds every bit as zany as that of the original *Dead Island*. You'll be able to create your own weapons and items, with Deep Silver promising hundreds of craftable goodies. Combining the available components should allow for a massive variety of weapon effects and abilities. As you progress, your weapons can then be improved in ways that suit your play style. If you're keen, they're currently accepting signups for early access at **deadislandepidemic.com/signup.html.**

Xbox One revs up for launch

Microsoft announced recently that the upcoming Xbox One has received a 150MHz boost in CPU speed and a bump of 53MHz on the GPU. Boom, take that, Sony!

This rather gentle nudge in processing power comes as a surprise, considering Microsoft has frequently jumped onto their defences every time someone mentioned the PS4's dominating raw specs, the most recent occurrence of which came from the company's director of product planning, Albert Penello.

"I'm not dismissing raw performance," said Penello. "I'm stating – as I have stated from the beginning – that the performance delta between the two platforms is not as great as the raw numbers lead the average consumer to believe."

That delta was obviously large enough for someone at Redmond to prompt a boost in speed, but honestly we're grateful that the company has managed to squeeze out even just a little bit more power. Then again, there was that talk some time ago about the console underclocking itself in the event of heat issues, so these numbers never mean quite as much as people might think.

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Stop buying games (so damn fast)

A few years back I made a half-hearted vow to never buy games at full retail price again. Games aren't cheap, after all. And those "free to play" *Bejewelled* clones on mobile that are specifically designed to screw you over so you pay for more energy/eggs/items/lives/retries don't count. They're not games: they're cunningly disguised Skinner Boxes made to siphon money off the gullible, in exchange for a weak and non-committal jolt of imitation fun.

Real games (oh yeah, I went there) cost money, and the "HD tax" (the artificial price inflation due to a new generation of consoles) didn't help. So the goal was thus: don't be impatient. Wait for sales, buy things second hand, look for discounts or deals. There's no need to get the Hottest Thing In Gaming *right now*, no matter how much your friends insist the plot is blowing their minds, or whatnot. So after a few years of dodging full price, utilizing Steam sales and my local Gamestop's magical trade-in ability, there are a few things I've noticed. Most are obvious, but bear repeating.

1) No matter how critically acclaimed the game, in a few months it'll be half the price. There are two exceptions here: limited print run games, like *Xenoblade Chronicles*, and anything first-party Nintendo. Limited print run games run out, and then the price for a new copy goes up. First-party Nintendo games, like *Mario Kart*, never go down in price because they never stop selling. Usually retailers drop prices to get units off shelves. Nintendo doesn't have that problem. Waiting saves you money.

2) You get the better game if you wait. Seriously, it's amazing what a few months of patching can do. Games that, at launch, are horrible and unplayable or have really dodgy balance/design, become *way better* after the developer's had some time to iron out the bugs now that the publisher isn't forcing them to launch early. If you wait, the DLC will also already be out, which often improves the starting experience dramatically, like the extra characters for *Borderlands 2*. Waiting gets you better games.

3) You make better purchase decisions. After all the hype dies down, and the gaming media has stopped trying to over inflate the value of The Next Best Thing, it's easier to identify the games you'll actually enjoy. Having some breathing room to digest whatever it is you're playing now, having the time to savour it or realize exactly why you don't like it, gives you better tools with which to approach your next purchase. How often do you see people claim they're getting bored of games, and they're the exact type that keeps buying the newest 9-out-of-10 flavour-of-the-month first-person shooter, because they think that's all there is to gaming? Those are the people who should stop buying games for a while. Waiting helps prevent you from buying things you end up not liking anyway.

4) You have enough games right now anyway. If you're waiting, and buying only the things you know you're going to like, chances are those games aren't disposable thrill rides that you play once and then eight hours later you're done. You're more likely to pick up games you can play over and over, or that have nuanced depth that keeps you challenged and you're always learning new things to try. Waiting means you don't need to buy more games right now, because you're happy with what you've got.

- Miktar Dracon -

EA working on "six to eight" new IPs



Publisher Electronic Arts has come under fire in response to their line-up of upcoming sequels. Critics are complaining about EA's over-reliance on existing IPs, which is kind of ironic considering how some of the most ardent EA naysayers have been clamouring for a sequel to *Mirror's Edge*.

Whatever the case may be, EA has taken the criticism to heart and has revealed that they are in fact working on in the region of six to eight new IPs. "The day we stop making new IP is when we go onto life support," EA Games Label executive VP Patrick Söderlund said. "We need to incubate new ideas and push creative boundaries."

One of those new IPs is obviously *Titanfall*, which is slated for a 2014 release on Xbox 360, Xbox One and PC. The game, by ex-Infinity Ward duo Jason West and Vince Zampella's Respawn Entertainment, is being published by EA. On top of that, EA considers the recently confirmed *Mirror's Edge 2* and Star *Wars Battlefront* among those six to eight new IPs: "We are working on a new *Mirror's Edge* game, and although that's not a new IP, it is a revival done in a new way. We are developing *Star Wars Battlefront*, which to us is a new IP, even though it isn't technically," Söderlund admitted.

That's three new IPs confirmed, which leaves room for quite a few new faces. Considering EA provided the previous generation of hardware with some stellar new IPs (*Dead Space* and *Mirror's Edge*), we're pretty excited to see what they're up to.

Origin offers full refunds for unhappy customers

EA continues to push their digital storefront Origin as a legitimate competitor to Valve's Steam, and EA's now taken a decisive move towards offering something that Steam simply doesn't: full refunds to unhappy purchasers. It's called the Origin Great Game Guarantee, and while it only applies to EA's own games, it's still a cheery move in the right direction for digital distribution. "If something doesn't work out – you aren't riveted by the storyline, or sucked in by the action, or even just if the game doesn't play well with your video card – we've got your back," say EA. It works like this:

"You may return EA full game downloads purchased on Origin for a full refund – within 24 hours after you first launch the game, within seven days from when you purchased it, or within the first seven days after the game's release date if you pre-ordered it (whichever of these conditions happens first)." Naturally, EA is free to declare certain uses of the policy as an abuse of the system – we imagine stuff like rushing to complete the game in 24 hours and then requesting a refund – but otherwise, the legal-speak in the Great Game Guarantee seems very fair.

Hulk smash

In what we imagine is a bid to stay as relevant as possible in today's increasingly digital entertainment market, Warhammer owners Games Workshop seem only too happy to hand out licences to produce games based on their products. It also seems like everyone is quite happy where Space Hulk is these days, and so the latest game from the franchise, *Space Hulk: Deathwing* is set in motion.

Deathwing will be a first-person shooter from *E.Y.E.: Divine Cybermancy* creators Streum On Studio. The player will take on the role of a Space Marine Librarian in Terminator power armour who has been sent off to deal with hordes of Genestealers on a deserted Space Hulk battleship. The game will include an XP system for levelling up and unlocking new weapons, abilities, relics and Psyker powers.

There's no word on a release date, yet, but we know that it's in development on the Unreal Engine 4, so anything is possible, from next-gen to mobile.



El Presidente returns

Tropico 4 came and went in a cloud of DLC. If you missed out, well, you didn't miss much at all – it was *Tropico 3* plus some stuff, but now *Tropico 5* has been announced and it actually looks like it could be worthwhile, if they settle on a sensible payment model.

The game will take place in a number of eras ranging from the 19th Century through to the 21st, and each will feature its own set of buildings and unique challenges. Your chosen El Presidente will bow down to the fine art of nepotism, and can employ their family members by stationing them in high-power positions in various industries.

No longer happy to leech off the world's superpowers, *Tropico 5* will allow players to research and develop new technologies to bring them into the present and right forward to the future. You'll also be able to be more self-sufficient when it comes to trade by establishing your own global trade fleet and import/export routes.

But perhaps the most attractive feature is the inclusion of up to four-player co-op, in which players occupy the same island map, each with their own cities to develop. Players can share resources and even citizens, or can declare war on each other.

Developers Haemimont Games will once-again be running this ship, now that *Omerta: City of Gangsters* is done and dusted, and are expected to have *Tropico 5* on shelf sometime in 2014.

SmartGlass will be way faster with Xbox One

Microsoft's SmartGlass app for iOS and Android phones and tablets has been available for some time. It's a nice idea, but sadly one that isn't executed all that well thanks to how slow it is to connect to an Xbox 360. The app is supposed to make browsing the Internet, typing messages and interacting with your console Dashboard a quicker experience; unfortunately in the time it takes you to get your tablet to connect to your 360, you could have typed a 100-page thesis using the standard Xbox 360 onscreen keyboard and an ordinary controller anyway.

Great news then that SmartGlass will be at least three times faster with Xbox One. The app has been completely overhauled and it also helps that the Xbox One was designed with SmartGlass integration from the get-go. That means that tablets and phones using SmartGlass can connect to the console directly, rather than having to connect over the Internet.



~ Distributors ~

Apex Interactive	011 796 5040
ASUS SA	011 783 5450
BT Games	0861 4 GAMES
Compuseed	011 781 8880/2/3
Comstar	011 314 5812
Core Gaming	011 535 9000
Corex	011 700 7188
EA South Africa	011 516 8300
Evetech Solutions	012 326 6547
ESET	0860 313 872
Frontosa	011 466-0038
Incredible Connection	0860 011 700
Intel Corporation	011 806 4530
Look & Listen	011 467 3717
Megarom	011 361 4800
Microsoft	0860 225 567
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Phoenix Software	011 803 5437
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Rectron	011 203 1000
Samsung	0860 726 7864
Silverscreen Trading	011 794 9749
Sonic Informed	011 3145800
Ster Kinekor Entertainment	011 445 7700
TVR Computers	011 807 1390

If your company isn't listed here, phone *NAG* on 011 704 2679.

~ Support Lines ~



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

PUBLISHERS Activision / Blizzard
2K Games Rockstar / Ubisoft /
Codemasters
NC-Soft / Namco-Bandai / Disney
E-MAIL support@xtrememems.co.za
Number: 0861 987 363

PUBLISHERS Microsoft Xbox
NUMBER 0800 991 550

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

Sony unveils PS Vita TV and slimmer, lighter PS Vita



It looks as if Apple TV might just receive some stiff competition from an unexpected corner as Sony unveils PS Vita TV: a small set-top box designed to stream online media as well as play PS One, PSP and PS Vita games. The device is essentially a diminutive PS Vita without a screen or buttons, instead connecting to your living room TV and making use of a standard Dualshock 3 controller. The caveat is that the lack of touchscreen and touchpad control means certain Vita titles won't work with PS Vita TV. Still, everything else will, including the steaming media services that are currently available on PS Vita handhelds, like Hulu. In addition to mobile games and media, the PS Vita TV unit can stream PS4 games to a second TV in a house. That means if the primary TV (that has the PS4 connected to it) is in use by somebody else, PS4 content can still be played and streamed to elsewhere in the home.

PS Vita TV is currently only scheduled for a November release in Japan for ¥9,480 or just less than R1,000. Sony has yet to clarify whether or not the media hub and stripped down Vita will be made available in other territories.

As for the PlayStation Vita handheld, Sony has announced a new PCH-2000 series form factor. The redesigned Vita is 20% thinner than the original and about 15% lighter weighing in at a total of 219 grams. Battery life has also been improved by an hour, which means you'll be able to squeeze six hours of non-stop gaming out of the device before needing an electricity outlet. Sadly, Sony has dropped the Vita's gorgeous OLED screen and instead opted for a cheaper LCD screen.

The new PS Vita 2000 series will come in six different colours ranging from white to hot pink and blue. A new 64GB PS Vita memory card is also on the horizon. A release date of 10 October has been set for Japan, but Sony has yet to confirm the new form factor for other territories.

"There's a cover system, but it's very optional."

- Andreas Öjerfors, senior gameplay designer on Wolfenstein: The New Order

School of hard knocks

In its successful bid to become the most expensive video game ever created, *GTA V*'s production team spared no costs in bringing a sense of authenticity to its portrayal of thug life, and used actual gangsters to perform the voice work for many of the ancillary characters.

"We get these guys in to record the gang characters because we don't want a goofy L.A actor who went to a fancy school trying to be a hard gang member," said producer "Lazlow" Jones.

Apparently this leaves a lot of room for improvisation, which the producers are only too happy to accommodate.

"They look at the lines and say, 'I wouldn't say that,' so we say, 'OK, say what you would say.' Authenticity."

Minecraft's money pile grows ever higher

Are you tired of hearing just how immensely successful Markus "Notch" Persson and his moneymaking monstrosity *Minecraft* have been? Well then today's not your lucky day, because we're about to remind you. On PC alone, the indie megahit has worked its way to 12 million purchases in the four years it's been alive.

According to our calculations – which are made of pure science (and also, a calculator) – this means that *Minecraft* has raked in R3,157,686,000, just on PC. To save you the time of counting the numbers, that's over three billion rand. Obviously, this doesn't account for discounted sales. Add in the ridiculous sales figures of the mobile and Xbox versions of the game, and if you don't start weeping uncontrollably, we'll happily do it for you. At the time of this writing, the last 24 hours have seen 15,357 copies of the game sold.


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Nintendo flattens the 3DS



Hold the phone – Nintendo announced a new handheld... sort of. It's called the 2DS, and while it uses all the same internal bits and pieces of the 3DS, it dumps the clamshell design and support for 3D output.

"Imagine a standard 3DS laid all the way flat, and with the depth slider all the way down," Nintendo of America president Reggie Fils-Aime explained. "Everything else is there in the system."

The 2DS is designed with young children in mind while the 3DS will continue to be sold (both standard and XL variants) for those aged seven and up. All of the 3DS' other features, including Wi-Fi, cameras, multiplayer and SD Card support remain intact, but the device features only a single mono speaker – stereo audio is possible through the headphone jack only.

There's currently no word on local price or availability, but the expected retail price is set at €130, with a street date of October 12th in Europe. Absolutely not coincidentally, that's the same day that *Pokémon X/Y* is set to launch.

Look & Listen

Pre-orders www.lookandlisten.co.za

PC	
Don Bradman Cricket 14	November
Need for Speed: Rivals	November 22nd
Watch_Dogs	November 22nd
360	
WWE 2K14	November
Ashes Cricket 2013	November
Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	November 1st
PS3	
F1 2013	October
Battlefield 4	November 1st
Call of Duty: Ghosts	November 5th
Wii	
SpongeBob SquarePants: Plankton's Robotic Revenge	October
Just Dance 2014	October
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	November
3DS	
Batman: Arkham Origins Blackgate	November
Angry Birds Star Wars	November
Ben 10: Omniverse 2	November

Heavy, bru

Some interesting facts recently emerged regarding Quantic Dream's relationship with Sony. The studio is practically first-party nowadays, all-but belonging to Sony Computer Entertainment, but it wasn't always like that.

"[Microsoft] really loved *Fahrenheit*," said Quantic founder David Cage in a recent BAFTA panel discussion, "and they really wanted to do something with us."

But, according to Cage, Microsoft got scared when Quantic's plans for *Heavy Rain* started to solidify. The company was vehemently opposed to a narrative featuring kidnapping and child death.

"They didn't want the scandal," said Cage.

Which we're sure they're pretty unhappy about right now, but hey, that's how these things go sometimes.

XCOM: Enemy Within adds mechanised soldiers and genetic modification

We adore *XCOM: Enemy Unknown*. It's such a brilliantly modernised version of the *X-COM* we know and love from years past. If you feel similarly, then you'll be happy to learn that a full expansion will be entering our atmosphere and abducting hapless cattle later this year. It's subtitled *Enemy Within*, and it's set to add a number of cool features to the game.

The most blatantly noticeable addition is the MECs – Mechanised Exoskeletal Cybersuits. This new class of warrior is effectively an XCOM operative in a great big mechanised suit. In addition to pulverising enemies in melee combat, MECs can also be outfitted with powerful weaponry like flamethrowers and grenade launchers. Another impressive new feature is genetic modifications that let you physically enhance your soldiers by artificially augmenting their chests, eyes, legs, brain and skin.

The upgrades to your troops will be necessary too, because powerful new alien threats (like the heavily armoured Mechtoid) will appear to ruin your day. There's a new alien resource to collect called MELD, which you'll need to accrue to access some of the new goodies. There'll be more stuff to research, new operative abilities, new weapons and more, with 47 new maps that'll supposedly introduce "new tactical challenges". For fans of the multiplayer, expect to see fresh maps, units and abilities to turn your custom squads into elite death dealers.

Enemy Within is due out this November as a standalone expansion on console, but you'll need to own *Enemy Unknown* for the PC version.



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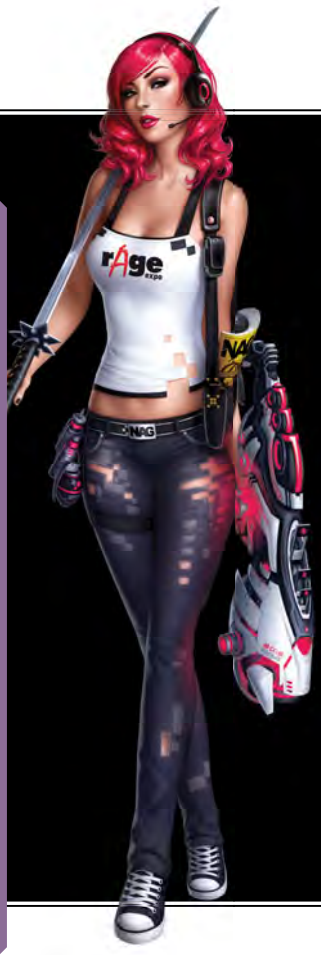


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Look & Listen

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



Foxy Roxy

Some call her the ultimate gamer grill. Then we smack them and tell them that Roxy isn't food (this is what eating too much of mom's meatloaf will do to you), she's the official rAge/*NAG* mascot. She was lovingly created in 2012 by South African illustrator Warren Louw for the 10th anniversary of rAge. Seeing that we (much like the gaming industry) like to squeeze the blood out of every IP we create, we've got her working it hard in *NAG* each month. Her job is to hide somewhere in the magazine for you to find. Go, do it now!

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

SEPTEMBER WINNER



Roxy remains MIA, we win again! Your move! **page 76**

THIS MONTH'S LOOT

Win a Walking Dead board game sponsored by Exclusive Books.



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CAPTION OF THE MONTH



Every month we'll choose a screenshot from a random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better one. The winner will get a copy of ***Farming Simulator*** for PC from Apex Interactive. Send your captions to **ed@nag.co.za** with the subject line "**October caption**".



NAG's lame attempt at humour

Search and Destroy, pirate style.

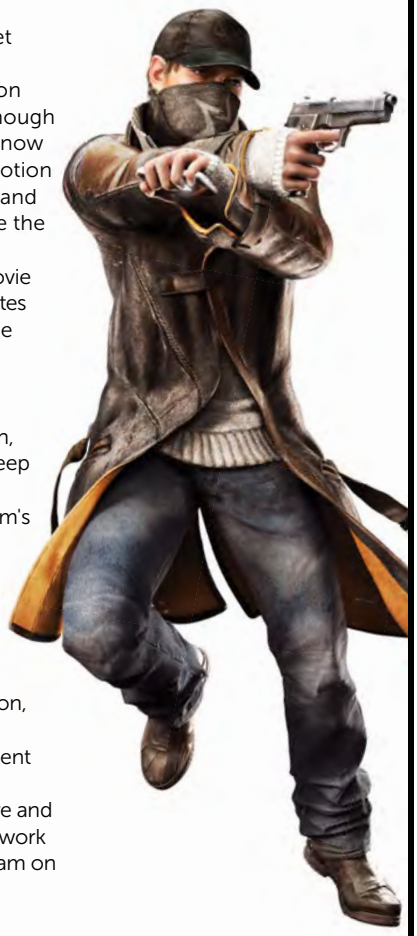


Last months winner

Mom: Hannibal didn't I tell you to clean your room. - **Daniel James**



Who watches the Watch_Dogs?



The game may not even be out yet (it's only out in November), but Ubisoft's open-world hack-a-thon *Watch_Dogs* has already perked up enough all-encompassing interest that there's now a film project in the making. Ubisoft Motion Pictures, Sony Pictures Entertainment and New Regency are teaming up to create the movie.

"Since both Sony and Ubisoft have movie and video game branches, this deal creates exceptional opportunities for us to merge the realms of the story-based cinematic experience with the interaction of the video game," said Jean-Julien Baronnet, Ubisoft Motion Pictures CEO. "In addition, Sony Pictures and New Regency have deep production expertise and are letting us maintain a strong creative voice in the film's development. Together, we're confident we can deliver a movie that builds upon the excitement that the game is already generating."

"The game has intense action and adventure, but the story focuses on information and the control of information, which we think will lead to an exciting thriller," added Columbia Pictures' president of production Hannah Minghella. "It has tremendous potential as a motion picture and we're thrilled to have the opportunity to work closely with Ubisoft's internal creative team on the development of the project."

"We like to tell big stories and we want people to put the *Destiny* universe on the same shelf they put *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter* or *Star Wars*; we've already seen they do that with *Halo*. We were extremely proud of what we achieved with *Halo*... I'm pretty convinced we are going to do it again with *Destiny* in a way that maybe even *Halo* never achieved before."

– Bungie COO Pete Parsons, chatting with GamesIndustry.biz on the power of Destiny*'s future*

RELEASE LIST

Dates subject to change without notice

October week 1

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker HD	Wii U
F1 2013	360 / PC / PS3
Just Dance 2014	360 / PS3 / Wii / Wii U
Jjust Dance Kids 2014	360 / Wii
NBA 2K14	360 / PC / PS3

October week 2

Beyond: Two Souls	PS3
Hot Wheels: World's Best Driver	3DS
Lost Planet 3	PC
Metal Gear Solid: The Legacy Collection	PS3
The Elder Scrolls Anthology	PC
SpongeBob SquarePants: Plankton's Robotic Revenge	3DS / 360 / DS PS3 / Wii
Pokémon X	3DS
Pokémon Y	3DS

October week 3

Invizimals: The Lost Kingdom	PS3
Invizimals: The Alliance	PSV
Pro Evolution Soccer 2014	PS2 / PSP
Sonic: Lost World	3DS / Wii U
Final Fantasy X / X-2 HD Remaster	PS3
Magic: The Gathering: Theros Event Deck	Trading card game

October week 4

Wii Party U	Wii U
Armored Core: Verdict Day	360 / PS3
Batman: Arkham Origins	360 / PC / PS3
The Sims 3: Into the Future	PC
Batman: Arkham Origins Blackgate	3DS / PSV

October Unconfirmed

The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds	3DS
Farming Simulator 2013: Titanium Add-on	PC



Gamescom 2013
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Willkommen in Köln

NAG's guide to a little show called Gamescom

BEER

The Germans have a reputation for loving beer, and there's no better place to experience that passion than in Köln. Dozens of breweries are present in the city, each producing a variety of a lager called Kölcsh. This smooth, hoppy beer is often drunk in 200ml glasses called stanges, and servers will automatically bring you a new drink when yours gets low unless you leave it half-finished or place a beermat over it. You can visit any *brauhaus* in the city and expect to find a unique Kölcsh, usually produced on the premises.



There's this idea that people have stuck in their heads that E3 is *the* gaming show of the year. Maybe because it's gained a reputation as the show at which new games and products are announced, or maybe it's just the American flair – the Hollywood glitz – that gets people thinking the show is actually greater than it is. In my most humble opinion, however, Gamescom is the best gaming show of the year. It's bigger, there are more games and exhibitors, and much of it is open to the public, allowing literally hundreds of thousands of visitors to get their hands on the latest games and technology. It's like having ten rAges in one location, and it takes place in the city of Cologne (locally, and more correctly known as Köln, or Koeln) across ten massive halls in the university-sized Koelnmesse trade fair campus.



CITY

Köln is an old city, with its roots dating back to the early Roman Empire era, and centuries of history buried beneath it and dotted around the city. Many of these historical sites were destroyed during World War II, during which the city sustained 262 Allied air raids, levelling countless acres of land and causing a mass exodus of as much as 95% of the population. Koln's greatest landmark, *Kölner Dom*, or Cologne Cathedral, was heavily damaged but ultimately stood its ground and protected those remaining civilians who huddled inside.

Köln has also gained a reputation for being a bit of a student town, and is home to *Universität zu Köln*, one of the oldest universities in Europe.

Transport within the city is a breeze, with a network of underground and aboveground trains and trams throughout. Trade visitors to Gamescom get free access to the public transport system for the duration of the show, although for some reason media members were excluded from that privilege this year. But for €22 a week, you get access to the full network of transport, which isn't too shabby.



HARDWARE

Where there are games, there will be gaming hardware. This year's show saw Microsoft and Sony battling for dominance with their upcoming next-gen consoles, and Nintendo was content to display just a few key titles. While it's true that many hands-on booths simply used PCs equipped with PS4 or XBO controllers, there were many that showed off the actual next-gen consoles in action, giving the public a chance to vet their performance and really get a feel for where their next bonus is going to be spent.

Not to be outdone, PC hardware manufacturers were present in all corners of the show floors. From Razer to NVIDIA to AMD, everyone had a chance to show off their latest tech and give away loads of prizes while blaring music directly at the bright-eyed crowds gathered before them. There's a trend of the hardware companies making the most noise among the whole lot, and this year it continued with full force in most cases. Perhaps the most subdued of the lot was the Oculus Rift booth, which wins the unofficial award of smallest booth with the largest queue, and it only got longer as the week progressed.



RETAIL

There were a surprising number of retailers at Gamescom this year, but then it shouldn't be that much of a shock considering the huge sales potential at a show like this. For the most part it was your usual fare, with action figures and clothing being the most common items. Not much in the way of gaming hardware, though, which we suspect is a security concern more than anything else.





GAMES

Almost every game publisher on the planet makes an appearance at Gamescom each year, with just a few exceptions (Capcom being the most notable). This is their opportunity to get holiday-release games into the hands of the public, as well as show off future projects and build up hype.

- Anno Online
- ArmA 3
- Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag
- Batman: Arkham Origins
- Batman: Arkham Origins: Blackgate
- Bau Simulator 2014 (Construction Simulator 2014)
- Beyond: Two Souls
- Battlefield 4
- Beyblade Evolution
- Call of Duty: Ghosts
- Castlevania: Lords of Shadow - Ultimate Edition
- Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2
- Command & Conquer
- Das Schwarze Auge: Memoria
- Dead Rising 3
- Destiny
- Destiny of Spirits
- Diablo III
- Diablo III: Reaper of Souls
- Drive Club
- Donkey Kong Country: Tropical Freeze
- Elder Scrolls Online
- Fable Legends
- Fable Anniversary
- Farming Simulator 2014
- FIFA 14
- Firefall
- Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn
- Forza Motorsport 5
- Gran Turismo 6
- Hawken
- Infamous: Second Son
- Killzone: Mercenary
- Killzone: Shadow Fall
- Killer Instinct
- Kinect Sports Rivals
- Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 Remix
- Knack
- LEGO Marvel Super Heroes



MODDING

The Germans love their PC gaming, and each year sees dozens of pro case-modders take to the DCMM stand to present their fine works to the public. The stand features live demonstrations, 24-hour case-modding challenges and full casecons (case constructions) built into some of the wildest designs you could imagine.



COSPLAY

Cosplay is a big part of Gamescom, with hundreds of attendees dressed as characters from video games, films, anime, comics and anything else even remotely geeky. There's a heavy JRPG trend most years, but this year saw a marked rise in popularity of *League of Legends* cosplay, and as always there were a number of cosplayers representing Blizzard's franchises. The Gamescom organisers have strict rules in place that limit the use of potentially dangerous props. And, yes, Jessica Nigri was at the show. We didn't get a chance to talk to her, but if you ever see local gaming celeb Grant Hinds bouncing around, ask him about their chat and we're sure he'll tell you all about it.

RETRO

The Retro Area at Gamescom pulled in a great crowd which enjoyed a range of classic gaming systems and games. Everything from the venerable Commodore consoles of old to dedicated arcade cabinets and even the Pandora handheld PC were on display, and it was good to see a range of age groups getting some time with them.



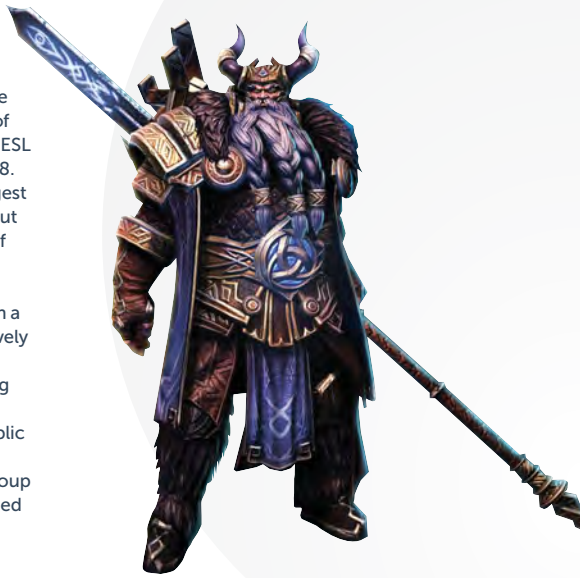


ESPORTS

Gamescom has quickly become the go-to venue for eSports events, and this year saw a number of top-level gaming tournaments culminate at the ESL CM Storm Arena which dominated most of Hall 8.

League of Legends pulled in perhaps the largest crowd as it wrapped up LCS Europe Season 3, but *StarCraft II* wasn't far behind with the final leg of their WCS Season 2 – the second-largest *SC2* event worldwide, beaten only by Blizzcon.

While we appreciate the big games putting on a show, it was great to see a few of the comparatively little guys like *Smite* and *World of Tanks* present as well, with prize pools as high as €100,00 being dished out during the week. Warner Bros. also used the opportunity to undertake their first public presentation of their new superhero-themed MOBA *Infinite Crisis*, which was demoed by a group of pro gamers on Wednesday evening and opened up for public play during the rest of the show.







PEOPLE

This year's show saw a staggering 340,000 visitors throughout its five days. If you think rAge gets busy, just imagine how ten times the number of people will look. Or don't imagine – we've got a photo of the madness that is the central "Boulevard" right here.

To handle the masses, there are a number of facilities in place throughout the show that make things just that little bit bearable. Huge outdoor areas for grabbing a take-away, having a quick smoke and taking a few moments to gather your complicated cosplay outfit straddle the main halls, and on the busiest days are the only sensible route between halls. When the masses swell to peak levels, human traffic is controlled by burly security guards with zero tolerance for teenage over-enthusiasm, and entry to Koelnmesse is regulated throughout the event to prevent over-crowding.

The German ratings board – the USK – takes its role of safeguarding the tender youth very seriously, and all visitors, industry or public, who look like they might be underage, are given a colour-coded bracelet before being allowed inside. If your approved rating doesn't match or exceed that of the game you're trying to play, then it'll have to be a strictly hands-off experience.



CONFERENCES

Just like E3, Gamescom officially begins for members of the media a day before, when the big publishers and platform holders host a press conference during which they give a brief tease of their product line-up for the show. As has become customary, these conferences are now live-streamed online direct to the public, and are seen as a sneaky opportunity to make new announcements with just enough information to get people interested.



BUSINESS

Because much of Gamescom is open to the public, some obviously very smart people thought it'd be pertinent to have a separate business area in which exhibitors, retailers and members of the press can get together to chat about secret gaming things without the need to worry that the wrong person could hear something they shouldn't. Thus, we have the business halls – four in total. Almost every major exhibitor on the main floor has a smaller counterpart behind closed doors, where those with access can escape from the crowds (oh lord, the crowds), enjoy a few drinks and snacks, and mingle with other members of the industry.

Business visitors also get a few very special benefits. Not only do we get an entire day to visit the main show floors before the droves of public attendees swarm the place, but often flashing your media badge is good enough to cut to the front of the queues, which have been known to take up to eight hours for the more popular games. NAG

- GeometriX

- Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII
- Mad Max
- Memoria
- Mario Kart 8
- Max: The Curse of Brotherhood
- Might & Magic: Heroes Online
- Murdered: Soul Suspect
- Need for Speed: Rivals
- PES 2014
- Pikmin 3
- Pokemon X/Y
- Professor Layton and the Azran Legacy
- Project Spark
- Puppeteer
- Ratchet & Clank Nexus
- Rambo: The Video Game
- Rayman Legends
- Ryse
- Skylanders: Swap Force
- Sonic: Lost World
- Splinter Cell Blacklist
- Star Citizen
- Super Mario 3D World
- Tearaway
- The Crew
- The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds
- The Legend of Zelda Windwaker HD
- The Mighty Quest for Epic Loot Online
- The Sims 4
- The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt
- The Wonderful 101
- Thief
- Titanfall
- Tom Clancy's The Division
- Warface
- War Thunder
- Wasteland 2
- Watch Dogs
- WildStar
- Wii Karaoke U
- Wii Party U
- Wonderbook: Book of Potions
- Wonderbook: Diggs Nightcrawler
- Wonderbook: Walking With Dinosaurs
- World of Tanks
- XCOM Announcement
- Zoo Tycoon

HANDS ON TESTED



Wolfenstein: The New Order

Nothing a strong cup of coffee won't fix

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

In a world of gruff and realistic beard shooters, it's refreshing when a game comes along that offers something different. *Bulletstorm*, *Serious Sam*, and even the ill-fated *Duke Nukem Forever* introduced their own takes on action-driven shooters that had their tongues planted firmly in-cheek, but that's not to say that there's no room for something just a little more serious.

And so we have *Wolfenstein: The New Order*. My hands-on experience rocked from horrendously violent to practically slap-stick – the game's pace and situations forcing me into morally uncomfortable grey areas in which I found myself teetering between joy and horror at awkward moments. When I asked senior gameplay designer Andreas Öjerfors about the use of violence in the game, he rightfully explained that it's never excessive – it fits the story and mood and serves its purpose.

But I'm getting ahead of myself here. Maybe you live in a swamp and have never heard of *Wolfenstein: The New Order*, and here I am going on about gaming violence like some sort of first-year philosophy student. That'd make this preview pretty useless, wouldn't it? Well, the first thing you should know is the team putting together this game is founded by mostly former *Riddick* and *Darkness* developers, and they're just as passionate about single-player action games now as they've always been. No multiplayer – just a solid, solo adventure.

> **"The team putting together this game is founded by mostly former *Riddick* and *Darkness* developers, and they're just as passionate about single-player action games now as they've always been."**

Most of *The New Order* takes place in an alternate 1960 – over a decade after the Nazis won World War II and forever set the planet down a path of human experimentation and prevalence of evil. You'll take on the role of the very clean-shaven BJ Blazkowicz as he attempts to overthrow the Nazi regime, save the day, get the girl and generally kick a lot of ass. There will also be instances of ass being stabbed, shot, blown up and otherwise made devoid of life thanks to immediate and painful external influences. Lots of death – that's what I'm getting at.

Wolfenstein treats history like a mouldable plaything, pulling out bits that it doesn't like and twisting the leftovers it into shape, and to go with its narrative chaos the game will feature a range of elements that the developers seem to be aiming at both old-school and modern first-person shooter players. Things like cover and stealth sequences should appeal to players looking for a more tactical experience, but the presence of dual-wielding, health and armour drops, exploration and hidden rooms should be plenty of indication that this game is just as happy being played like an arcade shooter.

From what we've seen, *Wolfenstein* looks to be a spectacular game, but between the crazy setting and wide range of gameplay features, the team at MachineGames have a delicate balancing act on their hands. The potential is there; all we can do now is sit back and wait. **NAG**

- GeometriX



It's not clear how the Nazi forces managed to win the war, but it is known that they got their hands on some high-powered, perhaps otherworldly technology that gave them the edge. That technology continues through to 1960, where it's incorporated into exciting looking retro sci-fi weaponry.







Most of the game will take place in 1960 (and possibly onwards), but the prologue features BJ and his squad mates fighting the Nazis towards the end of World War II.

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RELEASE DATE / TBA
PLATFORM / PC / iOS
GENRE / Digital collectable card game
DEVELOPER / Blizzard Entertainment
WEBSITE / us.battle.net/hearthstone
PUBLISHER / Blizzard Entertainment

Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft

HANDS ON TESTED

My First Magic: The Gathering

Love them or hate them, Blizzard's got a well-honed knack for adding just the right amount of flair to a game to make it undeniably and unmistakably *Blizzard*. *Hearthstone* is no different, and that it will be free-to-play makes the effort spent on how it presents itself even more impressive. There is so much vibrancy and energy in every little thing. How the cards float and twist as you decide where to place them, the kinetic "juiciness" and visual feedback when opening booster packs. Even the little fiddly bits on the game board, like catapults and campfires, waterfalls and vine-covered gates, respond to multiple clicks. None of it is necessary – the core game design is solid, fun and thoughtful – but it's the trimmings that set *Hearthstone* apart from current digital collectable card games.

"There is so much vibrancy and energy in every little thing."

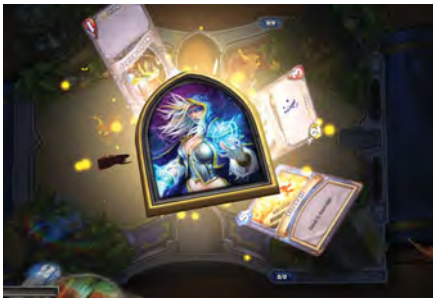
When you first start playing, you're given one hero (Mage) and taken through a series of simple tutorials to get you up to speed. Someone who has never played a card game of any type in their life can start playing *Hearthstone* with confidence. Wins (and losses) reward the hero you're playing with experience, which in turn unlocks new cards for that hero's deck. There are nine heroes in total, each with their own special ability to use in battle. You unlock the other heroes by defeating them, though the A.I. does not make it easy. As you unlock heroes, you get more ways to unlock cards. There are specially designed "puzzles" you can attempt, at varying degrees of difficulty, or you can hop online to fight a random (of equal skill level) opponent.





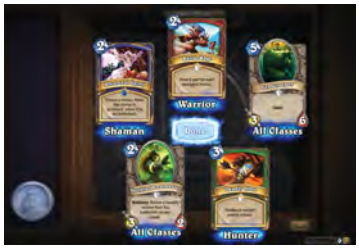
A "hearthstone" is an item used in *World of Warcraft* to teleport you to your home.

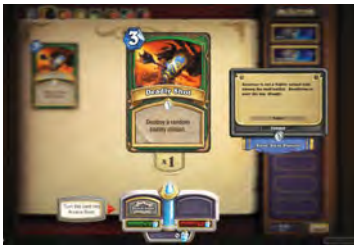






In the real world, a hearth is a stone-lined fireplace.





All the heroes have voiceovers, will talk to each other during battle (and there are even specific hero matchups for unique dialogue). The deck builder offers full customization, but also has a "wizard" mode where it keeps suggesting three cards for various functions (low mana cost, ability to soak damage, etc.) until you've built a full deck in just a few clicks. Each hero has its own special set of "quests" alongside the daily quests,. Completing these earns you gold, which you can use to buy booster packs (a random set of cards). If you're impatient, you can spend real money to buy boosters, but Blizzard promises every single card can be earned through normal play. You're also given free boosters when you complete certain objectives, such as getting a hero to level 10.

Compared to contemporary collectable card games, *Hearthstone* is not very complex. It's much more of a brawler, with big damage, big plays, and bold "all or nothing" moves. But this keeps things quick, so when you get screwed by bad luck, you're only a few minutes away from your next fight, and using what you just learned. **NAG**

- Miktar

gamescom

HANDS ON TESTED

RELEASE DATE / 2014
PLATFORM / 360 / PC / PS3 / PS4 / XBO
GENRE / First-person shooter / survival horror
DEVELOPER / Techland
WEBSITE / www.dyinglight.com
PUBLISHER / Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment

Dying Light

You can run...

When *Dead Island* came along, it did a lot of things right. Its brutal melee combat resonated with gamers looking to get personal with the undead hordes we so often face in video games, but its shaky RPG mechanisms and overall lack of polish were enough to put people off, ultimately relegating it to the pile of games we'll fondly remember but probably never replay. Now, with armfuls of feedback and a burning passion to succeed, developers Techland are embarking on their next zombie-filled adventure. *Dying Light* seems to be more action-focused than *Dead Island*, and looks like it'll be a capable scare-a-thon at the same time.

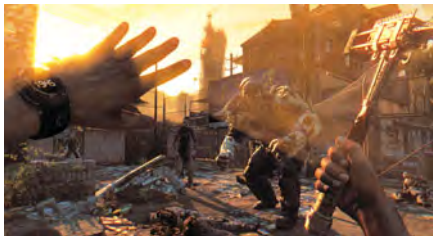
Where many zombie-filled games empower the player to slay the undead hordes in a flurry of limbs and blades, *Dying Light* encourages a more tactical approach to dealing with the living dead – or avoid them altogether. The game takes place in a quarantined city following the outbreak of an infection that has turned most of its citizens into mindless killers, and it'll be up to the player (or players – there's some wishy-washy talk of four-player co-op) to undertake various tasks to secure the few remaining strongholds of humanity, go out in search of supplies, raid, loot and generally survive any way they know how. Going into the danger zones brings with it the obvious threat of death by severe biting, and, while you will have access to a variety of melee weapons and hand-to-hand combat, you can only ever deal with a few zombies at once – any more and you'll be chum in a matter of seconds.

> "You can only ever deal with a few zombies at once – any more and you'll be chum in a matter of seconds."

To help you cope with the constant threat of death, the player character has been granted great mobility. It's not quite at the levels of *Mirror's Edge*, but you'll be able to sprint, dodge, weave and mantle your way through the dense urban environments to avoid the hordes. You'll also have access to a few combat abilities – many defensive – to allow you to deal with immediate singular threats with a swift blow from a hammer, axe or handy pipe, or to shove zombies aside, into crowds, down stairs or off rooftops. In the demo we played, our character wasn't yet equipped with any advanced abilities that can be unlocked throughout the game, so most of our encounters involved running for our lives while tossing around handfuls of firecrackers to provide a distraction and buy us a few precious seconds to escape, but the characters will later gain powerful skills like the ability to jump over crowds of zombies and perform an aerial ground slam that stuns them.

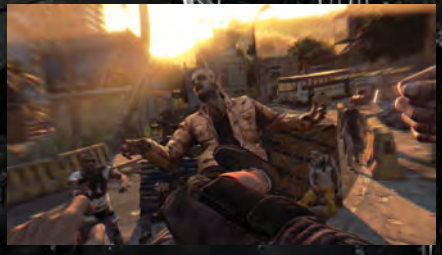
Another feature which we only just touched on in our playthrough was the day/night cycle. When the sun sets, all infected become more powerful, faster, and acutely aware of their surroundings. Stealth and frequent use of strategic GTFO are the order of the day, and you'll have to use your Night Sense to stay on top of enemy positioning or be overrun within a matter of seconds. NAG

- GeometriX









The infected are light-sensitive, and this can be taken advantage of at night. You'll always have your trusty flashlight on hand, and shining into the eyes of any nearby zombie will stun it briefly, allowing you to engage and take them down or make a run for it.



The Sims 4

Mogey mogey mogey

RELEASE DATE / Early 2014
PLATFORM / PC
GENRE / Life simulation
DEVELOPER / Maxis / The Sims Studio
WEBSITE / www.thesims.com
PUBLISHER / Electronic Arts

Don't act surprised; *The Sims 4* was as inevitable as a dodgy tum after that 3am corner-café binge, although hopefully this'll be a more enjoyable experience. But where does Maxis begin with a fourth iteration of this long-running series? We've seen it all in the millions of expansion and content packs, so *The Sims 4* needs to innovate on a core level rather than simply adding more Stuff.

A good place to begin is with the Sims themselves. In *The Sims 4*, players will be able to alter their virtual playthings with a far greater degree of control. Sliders for nose size and stomach bulges are out; now players can directly manipulate areas – large or small – of their Sims' physique by tugging at them with their mouse cursors in a manner quite like playing with clay.

To go with their new physical forms, Sims AI has also been given an overhaul. Moods and emotions now rule almost everything your Sims do and how they communicate with other Sims. A happy Sim will try to spread the joy, and their dialogue options will reflect this. An angry Sim gains a bonus to exercising but is limited to saying nasty things to others. A depressed Sim needs some time to gather themselves, or needs another Sim to help them do so. Sims that are feeling frisky will be stuck with a one-track mind, which might make that clinching business braai a tad tricky. These aren't new ideas to the series, but the concept is being cemented and formalised, making it easier for players to read their Sims and spend more time nurturing their personalities, not just their immediate needs.

> **"Players will be able to alter their virtual playthings with a far greater degree of control. Sliders for nose size and stomach bulges are out."**

Another area that's been given a lot of attention is in the building and decoration of houses. Not only will it be easier to build from scratch with preset room shapes, but altering existing structures will be a matter of simply moving whole walls (complete with any doors, windows or wallpaper they may have), or picking up and repositioning entire rooms, complete with their furnishings. Foundations can also, finally, be adjusted on-the-fly, and walls can be set to variable heights.

Decorating those rooms will also be made far easier with the new Magazine Mode. With this, players flip through what looks very much like one of those home styling catalogues, and can either apply full room makeovers or pick and choose individual objects. Much like the room adjustment tools, decorations are smart; if you resize a room or drag a makeover into a room, it'll position all of the furniture appropriately, giving you a quick starting point for your fine-tuning.

When it comes down to it, *The Sims* isn't for everyone – it never has been – but the new tools and advancements in Sims AI are going to do much to help this series regain a bit of love lost due to the endless spate of DLC releases. This might be just the injection of vigour the series needs to bounce back into the limelight. **NAG**

- GeometriX

Due to extensive engine optimisation, Maxis claims that *The Sims 4* will run better than *The Sims 3* on the same computer hardware. It'll also look better, which sounds like bi-winning to us.









The exact specifications for online interactivity are still in the works, but Maxis has confirmed that you won't need an active Internet connection to play *The Sims 4*, although you will need to run the game through Origin.



RELEASE DATE / November 2013
PLATFORM / 360 / XBO
GENRE / Management simulation
DEVELOPER / Frontier Developments
WEBSITE / zoo.frontier.co.uk
PUBLISHER / Microsoft Studios

Zoo Tycoon

Just smile and wave, boys

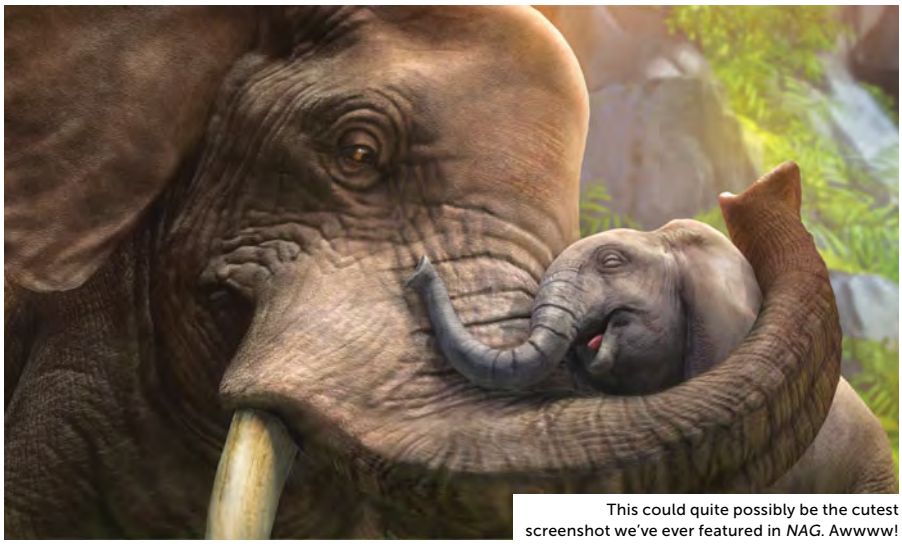
When you need a break from shooting people in the face with rockets or sneaking past poorly-designed security systems, there's nothing like a good old management game to give the bones a rest and engage the mind for a few minutes. I'm a huge nerd for the genre, so it was with absolutely no hidden excitement that I squeezed myself into the *Zoo Tycoon* presentation at Gamescom as soon as I discovered it was on show behind closed doors. I also got a free monkey hat out of the deal, and no, you can't have it.

As is the norm these days, *Zoo Tycoon* is an unimaginatively-named reboot of the series, but that's about it when it comes to predictability. The game is set for launch exclusively on Xbox 360 and One, which means it's been built from the ground up for controller input. This is a bold move for any management game, but everything I saw in the presentation lead me to believe that nothing has been nerfed for the sake of this decision. Where things get very interesting is in the game's two playable modes which you can switch between freely. In Tycoon Mode, you play from your usual godly position high above, placing down animal enclosures, spying on guests, building amenities for them to use and playing that classic balancing act of income versus expenditure. But pop into Park View and suddenly you're on the ground – you're a park ranger who can walk, run and drive around your establishment in a sweet little buggy.

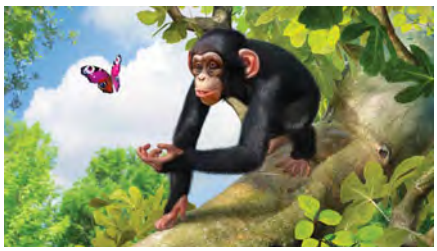
> "Pop into Park View and suddenly you're on the ground – you're a park ranger who can walk, run and drive around your establishment in a sweet little buggy."

HOW ABOUT SOME FOUR-PLAY?

Zoo Tycoon will feature multiplayer. This is a feature uncommon to the genre, but it looks like it'll be loads of fun in *Zoo Tycoon*, with up to four players working on a single zoo at the same time, some in Tycoon Mode and others in Park View. You can even manipulate areas of the zoo from Tycoon while others in that area are running around; they'll see enclosures seemingly magically floating around and slotting into place as they're moved in real-time.



This could quite possibly be the cutest screenshot we've ever featured in *NAG*. Awwww!







After what we were told were months of negotiations, Frontier managed to convince Microsoft to make real-world donations to animal welfare charities based on global online challenges that will be periodically run in the game. National Geographic is also on board.

who can walk, run and drive around your establishment in a sweet little buggy.

While the game is playable entirely in either mode, there are some neat tasks you can perform while in Park View. For example, you can interact directly with any animal in your facility – feeding, cleaning, and grooming can be done either with the controller or Kinect. Use Kinect and suddenly the game becomes highly reminiscent of *Kinectimals*, which makes sense considering Frontier developed that game, too. One thing's for sure: these people know their animals. And they clearly have a passion for them as well; there was no shortage of geeky zoological banter between the two developers showcasing their product, wide grins on their faces as they tell us the latest bizarre addition to the list of species in the game. **NAG**

- GeometriX

Diablo III: Reaper of Souls

The expansion we deserve (and the one we need)

RELEASE DATE / 2014
PLATFORM / PC
GENRE / Action role-playing game
DEVELOPER / Blizzard Entertainment
WEBSITE / us.battle.net/d3/en/reaper-of-souls
PUBLISHER / Blizzard Entertainment



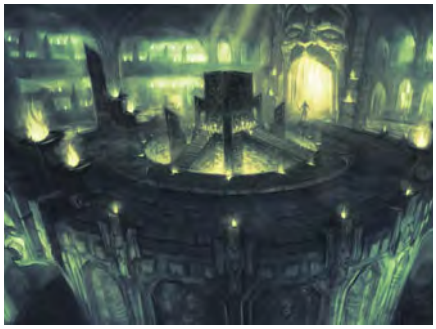
Disclosure: I'm one of those heathens that think *Diablo III* is better than *Diablo II*. Not in every way, mind you. There are a lot of things *Diablo III* did wrong (I don't include the auction houses on that list, sorry). By the same token, *Diablo II* only became the game most fans fondly remember, *after* the *Lord of Destruction* expansion pack. Here's where *Diablo III* gets it right (and obviously this is an opinion many would disagree with): the combat loop is potent, you have incredibly agency, it feels good to take on massive groups of monsters and survive by 1HP, and I don't miss that damn skill tree from *Diablo II* where if you made a bad choice you'd have to either edit your save or start a new character.

But *Diablo III* feels incomplete. The itemization (how weapon and armour drops are determined, what kind of stats they have, and how varied they can be) is poor. You rarely find an item that makes you change your entire play style and load out, just so you can use it. The story is dumb (but Blizzard was never known for their storytelling, and anyone who says otherwise is kidding themselves), and feels cut short. The skills available to each class, while varied, are also somewhat limiting.

> "And cue the expansion pack Blizzard swore to hell and back they weren't making."

And cue the expansion pack Blizzard swore to hell and back they weren't making: *Reaper of Souls*. After Diablo's defeat (not really a spoiler, is it?), Tyrael takes the conveniently unbreakable Black Soulstone back to Sanctuary and tries to hide it under the rug. But, former Archangel of Wisdom and dual-scythe badass Malthael has other plans, wounds Tyrael and takes the Soulstone... and where angels of incomprehensible power fail, the player steps up.









On average, 2.1 million players play *Diablo III* every day. Over 14.5 million players have played *Diablo III*.

Reaper of Souls expands *Diablo III* in a number of ways. There's an entirely new class called the Crusader, which looks and acts much like *Diablo II*'s Paladin. A fifth act continues the story, housing all new monsters and challenges. Every class is getting new runes and skills, the level cap is being raised to 70, and a new artisan – the Mystic – lets you re-roll the stats on an existing item. There will also be new weapons and armour to find and craft.
The expansion will be preceded by a patch that changes the base game dramatically. Paragon levels become uncapped and account-wide, acting as a great boost for making new characters. You'll be able to go on "Loot Runs", which take place on special randomised maps, and a new diamond gem type is being added. The way items are generated when dropped is also being changed, and you'll find new class-specific items for more build variety. **NAG**

- Miktar

The Crew

They see me rollin'

RELEASE DATE / 2014
PLATFORM / PC / PS4 / XBO
GENRE / Online racing game
DEVELOPER / Ivory Tower / Ubisoft Reflections
WEBSITE / thecrew-game.ubi.com
PUBLISHER / Ubisoft

Take a glance at *The Crew* and you'll see something you've seen a hundred times over: a campaign in which you take to *da streetz* in the attempt to infiltrate a gang of criminals, earn reputation and cash to upgrade your ride and worm your way deeper into the organisation. But there's a lot more to *The Crew* than ripping off a lifetime of bro racer flicks.

The concept of "your car" is important in *The Crew*. It's not unlike having "your character" in an MMO. Sure, you might have a few going at any one time, but you've got your favourite – you want to make sure that character (or car), is versatile and capable of handling anything you throw at it, and you want to be able to personalise it beyond just a few decals. To do that, there's one hell of a vehicle customisation system at work here, allowing you to alter every aspect of your car and see the results in real-time from the pistons to the suspension. You'll also be able to put together predefined kits which change the class of vehicle, so a street racer can be transformed into a rugged off-roader, a rally car can be kitted out for drag races, and so on.

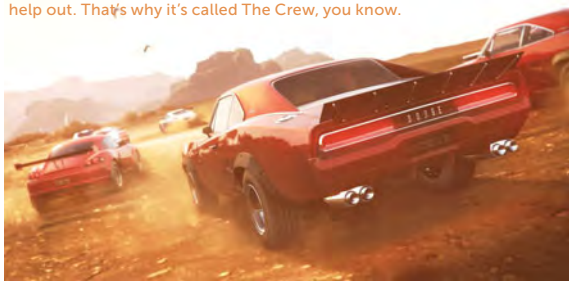
In addition to vehicle customisation, The Crew also features a number of RPG mainstays like skill trees, experience points and perks. The game world is also quite large, spanning a shrunken version of the US that's said to take 90 minutes to drive from coast to coast, so there's no shortage of areas to explore and challenges to complete when you're not attending to the main storyline.

There's so much that's interesting about *The Crew*, and it looks set to combine elements from *Test Drive Unlimited*, *Need for Speed* and any MMORPG that springs to mind. How exactly it'll manage to do that is anyone's guess right now, but it's certainly got a good mix of ingredients to work with. **NAG**

- GeometriX



All of the game's main missions can be completed solo, but it'll often be easier to bring in a couple of friends to help out. That's why it's called The Crew, you know.





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To enter answer this easy question: What is the name of the ship in Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag?

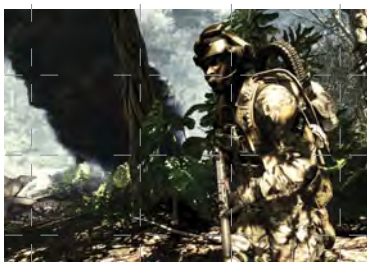
SMS your answer to 33110

- SMSes charged at R1.50 (free bundles do not apply).
- Competition closes 31 October 2013.
- Winners will be notified by SMS.
- No correspondence will be entered into.
- Competition is open to South African residents only.

UBISOFT

GHOSTS

LOS ANGELES MULTIPLAYER REVEAL



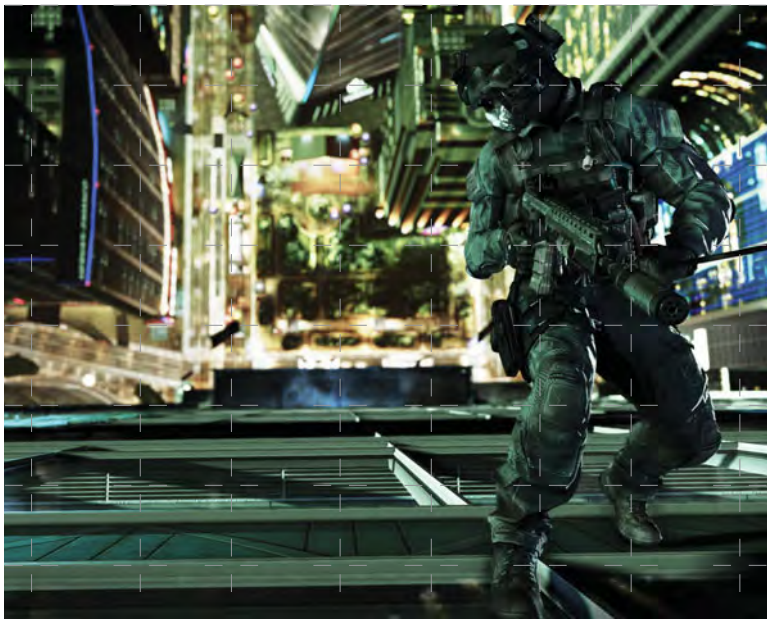
The parking lot of the L.A. Live entertainment complex in downtown Los Angeles has been converted into a massive *Call of Duty: Ghosts* venue for the multiplayer reveal. The emblematic streaky-skull *Ghosts* branding is everywhere. Journalists from all over the globe have been flown in to attend. It's always the Russian or Czech journalists who want to talk to me, for some reason. We are slowly funnelled into a carnival-sized tent, and asked to take a seat in front of the kind of stage usually built for E3 presentations.

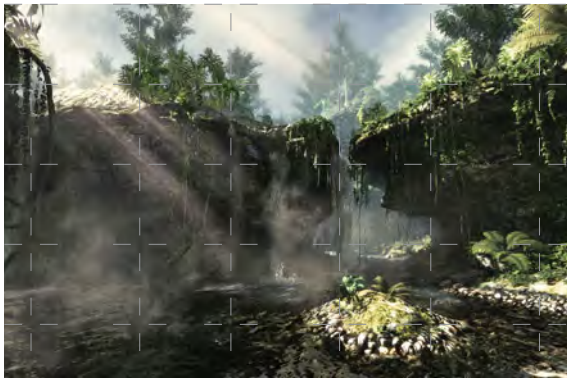
It's a sweltering mid-August day, the industrial-sized air conditioners working overtime to cool the interior. After a short but proud presentation from Activision CEO Eric Hirshberg boasting just how damn popular and money-making the *Call of Duty* franchise is, Mark Rubin (executive producer at Infinity Ward) takes the stage.

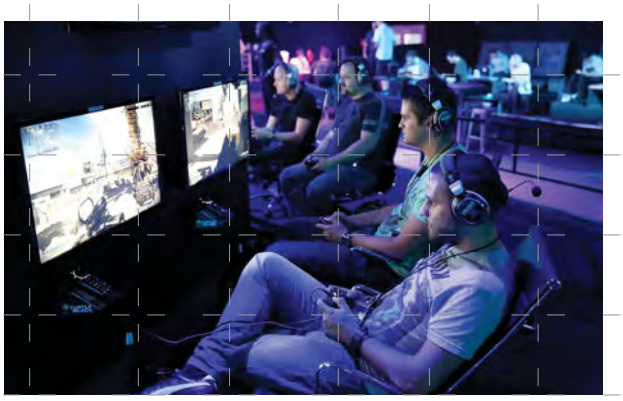
"This is the biggest overhaul of multiplayer since the original *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*", Rubin says, handing over the presentation to a video of Eminem talking about how cool *Call of Duty* is and that we're about to be the first people in the world to hear his new song *Survival*. Cue the ear-blasting (and kind of cool) video full of explosions and much *Duty*-ing. After, a prolific *Call of Duty* clan plays a quick exhibition match against some U.S. Army veterans, commentary provided by two of the top *COD* stream casters.

The presentation continues into a "what's new" pitch: a mobile app for changing loadouts outside the game, 30 new weapons, new "tactical" player movement, 20 new killstreaks, a new weapon class, seven new multiplayer modes, 14 maps at launch, and full clan integration. Finally we are set free with six hours to play some *Ghosts* multiplayer.

Call of Duty: Ghosts hits 360, PS3, Wii U and PC in November, and is a confirmed Xbox One and PS4 launch title.













CREATE-A-SOLDIER

The core of the revamped multiplayer in *Ghosts* comes from Create-A-Soldier. You're given 10 slots and can create a custom soldier for each. Not unlike having multiple character slots in an MMO. A soldier is not just a grouping of unique weapon loadouts (each soldier has their own set of custom loadout slots), but also unique physical appearance. You choose the head, body type, equipment, and gender. There are over 20,000 possible combinations, and each soldier has one level of Prestige. You keep all your progress when you Prestige a soldier, this includes weapon skins.

"Honestly, adding female soldiers to character customization wasn't about trying to lure more people into the game. It was actually just about acknowledging the people who already play our game," says Mark Rubin. "It wasn't until we rewrote the way character memory is handled – needed for 'Create-a-Soldier' – that the possibility of having female soldiers really came to fruition."

The soldiers you make have another function: as A.I. controlled team-mates in the new Squad modes, where they earn experience and unlocks the same as if you were playing them in regular multiplayer.

HANDS-ON IMPRESSIONS

For the event, journalists were divided into two factions: Federation and Ghosts. If your press badge showed Federation, you were to sit at Federation-marked consoles/PCs, and vice versa.

Clan Wars

To show how the new Clan Wars system works, the event ran a mini Clan Wars setup. A map of the world on giant screens above the stations marked key locations, like an airport or an oil rig, and which faction controlled it. At set intervals, the control of the map was automatically tallied, and the score for either Federation or Ghosts increased. Holding a point gave bonuses to whichever side controlled it, like an experience boost. To take control of a point, you had to make consecutive wins for your faction on the map/gametype that point represented. It's a system not unlike what's found in the underrated *Hybrid*. This system, but on a much larger scale, will be the "meta-game" for clans to engage in when *Ghosts* launches proper.

Game types

Three of the new game types were playable at the event. Search and Rescue is a variant of Search and Destroy, combined with *MW3*'s Kill Confirmed. Killing an opponent drops a tag at their location. If you pick up their tag, your side gains points. If they pick it up, that person respawns. Cranked is team deathmatch on steroids, and was clearly the favourite of everyone there since it eliminated camping. Once you get a kill, a timer starts counting down for you. If you don't kill again before the timer hits zero, you explode. As you get consecutive kills, you're given perk after perk, turning you into a whirlwind of death. Blitz is an interesting take on capture the flag, except everyone is the flag. You have to run into the other team's goal while defending your own.

Magic movement

Ghosts maintains 60 frames per second, even with its increased visual quality. The high framerate feels particularly good when doing any of the new tactical movements. The Knee-Slide lets you go from sprint to crouch or prone in one movement, and you can keep shooting as you transition. Mantling lets you move over low walls effortlessly, and you can keep firing while vaulting through an open window, for example. Leaning is particularly well-implemented, as it requires no additional buttons. If you iron-sight while standing/crouched near a corner, you'll automatically lean out.

> "You can now really hear if someone is shooting in the same room as you, one room over, outside, far away, or far away inside a room."

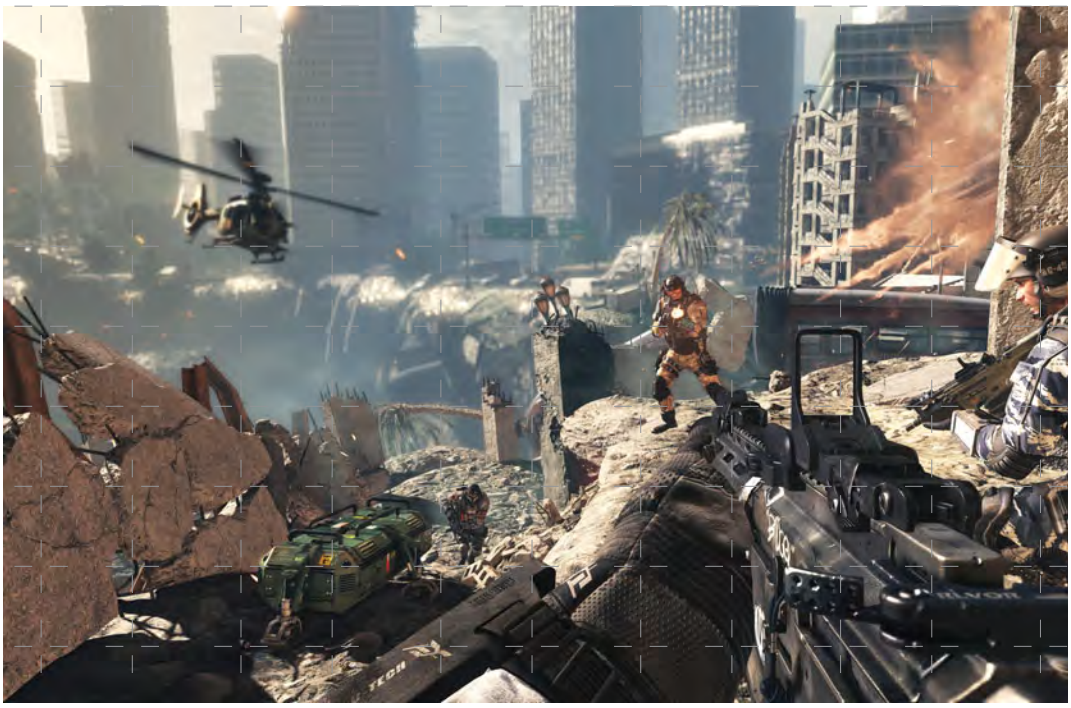
Sounds great

It's a small thing, but what stood out to me the most was the reworked sound engine. The way sounds reverb inside (or outside), has been completely changed. You can now really hear if someone is shooting in the same room as you, one room over, outside, far away, or far away inside a room. It's something not easy to express in words. On top of that, there is a new "reactive emitters" system that creates secondary sounds based on things like explosions. If a grenade goes off near a chain-link fence, you'll hear the fence rattle. It changes how you perceive a lot of the battlefield, as sounds now have additional cues for you to interpret and take advantage of.



Field Orders

When you kill someone, they may drop Field Orders. These are like the daily challenges from *Modern Warfare 3*, asking you to get a knife kill, or a headshot, for your next kill. Unlike the daily challenges though, this doesn't change the tone of an entire match, which was a problem for *MW3*. If you succeed at your Field Order, you get a Care Package drop which might give you one of the new map-changing triggers, like the K.E.M. Strike. The map changes didn't seem as dramatic as Infinity Ward made them out to be, but after the missile bombardment ended, the flow through the one map was so different it was practically a new map. Plus, now everything was on fire.





PERKS & STRIKE PACKAGES

Much like the "Pick Ten" system from *Black Ops 2*, you have a point budget for primary weapon, secondary weapon, lethal and tactical equipment, and your perks. As you gain experience and level up your soldier, you get tokens with which to unlock weapons, attachments and equipment.

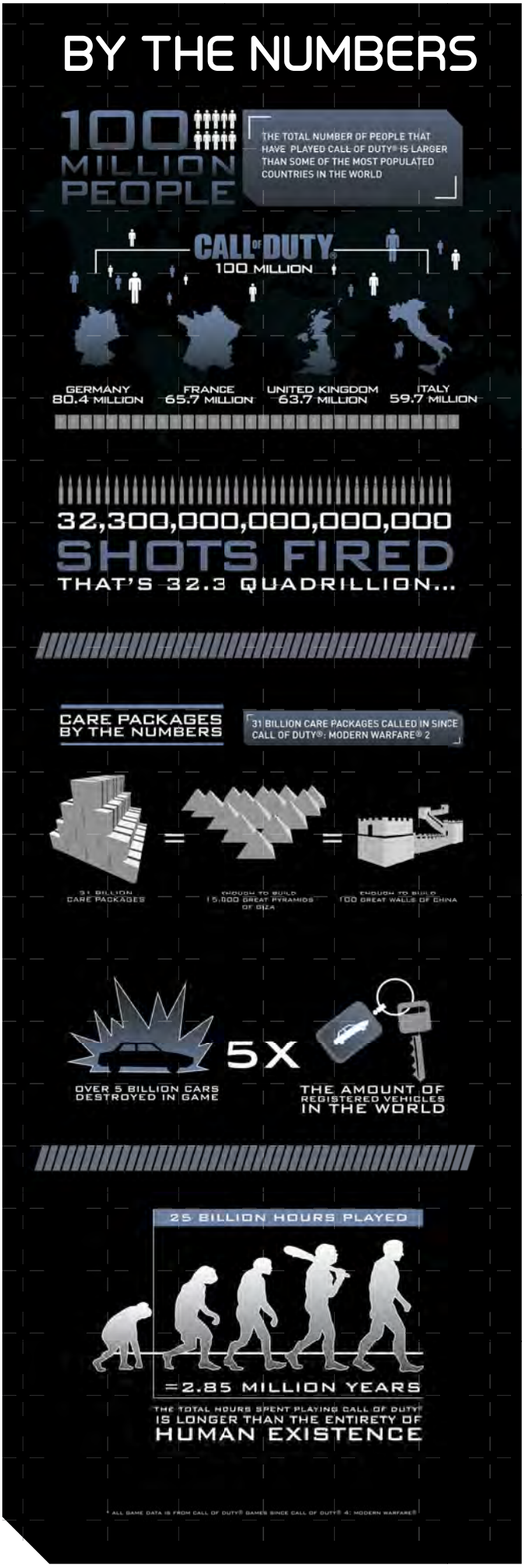
PERKS

In the new Perk system, every perk has a point value from one to five. There is a cap of eight, so you can choose four perks worth two points, or eight perks worth one point each, or if you drop your secondary weapon and tactical equipment, you can cram in up to 11 points worth of perks.
Perks are now divided into seven categories of five: Speed, Handling, Stealth, Awareness, Resistance, Equipment and Elite.
For example, Speed includes Sleight of Hand and Agility, which let you reload faster and sprint longer. Handling holds perks like On The Go and Strong Arm, which let you reload while sprinting or cook grenades faster. Stealth is for sneaky stuff like Takedown, which lets you kill enemies without it pinging on their team radar. Awareness is for better dealing with enemy equipment. Resistance lets you perk up for better health regen or survivability against blast damage. Equipment perks grant you extra ammo or equipment. Elite perks are the most situational, for example, Ping reveals enemies near a hostile you've just killed, while Deadeye increases your damage with each consecutive kill.

STRIKE PACKAGES

Assault, Support and Specialist pointstreak packages return. Assault is still based on consecutive kills and resets upon death, Support does not reset on death, and Specialist awards Perks as you kill without being killed.
Some of the new choices under Assault include Sat Com, which replaces the series-standard UAV. The Sat Com is deployed in the environment, removing the need for a specialized tool (launcher) to take out the enemy team's overwatch. Guard Dog gives you a new best friend, an assault canine that growls when enemies are near and takes down the ones sneaking up on you. Maniac lets you call in Juggernaut armour via a Care Package, meant for rapid melee kills.
Support has been bolstered with new packages like Helo Scout, which lets you act as sniper support in a controllable helicopter, and the deployable Night Owl that protects you from explosions and provides a small overwatch.



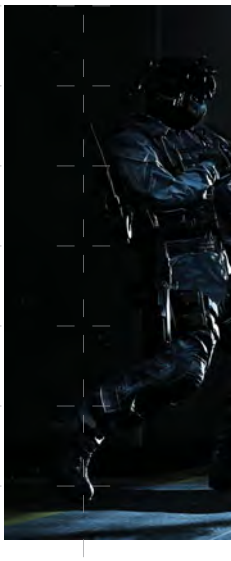


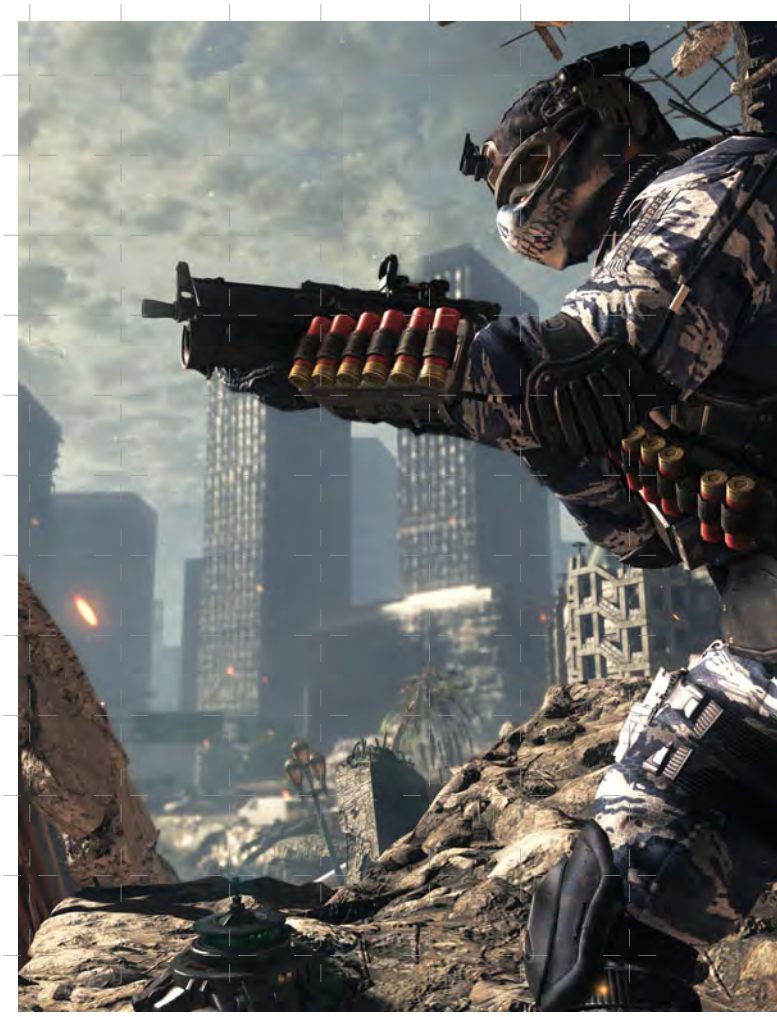
CALL OF DUTY ACCOUNT SYSTEM & MOBILE APP

If you signed up for Call of Duty Elite when *Modern Warfare 3* came out, or by signing up in-game or online when *Ghosts* is launched, you get a Call of Duty Account. This account now lets you take your profile anywhere, from console to console, this gen to next gen, and so on. All your stats, in-game achievements, unlocks and more will seamlessly appear wherever you log in. So if you decide to go from Xbox 360 to PC (or vice versa), you no longer have to re-unlock all your gun bling or max out prestige all over again. About time.

MOBILE APP

With the new *Call of Duty* app for iOS and Android (expected at launch), you'll be able to edit your entire squad, change loadouts between spawns, and share after-action results with social media sites. If you're in a clan, you get clan chat, a clan emblem editor and the ability to send out a Rally-Up which messages everyone in your clan a date and time for your next clan vs. clan match.











"Squads are a major new feature for the franchise. You are your own army in this mode."

SQUADS

Squads are a major new feature for the franchise. You are your own army in this mode. By teaming up with all the soldiers you've made through Create-A-Soldier, you can play all the various multiplayer modes (even offline), or engage in new special Squad game types. Your soldiers (bots) will corner camp, jump-shoot, side-strafe, and do all the things you expect real players to do. Depending on their loadout and perks, they'll play accordingly. No matter what mode you play here, you (and the soldiers you take with you) will earn experience just like in regular multiplayer.

Squad vs Squad is a one-on-one mode, with soldier bots filling out the rest of the team, making it six-vs.-six. If you feel like running with five snipers as backup, you can do that. Wargame replicates the full multiplayer experience, and works on any map with any gametype. You can go it solo (with bots filling out your team) against an enemy team of bots, and you can swap a bot out for a friend at any time. Safeguard is just like *Modern Warfare 3*'s Survival mode, but you can fill out your team of four with bots. Squad Assault involves taking five other players (or bots) and competing against another player's squad, even if that player is offline. When you set up your squad, you decide which map and game type your squad "defends" when you're offline. In Squad Assault, you'll get match-made against squads for optimal challenge, or you can choose to take on a friend's squad directly.



Closing thoughts

Now when you use a sniper rifle, the screen around the scope doesn't just black out. You still get an out-of-focus view of your peripheral vision, which is a huge quality-of-life change for snipers. The new Marksman rifle class, such as the IA-2, fills the gap between assault rifles and sniper rifles. These rifles have a built-in sniper scope, and are only single-shot, but with much faster reload and less recoil than a sniper rifle. There are many other little changes, like a huge increase in priming and throwing time on grenades, too numerous to list here. So how do I feel about the multiplayer in *Ghosts*? It's good. It feels like a polished and refined *Modern Warfare 3*, which makes sense since it's Infinity Ward and not Treyarch. Obviously fans have their favourites, and die-hard *Black Ops* fans won't be convinced otherwise (and vice versa), but who cares about fan wars? The core of what makes *Call of Duty* a successful yearly franchise is in *Ghosts*, with just enough new features to justify 2013's addition. **NAG**

- Miktar

FULL FRONTAL DISCLOSURE

Activision paid for my flights to and from Los Angeles, and two nights at a hotel. The "gift bag" given out after the event to all attendees contained a *Ghosts*-branded cap, a lined notebook, a 500GB portable HDD, a glass water flask, and a little *Ghosts* badge. Attendees were told that they would be sent a gratis copy of *Call of Duty: Ghosts* Prestige Edition at launch, which includes a 1080p "tactical video camera", a Season Pass, and a paracord strap.

Reviews Intro

They say anyone can be a games journalist. Based on all the evidence before us they're right. Meet your reviewers.

Which one and why: Xbox One or PS4 or other?



RedTide

I'll get both for free so I don't have to choose. I'm a bit of an Xbox fanboy but recently PlayStation is tempting me more and more.



Miktar

I'm pretty happy with my PC and Wii U, but I'll likely pick up a PS4. I had a good run with the Xbox 360, but I'm no longer Microsoft's target market with the One.



Azimuth

Xbox One. I'm too invested in Gamerscore to quit now, and besides, Xbox One has Gamerscore. Also, Gamerscore.



MikitO707

It would be "Other" – the Oculus Rift, but that thing is taking forever. Guess I'll go with PS4. Were there a choice, I'd be going Xbox One first, but MS doesn't love us enough.



GeometriX

Neither for now – I'll wait until the local XBO launch to see where they both stand and make a call. Until then, PC will suit me just fine.



Barkskin

I do the majority of my gaming on my PC, so I'm not really too bothered with either. Forced to make the choice, I'd go with whichever's cheaper at the time.

Mini reviews

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

DIABLO III CONSOLE

Let's not waste anyone's time here: the answer to the question "Does *Diablo III* work on consoles?" is a resounding "yes". Maybe "hell yes" would be more pertinent.

As Blizzard's worst-kept secret ever, we all knew that *D3* was coming to consoles. From the gameplay itself to the constant hint-dropping, the launch of this version of the game was inevitable, so we hope you're already settled with the facts: local co-op, offline play, no auction house, improved drop table.

In short: *D3 Console* feels great. We already know that the simplified gameplay mechanics of *D3* was mapped out with gamepads in mind. This one is a no-brainer.

The interface is okay. It's not perfect, but it gets the job done well enough, and once you're used to the layout of character equipment screens and skill assignments, you'll be whizzing through the interface at almost the same speed as you would on PC.

Multiplayer is a breeze. Local drop-in/drop-out co-op is so well executed that you'd think it was in the game from the start.

It looks fine. The world textures and effects are hardly any different from the PC version, but the character models look a little crusty. This is a hardware limitation, no doubt, so if you've been on the fence with this one, it might be better to wait for the next-gen release.

Diablo III is at home on consoles. This is the game you wanted from the start, and you can either wallow in sadness about the PC version sucking in comparison, or you can get the console version. Guess which option is more fun.

90



Mash "A" to win.



“I couldn’t see you through all the gibs!”

- Savage



Ramjet
Both. Because I am a game journalist, and I will need both. That simple, really. And they will both be awesome.



SAVAGE
Other. My PC is next gen right now.



ShockG
PS4 as it’s cheaper, more powerful, looks better, annoying DRM free and you can do a lot more with a normal PSN account than you can with regular Xbox LIVE account.

REVIEW **SCORES** GUIDELINE

1-39 This game is broken. Even if you get it to run, playing it is a painful experience that you wouldn’t wish upon your worst enemy.

40-49 It barely functions, but there’s little real game here. Maybe you’d play it for a bit if you got it for free, but it’s not something you’d recommend to friends.

50-59 Acceptable, but nothing special. It’s generic or uninspired, but playable, and might be worth spending some time hunting for achievements.

60-69 Now we’re getting somewhere. This game has something interesting about it, and fans of the genre or series should enjoy it, but something significant holds back this game from greatness.

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

80-89 An excellent game; one that you’d happily play through multiple times and recommend to friends. It adds interesting, if imperfect, advancements to the genre or series.

90-100 As close to perfection as possible. This game is highly innovative; it has incredible visuals; it plays like a dream and you can’t get enough of it. You have to look for faults just to avoid giving it a perfect score.

home_coded

Exposure for South African indie developers...

Roxy’s Quest

As it turns out, making games is hard. Like, it’s a *lot* of work. Of course, we all knew that, but going in with the objective to make an entire game from scratch in three months is a silly idea. Oh, and this is the first game Geoff has ever built to completion.

It’s called *Roxy’s Quest*, or, more correctly *Beyond the Dome: Roxy’s Quest (Part XIII): Ain’t Got Time for This Sh*t*. You can thank/blame Michael for that title. To get this thing done within the deadline, we partnered with the awesome and blisteringly hard-working people at Toon 53 Productions, who are providing all the artwork for the game.

In *Roxy’s Quest*, our favourite mascot is attempting to get to the Dome on rAge weekend, but there’s a small matter of an alien invasion and simultaneous zombie uprising to deal with. It’s silly, it plays a bit like *Metal Slug*, and it’s going to be awesome. We’ve already got ideas for the sequel but, at the time of writing, this first game is still terrifyingly far from completion.







Roxy’s Quest will be playable at rAge, as well as on NAG Online through your web browser. Once we’re happy with the build it’ll go on the cover disc – completely for free – hopefully with the November issue of *NAG*, but don’t be mad if we push it out to December to add in a bit of extra content and features.

If you have an established local game development company or project and would like to be *featured in* NAG, *send an email to* ***geoff@nag.co.za.***

PLATFORMS
360 / PC / PS3 / PSV / Wii U
REVIEWED ON
PS3
GENRE
Platform game
AGE RESTRICTION
7
MULTIPLAYER
Local
4 players
Online
None
DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Montpellier
WEBSITE
Rayman.ubi.com
PUBLISHER
Ubisoft
DISTRIBUTOR
Megarom

Reviewed

Rayman Legends

Pretty as a picture

It's far easier to review a bad game than a good one, and an excellent game is even more of a challenge. Bad games have things that are obviously wrong with them, and you get those good games that have so much going for them but there are one or two glaring issues holding them back from greatness. But with an excellent game, well, there's not much all that wrong to talk about, which is why the rest of the words on this page are going to involve me gushing about *Rayman Legends*.

There's this theory that games which undergo any sort of development turmoil great enough to become public knowledge always end up feeling half-arsed in some way. We've seen it countless times, and it's been a pretty solid theory until now, but *Legends* bucks that trend. For a game that began development as a Wii U exclusive, it's done very well on other platforms (although we still think the Wii U version is the best).

Legends continues with the format created for *Rayman Origins* – a game which did rather well itself – but everything has been improved upon. The most immediately obvious step up is in the visuals department, with *Legends* now throwing around a few true 3D elements and a considerable increase in the number of parallax 2D layers, the combination of which lends the game world a far greater sense of depth than practically any other 2D platformer. An area in which there's been no especially significant improvement is the audio. That's not a bad thing, mind – the music and sound effects were charming and perfectly fitting in *Origins*, and that perfection has simply been recreated for *Legends*. If you don't find yourself chortling almost every time you uncover a secret area or play one of the musical stages, then there's no hope for you and your blackened, crusty heart.

Alright, fine, I lied. There is one little

YOU'RE OUR ONLY HOPE!

The GamePad player on the Wii U version gets to control Murfy, a flying sprite-like creature that can activate certain traps and objects in the game. Some of these activations are required, and others are optional (or even hidden), and many of them require a bit of thinking before blasting ahead. This creates an interesting asymmetrical dynamic in that the four "main" players can really just go about their business of attempting to get from one side of the level to another, but the Murfy player has some serious responsibility – this is made especially true in the fast-paced and timed levels, where one missed swipe on the screen can cause the death of everyone on the ground.

If you're on any of the other home consoles, a button press is required to activate Murfy's assistance, which makes for one hell of a finger dance across the controller's face buttons in some situations.









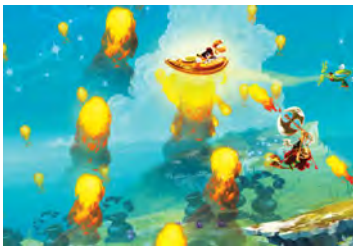




1 There's a whole underwater world to play through in *Legends*, and it totally doesn't suck!



"For a game that began development as a Wii U exclusive, it's done very well on other platforms (although we still think the Wii U version is the best)."





2 *Legends* includes a football mini-game called Kung Foot, which is a great way to kill some time with your co-op buddies.



problem with *Legends*, but it's only considered as such if you're going to be all "this is a game and it must check these boxes because that's what people expect". First, don't be like that. Second, the story in *Legends* is essentially not a thing, at least not a thing that matters. There's an intro and a premise, but from there, the game's colossal assortment of content steamrolls over anything resembling a narrative. Again, that's not a bad thing, but it is certainly a bit of a missed opportunity. Insert optional sad face here.

But if you want content, oh boy/girl, you're going to have *all* the content. The sheer amount of things to do in *Legends* is overwhelming – like, actually overwhelming – with regular daily and weekly challenges, a persistent unlock/reward system, four-player co-op (five on Wii U), and over 120 levels (including 40 remastered levels from *Origins*) to keep you busy. **NAG**

- GeometriX

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***Rayman Legends* is the perfect game to soak up just a few minutes of your time or melt away those weekends with a couch full of friends.**

PLUS

Heaps of beautiful hand-drawn artwork / Cracking good soundtrack / Filled with good old platformer fun / Loads of content

MINUS

Story shmory



PLATFORMS
360 / PC / PS3
REVIEWED ON
360
GENRE
Action adventure
AGE RESTRICTION
18
MULTIPLAYER
Local
None
Online
2 players
DEVELOPER
Volition, Inc.
WEBSITE
www.saintsrow.com
PUBLISHER
Deep Silver
DISTRIBUTOR
Apex Interactive

Reviewed

Saints Row IV

War of the worlds

When you're elected president of the United States after saving the country by disarming a terrorist's nuclear missile in mid-air, your first big job is dealing with illegal immigration. The hostile alien invasion from outer space kind of illegal immigration, which any president of the United States can tell you is totally the *worst* kind of illegal immigration. To further complicate matters, you're also now also stuck in a simulated version of reality and you just *know* your naked body is suspended in goo somewhere back in real-reality because you saw it in *The Matrix*. Not f***ing cool, homie.

But first, an endorsement cleverly disguised as a public service announcement! I've played a lot of games over the last few years that were intended for a more mature audience, but *Saints Row IV* must be the most adult-oriented of the lot by several million rectal probe-measured parsecs. This game features enough swears, nudity, sexual innuendo, casually gratuitous violence, and exceedingly questionable integrity to keep Fox News' moral panic dial at 11 for the next decade.

Me? *I loved it.*

Saints Row IV is – more than the zany social satire and self-referential funnies, more than the abundance of ingenious innovations in a genre become much too dreary and copy-pasted predictable, and more even than the surreal absurdity of an alien with a posh English accent reciting a monologue from *Macbeth* (but it's close) – just heaps of the fun stuff. It's like the development team compiled a list of everything that makes open world games such a slog and brainstormed a simple solution: SUPERPOWERS. In fact, I daresay the whole simulation gag is really just a cover for the very smart decision to eliminate tedious busywork from the game, and keep players engaged in the much more important business of bustin' aliens.

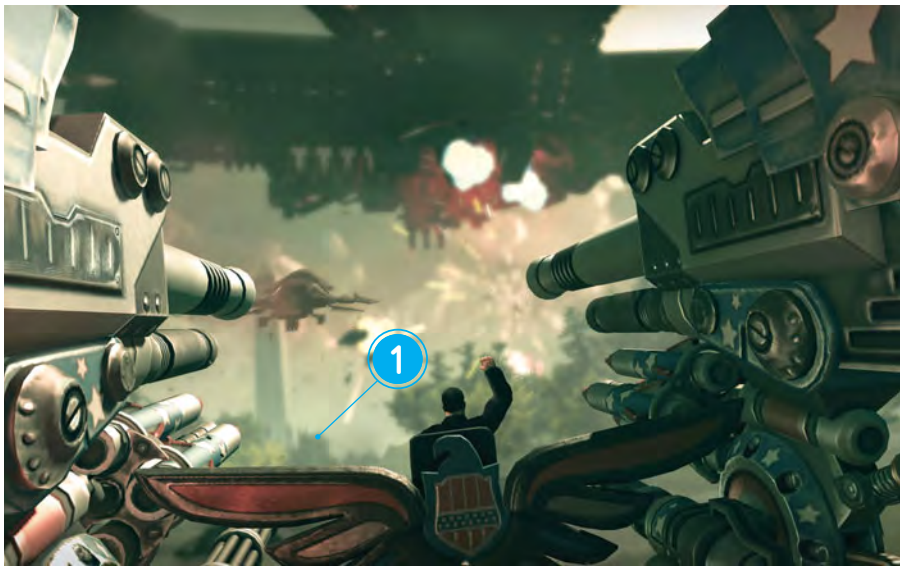
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

You can choose to play as a male or female character and swap whenever you want because that sort of... scientific experimentation is the whole point of simulated reality but don't expect the game to make any special concessions for this. Playing as Ms President, my character was easily the brashest, swaggiest, most potty-mouthiest heroine in the whole history of things, ever (except maybe me). A sequence where she was nude was treated without any of the cheap exploitation seen in basically every other game, and instead turned into the same hilarious, bad-dream bumbling scene had it featured a male character. It's perhaps that much more surprising that a game with a bling-bling thuggish legacy like *Saints Row* should promote gender equality, but hey, I'm not complaining.









1 Old geezer on porch moaning about how the dang commies are taking over not pictured.

"Saints Row IV is – more than the zany social satire and self-referential funnies, more than the abundance of ingenious innovations in a genre become much too dreary and copy-pasted predictable..."

2 Steelport used to be such a nice place. Wait. No, it wasn't.











Ultra-high-speed sprinting, massive jumps, and gliding abilities (all unlocked early on in the game) more or less completely replace driving around the city of Steelport, for example. I mean, you can drive if you want to but why would you when you can fly instead? Exactly. If you insist on doing it old school, though, you have the option to save every vehicle you jack and later have one delivered instantly at your location. That includes a tank.

The upgrade system is also built conveniently into the game as orb pickups found everywhere and cache (cash, get it?) awarded for completing objectives. Collect enough and you can trade them in for new and improved superpowers and character-based enhancements respectively. Within an hour or two of playing the game, you'll already be an unstoppable megabeast.

Most of the game's brilliantly stupid campaign missions involve "hacking" the simulation and even occasionally exiting it entirely, to where your crew (assembled over time as part of the main story) is hanging out on a spaceship and awaiting the final assault on the bad guys. If that sounds a bit like *Mass Effect 2*, it's because it's actually a lot like *Mass Effect 2*, and oh oh oh, just wait until you see the Saints' riff on the game's awkwardly contrived romance subplots.

In between that, though, there's a lot that needs doing around town. Some of these missions include running errands for members of your crew to boost their loyalty, although there are also activities that contribute to subverting alien control of the simulation. You can delete enemy presence in an area by taking control of flashpoints all over the map, for example, or compete in chaos-generating events like the unambiguously named "Mech Suit Mayhem", or even sign up as a contestant on the Zins' top-rated gameshow, "Prof. Genki's Mind Over Murder". There's enough content here to keep you occupied for weeks, and that's before the inevitable DLC drops.

Okay, but seriously, why are you even still reading this? Get out and go buy this now. NAG

- Azimuth

MAXIMUM FIREPOWER

There's a gun in this game that launches black holes. If that doesn't suck you in, what about a gun that deploys a UFO, that then abducts targets? If close encounters aren't your style, there's also a matter disintegrator. If that doesn't make your problems go away, perhaps consider an oversized neon purple jelly dildo. And I'll stop with the puns now because it's getting uncomfortable up in here.

92

The ultimate gamer's game, *Saints Row IV* has something for everybody. Even that guy with a thing for suggestively shaped beatsticks covered in tentacle suckers. Even Paula Abdul fans. Probably one of the best open world game ever made, definitely the most ridiculous, and stiff competition for *GTA V*. Heh. "Stiff." Heh.

PLUS

So. Much. To. Do. / SUPERPOWERS! / Dubstep gun? Dubstep gun.

MINUS

Repetitive mini-bosses

PLATFORMS
360 / PC / PS3 / Wii U
REVIEWED ON
PS3
GENRE
Third person action
AGE RESTRICTION
18
MULTIPLAYER
Local
2 players
Online
8 players
DEVELOPER
Ubisoft
WEBSITE
www.splintercell.com
PUBLISHER
Ubisoft
DISTRIBUTOR
Megarom

Reviewed

Splinter Cell: Blacklist

Sneaky spies and manly men

Even the most well established franchises can falter, particularly when they are working hard to keep relevant. We have seen it often enough. In case of the *Splinter Cell* franchise, that misstep was *Conviction*. Sure, it was a fun game and lots of people enjoyed it, but fans were pretty quick to point out that it wasn't really *Splinter Cell*. Not really. It might have had Sam Fisher in it, but the heavy reliance on action and the downplaying of the stealth element left aficionados with a sour taste.

That, in turn, left Ubisoft with a situation that needed a careful approach. See, *Conviction* had garnered new fans, but they certainly didn't want to alienate the core that had made the *Splinter Cell* series so popular in the first place.

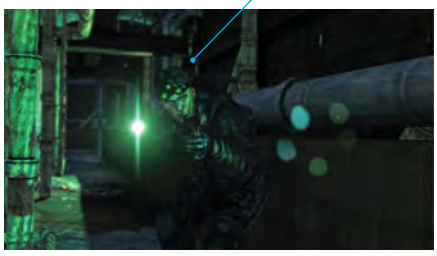
And that is where *Splinter Cell: Blacklist* comes in. With this outing, Ubisoft not only correct their previous directional error, but they manage to retain the fans that that misstep got them. And they do it all with style and grace.

A little background: after a few really nasty years, Sam Fisher is back on the side of the government, and in charge of the newly created Fourth Echelon. It's the typical kind of organisation Sam is involved in; deniable, under-the-table kind of stuff. Right, so this bunch of terrorists called the Engineers (lead by a guy who is acted by the guy that was Morris in *24*) decides that America needs to withdraw their troops from... well, everywhere. They start a campaign of destruction to force the USA's compliance, and their targets are on what they call the Blacklist.

Maybe I sounded a little flippant there but, in truth, the plot may be good, but it isn't something we haven't seen tons of times before. It's *Splinter Cell* moving, in terms of narrative, back to its roots. That's not a bad thing, I suppose, but with the rest of the game being so strong, the plot is actually a little disappointing. Engaging yes, but not thrilling.

But that really is okay, because *Blacklist* makes up for it by presenting the player with a series of complex and challenging missions. These are scattered around the globe (because the Engineers roll like that) and see Sam taking on all kinds of situations. And that is the core of where *Blacklist*'s brilliance lies. See, the game provides the player with a ton of tools, and a choice; lethal, or non-lethal. The

1 Stealth is always the best option in *Blacklist*.











choice of tools and decision whether to leave a few guys standing at the end of the mission results in the player being able to take a variety of approaches to each mission. The player is then rated in terms of Ghost (for being sneaky and not killing people), Panther (for being sneaky while killing people, a personal favourite) and Assault (killing people with noisy guns and bombs, stealth be damned). In effect, that means that *Blacklist* has something for the stealth-geeks, while not making the game intolerable for the gun-nuts. That means that there's something for everyone in *Blacklist*.

That all said and done, the game does force the stealth bit a little more. Players who tend towards Ghost behaviour get greater rewards, and some missions give you no option. Still, the missions are great, with a wonderful sense of dimensionality it the missions. Sam can sneak up walls, hang on ceiling pipes, and all the other cool stuff that this super-agent should be able to do.

The tools, as said before, come in all kinds of flavours, ranging from items that will pacify (like proximity mines that knock enemies out with electric shocks) through to items that will kill (like proximity mines that will blow the hell out of enemies with manly explosives). There are a lot of toys in between, too, including a tri-rotor and sticky cams. All the kinds of things you'd want if you were a covert operative, really.



"...after a few really nasty years, Sam Fisher is back on the side of the government, and in charge of the newly created Fourth Echelon."







2 To kill or not to kill... is that even a question?

In addition to the campaign, the game offers excellent co-op missions (many of which can be played solo) and the return of Spies vs. Mercs as multiplayer is very welcome.

In addition to all that, Sam has been provided with the Paladin – a massive aircraft that serves as his mobile base of operations. From here, Sam can purchase and upgrade equipment using the game's economic system (which is a little too generous, but anyway), and set up load-outs for various missions. The player can even upgrade the paladin itself, adding rather useful tools and functions to the game by making Sam's base better.

Naturally, *Blacklist* looks great. The characters are well modelled and beautifully animated. They sound good too... wait, what? Sam no longer sounds like Sam? What the...? Yes, sadly, Michael Ironside no longer provides the voice for Sam Fisher. That role has fallen to Eric Johnson. He does a great job, actually, when you get used to the fact that Sam no longer sounds like an old guy who has just swallowed a pound of hot gravel.

Sam is joined by a cast of memorable support characters, too, some of whom will be familiar to veterans of the series.

Overall, there's something here for action and stealth fans alike. It's a little heavier on the stealth emphasis, but that doesn't stop *Blacklist* from being a tense, exciting and sometimes extremely challenging game. Ubisoft have managed to herd the franchise back on to the straight and narrow, and have gained all that relevance that they have been after. **NAG**

- Shryke

90

With the franchise's return to core values, *Splinter Cell: Blacklist* will deliver the experience fans want while still staying appealing to action fans... this is the best *Splinter Cell* game we have seen in years!

PLUS

Freedom! / Great gadgets and weapons / Lots to do

MINUS

No Michael Ironside / Pushes stealth sometimes

Reviewed

The Bureau: XCOM Declassified

The truth is out there

PLATFORMS
360 / PC / PS3
REVIEWED ON
360
GENRE
Third-person shooter
AGE RESTRICTION
18
MULTIPLAYER
Local
None
Online
None
DEVELOPER
2K Marin
WEBSITE
thebureau-game.com
PUBLISHER
2K Games
DISTRIBUTOR
Megarom

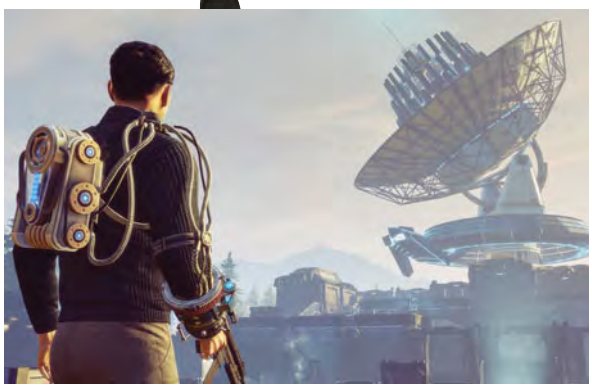


If there's one thing *The Bureau: XCOM Declassified* successfully managed to do throughout my time playing it, it's that it gave me the itch to fire up *XCOM: Enemy Unknown* again. Every *X-COM* fan knows the story of its tumultuous development by now. How it started life as a first-person shooter that rapidly adapted the breadth of its scope to placate the violent outcry from fans disappointed in the direction their beloved series was headed. How it effectively disappeared from public view, destined for the great big box of vapourware in the sky while the more faithful *X-COM* reboot, *Enemy Unknown*, wowed people with its modernised take on strategic alien removal. How it was miraculously revived as the tactical third-person shooter that it is now. Sadly, as with so many games that suffer developmental troubles, *The Bureau* has exited the other end dazed and confused – and it's made me grateful that *Enemy Unknown* exists, and is so damn good.

Anyway, in *The Bureau* you are cast as William Carter. He's your typically gruff, damaged, alcohol abusing anti-hero who bears little regard for authority. So, standard fare for a shooter then. Carter's not a particularly likeable lead, despite the fact that I occasionally cared for the circumstances of his past as the narrative progressed. The game's set in the early '60s, and I love its sci-fi meets *Mad Men* aesthetic – the mix of low-tech human goodies with the jarring extraterrestrial set dressing makes for a distinctive look and feel. Its narrative kicks off at the onset of the original Outsider invasion of Earth, when the Sectoids, Mutons and other alien baddies first set an angry foot on our soil.

Returning to the scene of the XCOM organisation's frantic beginnings is indeed an appealing prospect, but *The Bureau*'s storyline is too untidy to ever really have a meaningful impact at any point throughout. There's a section near the end where the game presents a truly clever twist that questions a player's relationship with the games they play, but it's clumsily handled, tarnishing the effect it could've, and should've had. Ultimately, the story and its characters feel inconsequential, despite the fact that it feels like it originally set out to be much more than it is.

The game itself feels similarly so. At first, it's a straight-up cover shooter with very little to set it apart from the rest of them. That changes when you're given your first squad member, which happens early on. Taking a cue from its tactical strategy brethren, *The Bureau* sees you in charge of two squad members who join Carter on his







The game's set in the early '60s, and I love its sci-fi meets Mad Men aesthetic – the mix of low-tech human goodies with the jarring extraterrestrial set dressing makes for a distinctive look and feel.





1 It may not have much in common with the other *XCOM/X-COM* games, but the first appearance of a Muton in *The Bureau* gave me goosebumps, knowing that I now had to face the brute from a more hands-on perspective.





exploits across the USA. Unlike its brethren, however, where losing experienced squad members to bad decisions is one of the most painful things a person will *ever* experience, the death of your squad members has a miniscule impact on proceedings here. This is partly because it's tough to actually lose squad members at all, even on the higher difficulty settings, and when you do you're likely to die as well, and the load from save that this forces will bring your squad back in full force. It's also partly because there's no incentive to feel any connection to your squad mates here, as they're so easily replaced and entirely expendable.

You're able to give orders to these squad members mid-battle by using Battle Focus – an ability which, when activated, slows time to a crawl to give you a chance to move your squad, preferably into flanking positions, and utilise any special abilities they have. Squad members are available in four classes (Recon, Commando, Engineer and Support), each wielding different weaponry. They'll also gain experience and rank up as you progress, unlocking abilities (like cloaking for Recon agents, or a deployable turret for Engineers) that you can unleash in the field. Carter similarly ranks up and gains an array of useful skills as reward. You're also able to outfit your squad with special backpacks that imbue small bonuses – like a small increase in weapon damage – but this is ultimately a throwaway feature.

The calculated nature of combat in *The Bureau* definitely gives the game an edge over many other third-person shooters. I found myself making extensive use of Battle Focus to constantly keep my squad safe and on the advantage. Although, in retrospect, perhaps I was subconsciously forcing myself to make as much use of it as possible – because without the tactical aspect, it really is just another cover shooter. In between missions, you'll be able to wander the XCOM base, completing menial tasks for its inhabitants – but beyond the initial novelty, your headquarters aren't much more than a tedious distraction. From here, you browse missions to which you can deploy your team – either minor operations (side missions) or major operations (story missions). You're also able to dispatch idle agents to engage in their own subset of missions, where they'll gain experience even though they don't join you in the field.

I think *The Bureau*'s biggest problem is that it lacks direction, and by extension, polish. This is so often the case with games that suffer during development. It feels like it couldn't decide what it wanted to be when it grew up, and so it's done a little bit of everything, but succeeded at very little. Despite this, I honestly enjoyed my time with *The Bureau*. Perhaps it's because the last few games I played for review were *Dark* (frustratingly finicky stealth) and *Fuse* (frustratingly textbook design), but *The Bureau* was a refreshing change. It's deeply troubled, but it's at least got heart.

As a side note, I really wish the fans hadn't killed 2K Marin's original vision for the *XCOM* FPS – because despite everything, I feel that would've been a much more interesting game. NAG

- Barkskin

71

Like a human forged in the fires of ADHD, *The Bureau* lacks focus. For everything it does right, it does two more things wrong. Its relation to *XCOM/X-COM* is tenuous, with only its name, narrative and aesthetic making its family ties clear. That said, this is not a bad game at all – but it's also miserably forgettable.

PLUS

Tactical combat / Decent narrative, despite being somewhat jumbled

MINUS

Feels unfocused and unpolished / Missing what makes *XCOM/X-COM* special

PLATFORMS
PC
REVIEWED ON
PC
GENRE
Strategy
AGE RESTRICTION
16
MULTIPLAYER
Local
None
Online
2 players
DEVELOPER
Creative Assembly
WEBSITE
www.totalwar.com
PUBLISHER
SEGA
DISTRIBUTOR
Ster Kinekor Entertainment

Reviewed

Total War: Rome II

World War Zero

The *Total War* series has been around for thirteen years now, and during that time we have seen it rise from strength to strength. One of the things that the developers, Creative Assembly, really do right with this franchise is streamline and improve on what has come before. That is largely the case with *Total War: Rome II*, but they have also managed to miss a few strange quirks and bugs that manage to bring down what would be an otherwise sublime experience.

These quirks don't ruin the game, mind you. Rather, they serve as a reminder that it is, indeed, a game, and not a perfect war and political strategy simulation. If it wasn't for these few issues, it would have come close. And the sometimes annoying user interface and inconsistent AI are things that we've had to deal with for pretty much as long as this series has been around.

The good stuff that *Rome II* brings to the table is quite a lot, really. First of all, the frantic dashing about trying to keep control of an ever-growing empire has been simplified by tying cities together in provinces. These vary in size, from two to four cities, generally. The player can now manage whole provinces at a time, and will need to balance areas according to the limited building slots of the cities they contain. Also, only provincial capitals are walled, which cuts down on drawn out sieges being the norm.



Armies, too, are easier to manage, although some new restrictions make things a little trickier. Every army must have a general, and no army can move without one. That keeps things neater, but reinforcing and the like are a little more tedious under this system. The player has a limited number of war leaders, too, although this increases as their empire grows. The political and management aspects of the game are, as always, complex and deep. It is a truly engaging aspect of this complicated and strategically sound title.

And then there are those massive battles, the real-time strategy element of the game. As with all *Total War* titles, *Rome II* demands a strong grasp of strategy to be dominant, but the erratic AI can be exploited. Some battles are saved by it... others are lost because of it. It is annoying at times, but the sheer scope of the battles in this game makes up for the odd occasions that it does surface.

Overall, fans will find an improved experience, even if Creative Assembly have still not managed to address issues that have plagued this series for over a decade. None of these is ruinous, though... *Total War: Rome II* is a great game for history buffs and strategy nuts alike.

- Shryke

1 The detail of the battles is engrossing and utterly awesome!











85

It may not be the perfect game, but *Rome II* is perfect for strategy buffs and history nuts [*so ideal for* Buffy *nuts then? Ed*]

PLUS
Great detail / Some management easier this time

MINUS
Inconsistent AI / Some UI issues

Alienware recommends Windows.

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PLATFORMS
PS3 / PSV
REVIEWED ON
PSV
GENRE
Action role-playing game / Beat 'em up
AGE RESTRICTION
16
MULTIPLAYER
Local
None
Online
4 players
DEVELOPER
Vanillaware
WEBSITE
www.atlus.com/dragonscrown
PUBLISHER
Atlus
DISTRIBUTOR
PSN

Reviewed

Dragon's Crown



Keeping the spirit of coin-op brawlers and gothic fantasy alive.

If you've ever played the seminal 1989 coin-up classic *Golden Axe* by SEGA, or the more recent genre-redefining *Dungeons & Dragons: Shadow Over Mystara* by Capcom, then you've a pretty good grasp as to the shape of *Dragon's Crown*. At the most basic, the game pays homage to the classic side-scrolling brawler, and the gothic fantasy artwork from lauded artists like Gerald Brom, Frank Frazetta, Esteban Maroto and Simon Bisley.

You choose from a group of six archetypal heroes, the character selection screen themed appropriately as them all sitting around an inn table, conversing. Each hero, be it the axe-wielding Amazon or the powerful Sorceress, is unique in how they play. The Dwarf, for example, does not deal damage directly. Instead, this vertically-challenged powerhouse pile drives enemies into each other, or throws giant rocks around the screen to create a cascade of ricocheting foes. The Wizard fills the screen with powerful magic and the Amazon goes vertical with aerial combination attacks.



But *Dragon's Crown* is not a stoic tip of the hat to the past. It brings modernization in the form of a complex combat system you'd more expect to see in games like *Devil May Cry*, and along with that, the full *Diablo* styled loot game. The general gameplay loop is as such: you pick up quests (or upgrade your skills) at the Guild in town, choose some A.I. heroes to bring with you from the Tavern, upgrade or repair equipment at the Shop, then head out the gate. You can either pay to go to a specific location, or go cheap and let the game place you in a random stage. When in the field, you can leave your game open for friends or strangers to join (even mid-fight), which will replace one of the A.I. partners.



Stages are moving works of art; no single screenshot will do the environments justice. There are hidden areas to find, bosses to fight, and each stage has two paths you can choose between. When you finish a stage, you can either go back to town, or keep on rolling. If you keep going, you're given bonuses to money drops, chances at finding better loot, and more. But if your equipment breaks in the field, and you didn't pack a spare, you're in trouble. That risk/reward structure is incredibly alluring, facilitated by each stage being reasonably short, perfect for portable game sessions. The entire game is wrapped up in a wonderful vocal narration by a "Dungeon Master" style figure, who annotates what you're doing (or must do) as you play. There are six additional narrators to unlock, and multiple difficulty tiers (akin to *Diablo*'s Hell/Nightmare/Inferno) each with improved loot and challenge. **NAG**
- Miktar









90

As if jumping straight from the pages of *Heavy Metal* magazine, *Dragon's Crown* is a wholly self-indulgent festival for the kind of symbolic Conan the Barbarian characters that the fantasy genre now seems to ignore because it makes prudes uncomfortable. Look past the art, and you find a *Diablo*-styled hack and slash with great gameplay that rewards actual skill.

PLUS
Incredible artwork / Tight, responsive controls / Great cooperative experience

MINUS
Some slowdown on Vita



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PLATFORMS
360 / PC / PS3
REVIEWED ON
PS3
GENRE
Third person action
AGE RESTRICTION
16
MULTIPLAYER
Local
None
Online
10 players
DEVELOPER
Capcom
WEBSITE
www.lostplanetthegame.com
PUBLISHER
Capcom
DISTRIBUTOR
Ster Kinekor Entertainment

Reviewed

Lost Planet 3

The daily grind

The fact that Capcom made *Lost Planet 2* was something of a surprise, because the first game wasn't all that good. Admittedly, it was released in the early days of the current generation of consoles, so maybe a second try wasn't that much of a stretch. But a third game in this franchise? Well, that is a bit of a shocker, really, because the second game was just as nasty as the first. Still, hope springs eternal, right?

This game takes players to E.D.N. III once again, but this time around it's back to the beginning. Yes, a prequel, folks, set fifty years before the original game. And, as the whole thing starts up, it actually looks rather promising. The player takes on the role of James Payton, a dude who has brought his big walker-rig-thingamajig to E.D.N. III in search of work. Basically he has a wife and kid, and he wants to make money for them. It's a sweet sentiment, and something that ends up driving both character development



and the narrative of the game forward. It also allows *Lost Planet 3* to show off some of its better voice acting and character animation, which really isn't bad at all. The video messages that the couple send to each other are touching and believable.

While not playing the voyeur, the player guides Payton through a variety of missions. These are either driving his rig to go fix things (and killing Akrid on the way) or going on foot to collect things (and killing Akrid on the way)... or a combination of the two. The combat is divided into clunky first person melee when using the rig and mediocre third person action when on foot, with some reliance on generic cover mechanics. There is nothing much within the combat to grab the player, and things get pretty repetitive before long... go here, shoot that, fix that, go home. And all in a blasted, icy landscape that does nothing to curb the tedium.

On top of that, the game manages to be rather inconsistent. Where invisible walls will prevent you from falling off of some cliffs, for example, others will leave you as a small red smudge at the bottom of a blue-white crevasse should you put a toe wrong and there's no real way to tell the difference. This inconsistency permeates all levels of the game, building a degree of frustration in to it... particularly when the game gets overly punishing during boss battles.

It's not all doom and gloom, though – *Lost Planet 3* certainly is the best game in the series, and a step in the right direction for the franchise. It's far from perfect, but forgiving players may well draw some enjoyment from it. **NAG**

- Shryke













60

More forgiving players may well draw enjoyment out of this latest *Lost Planet* title, but it may prove to be too masochistic an experience for others.

PLUS
Some excellent voice acting / Fairly interesting plot

MINUS
Inconsistent / Gets pretty tedious



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Aug 2013 2178-800009-A00

PLATFORMS
3DS
REVIEWED ON
3DS
GENRE
Role-playing game
AGE RESTRICTION
12
MULTIPLAYER
Local
None
Online
None
DEVELOPER
Alpha Dream
WEBSITE
marioandluigi dreamteam.nintendo.com
PUBLISHER
Nintendo
DISTRIBUTOR
Core Gaming Group

Reviewed

Mario & Luigi: Dream Team

The Bros are back for another grand adventure

In *Dream Team*, the fourth entry in the series, Mario and Luigi plus Peach visit a new island whose history is oddly pillow-centric. Luigi's newfound narcolepsy suddenly becomes the island's salvation, letting Mario enter Luigi's dreams so as to rescue a race of living cushions. You impact the dream world by messing with Luigi's face on the bottom screen, explore the island, and battle many monsters using a turn-based battle system with action elements that keep things fresh.

When Mario and Luigi talk in *Dream Team*, they babble in a cute pseudo-Italian. It's charming, and an appropriate pastiche summation of the series. The Bros. gibberish is an utter mockery of their stereotypes: that of their dubious nationality and that they have no *actual* voice since everyone around them just interprets the babbling however they want. But it's also a celebration of the freedom they have by being iconic ciphers, meant to represent a player's agency in the game's universe without getting in the way.

The bright, lush environments Alpha Dream is known for have been translated perfectly into 3D (a first for the series), and look great with the 3D slider all the way up. While *Dream Team* doesn't push the envelope in any way, it doesn't drop the ball anywhere either. **NAG**
- Miktar





87

This role-playing game series never ceases to surprise with its mix of humour and involved turn-based combat. Where Nintendo tend to keep the Mario Bros. reserved and quiet, Alpha Dream lets them sing and dance in an expanded universe full of imagination and fun, turning them into real characters.

PLUS
Huge world to explore / Great comedy / Engaging battle system / Incredible animation

MINUS
Takes a bit to get going / Can get difficult fast

PLATFORMS
PC
REVIEWED ON
PC
GENRE
Hack and slash / action adventure
AGE RESTRICTION
3
MULTIPLAYER
Local
4 players
Online
4 players
DEVELOPER
Jochum Skoglund and Niklas Myrberg
WEBSITE
www.hammerwatch.com
PUBLISHER
Crackshell
DISTRIBUTOR
Steam

Reviewed

Hammerwatch

When delving deep dungeons, always pack a partner or two. Or three.

My first impression of *Hammerwatch* wasn't positive. It was an impulse purchase, spurred on by the ability to set the game to look like it is being played on an old CRT screen, complete with phosphor scan lines and curved edges. I'm a sucker for that stuff. The little-hero pixel art style is also charming enough, but trudging through the pre-built campaign just didn't gel with me. It took too long to kill the huge hordes of monsters, to find the keys needed to open doors.

Then I tried it multiplayer, and everything fell into place. This is *Gauntlet*, for a new generation. Working together, covering each other's backs, or accidentally killing your partners by triggering traps – it's a blast. *Hammerwatch* is an incredibly reserved game design. There are four classes, each unique and upgradeable with new attacks you buy from vendors across the maps, but nothing carries over into a new game. It's a bit one-shot, and might change as the game evolves since it's still in a bit of a "beta" state.

Multiplayer works local, LAN and online, and loading a save game for an online campaign in progress requires a bit of finagling, but it does work. Likely too simplistic for most, *Hammerwatch* is an acquired taste. But with the right friends, it's a kind of magic straight out of 1985. **NAG**
- Miktar



79

There is a sublime kind of moment you can only find in gaming, but it requires just the right circumstance. Everyone on low health, lost in a maze of corridors, countless enemies ahead... where only teamwork and a bold charge ahead can save you. *Hammerwatch* provides that experience over and over.

PLUS
Retro! / Classic! / Challenging!

MINUS
Retro / Old / Hard

PLATFORMS
PS3
REVIEWED ON
PS3
GENRE
Japanese role-playing game
AGE RESTRICTION
16
MULTIPLAYER
Local
4 players
Online
None
DEVELOPER
Namco Tales Studio
WEBSITE
www.talesofgame.com
PUBLISHER
Namco Bandai
DISTRIBUTOR
Megarom

Reviewed

Tales of Xillia

From the East...

If you are a JRPG fan, or just a fan of games that delve to extreme depths, then you should be playing *Tales of Xillia*. This franchise is now thirteen games strong, but has never really been big outside of Japan. However, a following of the *Tales* games has grown in the West, and now *Tales of Xillia* is locally available. And that's awesome for fans of JRPG titles.

While the genre is well known for depth and complexity, *Xillia* manages to go deeper than many, particularly in terms of character development. It has multiple skill systems, as well as huge amounts of equipment available. On top of that, it offers a strong story line, and tons of side quests and other things to do... as well as a main plot told from different sides, depending on which of the two main characters you decide to play with.

Tales of Xillia is a JRPG fan's dream, but isn't perfect. One example is the dated graphics. Not a major problem until you realise that most of the story telling stays away from cut-scenes and is handled by the game engine. Still, *Xillia* is well worth experiencing, and fans of the genre could do far worse than visit its unique and intriguing world. **NAG**
- Shryke

1 More depth than a really deep thing... [*This was way too easy of a mom joke to do, AD*]







80

The thirteenth game in the Tales franchise, Xillia will provide players with a huge amount of depth, and around 60 hours of stuff to do.

PLUS
Awesome depth / Great narrative

MINUS
Dated graphics / Niche appeal

A HIDEO KOJIMA GAME
TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION
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THE LEGACY COLLECTION 1987-2012
KONAMI
www.konami-europe.com/games
THE LEGACY COLLECTION
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METAL GEAR SOLID 3 SNAKE EATER
METAL GEAR SOLID DIGITAL GRAPHIC NOVEL
METAL GEAR SOLID SPECIAL MISSIONS
METAL GEAR SOLID 4 GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS
METAL GEAR SOLID 2 DIGITAL GRAPHIC NOVEL
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Use your Edgars Thank U Account Card at CNA and enjoy even more rewards.
Get your card!
Enjoy your rewards!

EVERYTHING ELSE

Well, almost everything.

Bits and bobs that can all be filed under gaming lifestyle



IRON MAN MARK XLII

That's Mark 42 to those heathens of you not brought up by Romans in the civilised world. As the rule of thumb-sucking dictates, this ARTFX statue is heavy so is therefore expensive, and features Iron Man (standing just under 40cm) in an action pose. The base he slots into represents him flying backwards over water; in a comic it would have a large "Whoosh!!" somewhere on the page. But that's not all, this statue has its very own Arc Reactor (three [included] 1.5 volt button cells) that cause Iron Man's eyes, hand and chest Arc Reactor to light up when the built-in microphone hears (or is that "detects"?) a distinct noise, like a clap (or Dane breathing in your ear). Iron Man needs some basic assembly out the box, but only the very stupid among us will have trouble with the simple press and fit joints. The battery compartment did require a little fiddling to make it fit and his right arm also needed some jiggling before the LED worked. It's an impressive piece and thanks to the popularity of the Iron Man franchise, will look good on any desk or geek shrine.

Supplier: Cosmic Comics
Website: www.cosmiccomics.co.za
RRP: R2,199

WIN

THIS IRON MAN MARK XLII*!

Simply visit NAG Online **(www.nag.co.za)** and look for the competition entry. We don't know where it'll be because time and space work differently in a magazine, but you'll find it when you get there. Don't panic. Good luck!

*** Note:** it's been assembled and disassembled by Savage, he also took the pictures, Michael wrote about it and everyone had a go at clapping to make the light come on. Essentially it's done the rounds at the NAG office.



SUPERMAN

This is a 1/10 scale pre-painted statue of Superman. Comments in the office centred on how shiny he looks and that he has a bit of a dumb looking face. Do remember of course that we've all just come off seeing *Man of Steel* with the delightfully dreamy Henry Cavill, so it's not really fair on this dude. He has an earnest face, but it doesn't remind you of any Superman you've ever seen. He's also very shiny (have we mentioned that?), so you'll have to hand out sunglasses to reduce glare when arranging a rescue scene with Barbie in her Mercedes. The packaging comes with a very solid stand and as a major bonus, Superman has small stability magnets in his boots. We tested in the office, and he'll stay standing up to about a five on the Richter scale. The statue is well made, has great detail and is sturdy – everything you'd expect from something with Superman on it.

Supplier: Cosmic Comics
Website: www.cosmiccomics.co.za
RRP: R699

REVIVAL VOLUME 1

The dead have begun to walk the Earth again – you know the drill by now. But *Revival* goes beyond the clichés, and that makes it very interesting. This first book takes place shortly after "Revival Day" – a single moment in which a number of the dead simply came back to life, as they were when they died, and in varying states of zombie-ness. Some look and behave just like everyone else, others are brain-dead, and a few have a couple of screws loose. And the world is trying to figure out what to do with them.

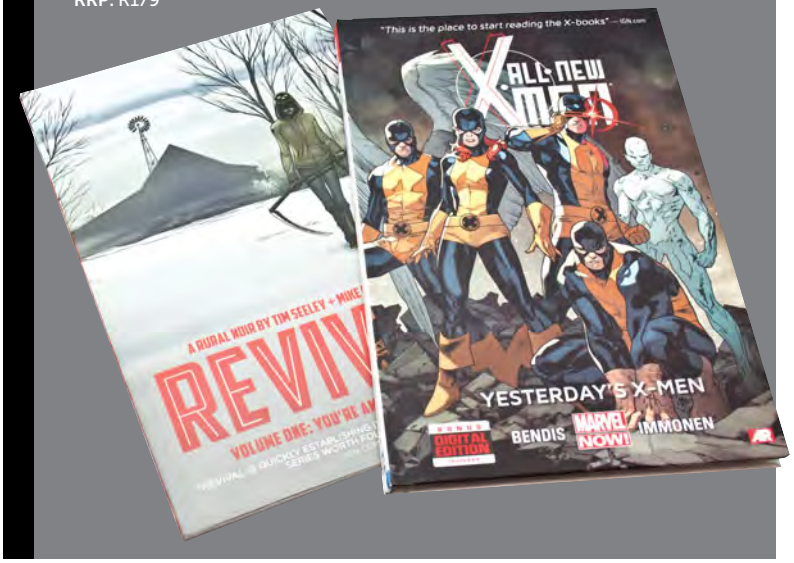
Revival is the start of something great. The artwork is professional and the writing, while it does an excellent job of keeping the reader in the loop, manages to leave a little room for imagination. It's got a flow that keeps you going, and you'll pile through it in one sitting.

Supplier: Cosmic Comics
Website: www.cosmiccomics.co.za
RRP: R179

ALL-NEW X-MEN: YESTERDAY'S X-MEN (HC)

All-New X-Men at first seems like an attempt to simply reboot the *X-Men* series in much the same vein as DC's *The New 52* collection, but get a few pages in and you'll see that the approach taken is far more complex. This is a must-read for anyone who appreciates X-Men history, as there are plenty of nuances and references that you're sure to enjoy. It's also a suitable starting point for any newcomers to the series, with quite a lot of new content and plenty of (sometimes too much) explanatory dialogue to keep you on top of the intricate narrative that is evident even this early in the series.

Supplier: Cosmic Comics
Website: www.cosmiccomics.co.za
RRP: R289



T-SHIRTS

"Do not tumble dry" is more of a suggestion than something you really need to worry about, right? What's the worst that can happen inside a drum full of hot air? Technical specifications and tags on clothing is something for your mom to worry about. All you need to do is wear them to show the world one of the following: you bought a T-shirt that had a clever message on it one time, you want people to know you *get* Star Wars, or your stance against company branding in general. T-shirt terrorist strokes the outer rim of popular culture with mixed metaphor propaganda and cleverness you can wear. They're good quality being made out of plants (100% cotton), and the prints look like they will hold up under a few washes and fade well in the future.

Supplier: T-Shirt Terrorist
Website: www.tshirtterrorist.co.za
RRP: R150 (each)



POP! TELEVISION: THE WALKING DEAD 36: TANK ZOMBIE

When the new batch of these arrived there was a depressed sigh instead of an excited babble. When this happens you know it's time to take a break from these vinyl figures. We've had *Star Wars, Game of Thrones* and various other popular culture geeky examples. We ended on a high last month with the lovely Daenerys Targaryen and we're only talking about this one because it's a zombie. It's a zombie, a tank one which probably means it can take a lot of damage or has better hacks than you do. So that's it. We're done with this range of things now.

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



TECHNEWS

KNOW YOUR TECHNOLOGY

DCT

Discrete Cosine Transform expresses a finite sequence of data points in terms of a sum of cosine functions oscillating at different frequencies. DCTs are important to numerous applications in computing, from lossy compression of audio (e.g. MP3) and images (e.g. JPEG) to spectral methods for the numerical solution of partial differential equations. The use of cosine rather than sine functions is critical in these applications where compression is concerned.

MDCT

A discrete cosine transform with an additional property of being lapped where blocks are overlapped so that the last half of one block coincides with the first half of the next block. This overlapping, in addition to the energy-compaction qualities of the DCT, makes MDCT especially attractive for signal compression applications, since it helps to avoid artifacts stemming from the block boundaries. Because of these advantages, the MDCT is employed in most modern lossy audio formats, including MP3, AC-3, Vorbis, Windows Media Audio, ATRAC, Cook, and AAC.

LOSSLESS COMPRESSION

A class of data compression algorithms that allows the exact original data to be reconstructed from the compressed data. Lossless data compression is used in many applications, such as in cases where it is important that the original and the decompressed data be identical, or where deviations from the original data could be deleterious. Typical examples are executable programs, text documents, and source code. Some image file formats, like PNG or GIF, use only lossless compression. Lossless audio formats are most often used for production purposes, while smaller lossy audio files are typically used on portable players and in other cases where storage space is limited or exact replication of the audio is unnecessary.

TEXTURE COMPRESSION

Lossy texture compression algorithms. Unlike some image compression algorithms (e.g. JPEG), S3TC's fixed-rate data compression coupled with the single memory access make it well-suited for use in compressing textures in hardware-accelerated 3D computer graphics. Its subsequent inclusion in Microsoft's DirectX 6.0 and OpenGL 1.3 (via the GL_EXT_texture_compression_s3tc extension) led to widespread adoption of the technology among hardware and software makers The wide use of S3TC has led to a de facto requirement for OpenGL drivers to support it.

T-JAYS THREE

Manufactured in Sweden, these rubber coated black in-ear earphones are super sleek. They come with a 70cm extension cable, a stereo splitter, a flight adapter, and a protective travel case.
www.musica.co.za | R899.95



MONSTER N-TUNES

Lightweight on-ear headphones with small cans that look good and sound good. You can get them in bold blue, black, red or white.
www.musica.co.za | R1,999



DID YOU KNOW?

By 2050, 70 percent of the world's population is expected to live in megacities, according to Intel President Renée James. Intel is partnering with the cities of Dublin and London to build a reference solution that could revolutionize urban management, providing citizens with better cities and improved municipal services with lower costs.

"It's one thing to install computing power in billions of smart objects," said James. "What we're doing is harder - making powerful computing solutions that turn data to wisdom and search for answers to the world's most complex problems like cancer care. What we've seen so far is just a glimpse of how Intel technology could be used to help heal, educate, empower and sustain the planet."

#144Hz

BY THE NUMBERS

Philips recently announced their new 24" 144Hz gaming monitor, the Philips Brilliance 242G5DJEB/75. Features include a 16:9 aspect ratio, native resolution of 1920 x 1080 pixels, 5ms response time, a VGA port (Analog), DVI-Dual Link (digital, HDCP), HDMI (digital, HDCP), MHL-HDMI (digital, HDCP), DisplayPort 1.2, USB3.0x4 with fast charger and Smart keypad.

Mosh Pit

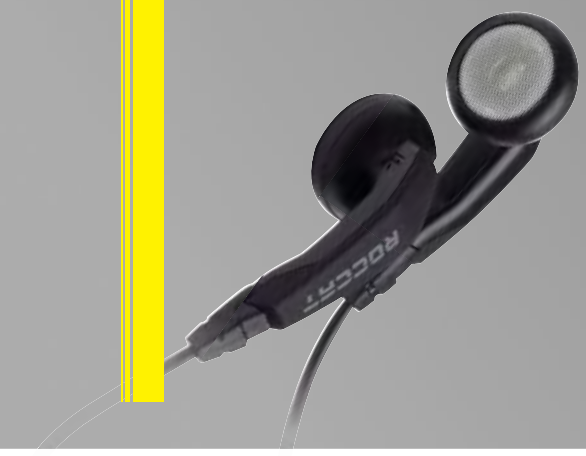
HP ELITEPAD 900
If you're looking for a tablet that runs Windows 8, has a 1080p 8MP camera, and runs on a Intel Atom Z2760 with 2GB of memory, then the ElitePad 900 might be up your alley.
www8.hp.com/za | R 9,999



NOKIA LUMIA 625
This 4G smartphone with its 4.7" LCD screen, and sporting Windows 8 has a host of cool new features. If you're into taking pics the Smart Camera app lets you create action shots, remove objects, and even blur backgrounds on the fly.
www.nokia.com | R3,499



ROCCAT VIRE
The Vire mobile communication gaming headset features a microphone, two extension adapters for a PC (1.3m) and notebook (0.17m), and a plug for your mp3 player and BlackBerry.
www.computersonly.co.za | R299



"Smartphones and tablets are not the end-state. The next wave of computing is still being defined. Wearable computers and sophisticated sensors and robotics are only some of the initial applications."

Intel CEO Brian Krzanich

INTEL DEVELOPER FORUM, San Francisco, 10 September 2013

DREAMMACHINE

This month in the Dream Machine we replace the two GTX TITAN GPUs with the brand new EVGA GTX 780 Classified. This graphics card is supremely fast, overclocks very well and costs less than the two TITANS while offering superior performance. Next month, we'll be moving back to the brand new Ivy Bridge-E platform on the X79 Platform.



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



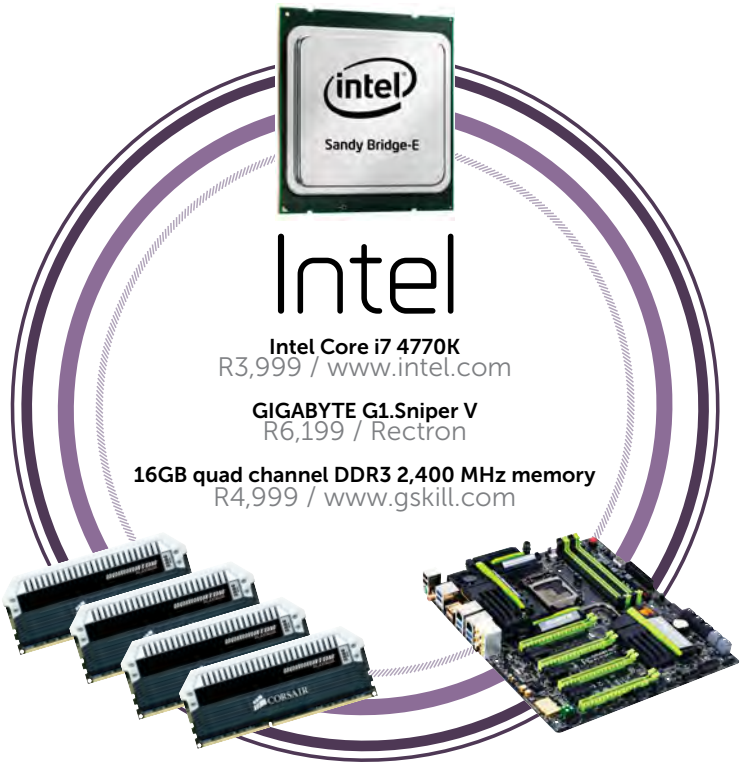
SOUND
Creative Sound Blaster ZxR
R2,799 / www.corex.co.za



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



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



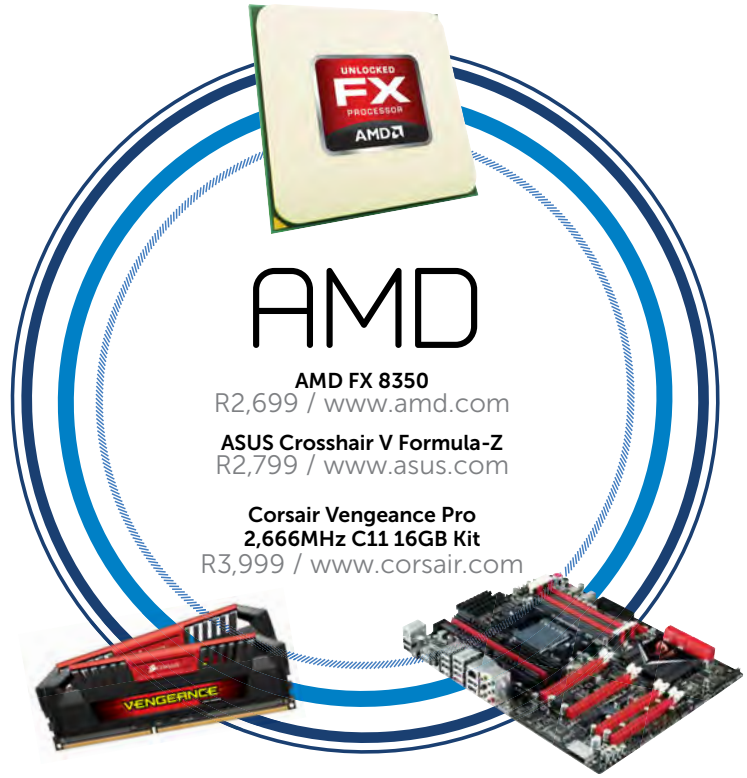
Intel

Intel Core i7 4770K
R3,999 / www.intel.com

GIGABYTE G1.Sniper V
R6,199 / Rectron

16GB quad channel DDR3 2,400 MHz memory
R4,999 / www.gskill.com

Intel Dream Machine:
R57,106



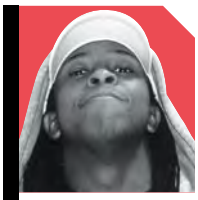
AMD

AMD FX 8350
R2,699 / www.amd.com

ASUS Crosshair V Formula-Z
R2,799 / www.asus.com

Corsair Vengeance Pro 2,666MHz C11 16GB Kit
R3,999 / www.corsair.com

AMD Dream Machine:
R51,406



HARDWIRED
New stuff

By the time you read this, the PS4 and Xbox One should be fairly close to launching and, if history is anything to go by, they will sell well and encourage growth in the gaming economy. All good and well but as I've stated in the past, I do feel there are opportunities that are not being realized by PC hardware vendors. The gaming landscape is unlike what it was before where there were technical differences between consoles and the PC.

As it stands, we have three scaling specifications for gaming computers, represented respectively by the two consoles and the modern gaming computer. As such, hardware vendors that are looking to get into the headphone and gaming market should perhaps consider making controllers for the new consoles. There's plenty of opportunity there despite the licensing costs involved. As it is, the keyboard and gaming mouse market is saturated. It's pretty stagnant as well because there's not much that can be done to a keyboard that we've not seen already.

> "hardware vendors that are looking to get into the headphone and gaming market should perhaps consider making controllers for the new consoles"

I'm very much aware of the limitations and constraints that vendors are working within, but I have to be honest and say that we pretty much have way more keyboards than we need. Moreover, they are all very similar. It's amazing the relationship hardware vendors have with gamers. They will pay thousands of dollars for branding exercises but do not leverage the actual resource that is said gamer to design products. The Fatal1ty branding comes to mind because it's been with us for years on end but has been adorned by pathetic and exceptional product alike. In essence it doesn't mean anything to anyone at this point.

As someone who prefers PC gaming (purely from a visual and auditory sense point of view) above all, I'd like to see a game controller that can do the following: emulate keyboard and mouse commands (software exists for this but it isn't a plug and play experience and it isn't cheap either); and can switch between Xbox and PS modes, thus making it compatible with all three platforms. This isn't impossible technically and isn't really expensive. For a wireless controller that costs R1,300 or there about (which is less than some keyboards) this can be achieved, but vendors lack the willingness to step out of their comfort zones and do something truly innovative.

After all, I'm confident that there are many individuals like me who are attached to the gaming experience but not the control mechanism. In a way, such a demographic can get the best of both worlds without sacrificing anything.

This can be applied to headsets as well that have suddenly become the go to products of all hardware vendors. One headset that can work equally well with your PC, PlayStation, Xbox and iPod or other portable music player without being overbearing. All this is possible and easily realized by those who are willing to go out on a limb and truly stand out.

Why this isn't happening is beyond comprehension, especially given just how difficult it's become for vendors to sell computer components. From where I stand this is a very obvious trajectory but then again, in this industry, what is obvious to end users is many times a revelation of the heavens to the powers that be at these companies.

- Neo Sibeko

The Lazy Gamer's Guide

Disney Infinity Starter Pack

Website www.disney.com/infinity **RRP** R799 / 3DS R699

It was Activision's *Skylanders* that first introduced the concept of real-life toys appearing in video games through the magic of a USB-based peripheral hub/portal/device. It was such a good idea and made them so much money that Disney has now also decided to jump on the same money train with their *Disney Infinity* franchise. Like *Skylanders*, *Disney Infinity* is a "platform", a well-designed platform to get kids addicted, leverage off exciting properties and of course make plenty of money in the process. It goes without saying that the Disney brand is a powerful one and has decades of amazing characters, crazy worlds and ideas to draw from, and outside of their recently acquired brands (Marvel and Star Wars), it's all been aimed at kids. They even have Pixar under their wing and there is some deep irony in how Pixar first became famous for bringing toys to life with *Toy Story*. If you don't know the concept, here's a quick rundown: in the starter pack you get a *Disney Infinity* base which plugs into a USB controller slot in the console of your choice. From here you can play the game disc that comes with it which also recognises the base and whatever you put on it, be that a character, power disc or play set piece. The chosen character and their adventure then appear in the game environment and off you go unlocking things, fighting things and collecting things. Figures can be changed, power discs added and of course new real-world objects can be bought to add to the whole collection at any point. There is iPad functionality so players can edit their worlds anywhere and online functionality so you can share and explore others' creations.

POWER DISC
These discs grant character bonuses such as 10% more damage and 20% health. Up to two of these can be stacked on the base under the figure.



PLAY SET PIECE
Adds unique content to the Toy Box mode such as environmental/terrain themes or specific objects like Cinderella's carriage or Abu the flying Elephant. You can stack up to three of these at one time. Rare discs have a special lenticular design.

DISNEY INFINITY BASE
This is the peripheral hub the toys and accessories slot into. It has a six foot USB cable so it can be placed where the kids are most comfortable. It doesn't have rubber feet like the *Skylanders* base so it slides around a bit and feels a tad scratchy on tiles or wooden surfaces.



SOFTWARE

Two game modes exist. The first is Toy Box, which is essentially a creative play zone where you and your friends can build, play and generally do whatever you do in an open sandbox environment with exciting toys and freaky physics. The other game mode (the proper game) revolves around selected play sets and their corresponding characters. The idea being, if you choose the *Monster's University* play set you need to use Scully or Mike to run around completing tasks. In this mode players must defeat monsters, collect things and navigate the themed worlds. The point of playing through these areas is to unlock items to use in the Toy Box mode. Current play sets include: *Monsters University, The Lone Ranger, Cars, The Incredibles* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Things to know; you can't have Jack Sparrow in the *Monster's University* play set just as much as you can't use Scully to sail the seven seas. There is some inconsistency when you use different characters too: for example, you can play as Randall but during the related cut scenes it's Mike and Scully taking all the credit for your hard work. It's expected considering the nature of the game, but why didn't the developers prepare an in-engine video for all eventualities?





SUMMARY

PROS

- Disney toys in your game
- Toy Box mode is fun, exciting and creative
- Great source for Christmas presents

CONS

- The play sets are a little repetitive
- All you money will disappear

ALTERNATIVES

- Activision's Skylanders

TECHNICAL

360 / 3DS / PC
PS3 / Wii / Wii U



TOY FIGURES

Everyone from Jack Sparrow to Scully has a figure that slots onto the base. The actual figurines are well made and sturdy, enough to survive a trip to the bath (not recommended). Each figure is surprisingly detailed and feels solid. Because they're based on existing characters they don't have the flair and fresh creative feel of the *Skylanders* figures. That said, they are all instantly recognisable to the target audience and sometimes that's all you need.

The Lazy Gamer's Guide
Roccat Tusko

Website www.computersonly.co.za **RRP** R449

Bags maaaaan. You can, like, keep stuff in them. All kinds of stuff. And then carry that stuff around much easier than you could without a bag. Which is a win for everybody. Sometimes, the stuff you can keep in them is pretty bizarre, but in a cool way. Enter the Roccat Tusko, a bag that's much more than just another bag. It's a bag designed for transporting and protecting your beloved (and expensive) PC monitor (and assorted accessories) when you're off on LAN adventures.

TECHNICAL

DIMENSIONS (20"-24")
- 395mm (h) x 575mm (w)
- 1 compartment front
- 4 compartments back

DIMENSIONS (15"-19")
- 360mm (h) x 480mm (w)
- 1 compartment front
- 2 compartments back



ONE SIZE FITS MOST

The Tusko is available in two variants: one for flat screens, the other for widescreen monitors. The flat screen bag will fit monitors between 15 and 19 inches, while the widescreen will function with any monitor from 20 to 24 inches. If you're still all about the CRT (!), you're out of luck.

TECH KEPT SAFE AND CLEAN

There's a rigid plastic plate on one side to help protect your monitor's screen against sudden bumps and shocks. The whole bag is covered in material that's water and dirt repellent. Rugged adjustable snap hooks keep your monitor secure at four points.

AND NOW FOR ALL THE REST

The bag's got straps on its side with which you're able to secure your keyboard. There are mesh compartments on the back (three for the 15"-19" model, four for the widescreen) and one zip-up compartment on the front for storing your mouse, cables and whatever else you need to take with you. In addition to the rubber handle, there's a detachable adjustable strap to sling the bag over your shoulder.

SUMMARY

PROS
- Keeps your expensive hardware safe and scratch-free
- Simplifies your LAN packing

CONS
- Nothing

ALTERNATIVES
- Numerous grocery packets
- That crusty kitbag you've had since high school

NAG

South Africa's leading gaming, computer and technology magazine

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zinio.com/nag



Option 1	tick	Option 2	tick	Option 3	tick	Option 4	tick
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EVGA GEFORCE GTX 760

Website www.computersonly.co.za
RRP R3,499.99

- The EVGA GTX 760 is a standard card, with the only difference stemming from the new and highly effective ACX cooler.
- Performance may be slightly better than that of a reference card, because the cooling is better, therefore Turbo 2.0 frequencies may be maintained for longer in addition to higher frequencies.
- Memory is the standard SKHynix GDDR5 at 6GHz, overclocking will vary but you're not likely to reach 7GHz.
- Pricing is just about as good as it will get right now for a GTX 760. It's not much more than a reference card, but for the cooling alone, the value is increased tremendously making it more attractive than the alternative we have here.
- Electronically this card doesn't deviate from the reference design at all, thus overclocking should be considered carefully before being undertaken. It should be significantly more robust though as the PWM area is kept in check by the ACX cooler.

This is a brief overview on both cards. It'll be up to you to decide which one suits you, your PC and budget best.

EVGA GeForce GTX 760 VS ASUS GTX760-DC2OC-2GD5



ASUS GTX760-DC2OC-2GD5



NVIDIA released the GTX 760 not too long ago without much fanfare. It could possibly be because there was no desire to take away the focus from the high end GTX 780 which has gained momentum rather uncharacteristically since its debut. Either way, the vast majority of us cannot afford to spend close to R10,000 on a graphics card and the GTX 760 is more in line with what some would consider fair for the newest graphics accelerator at half to less than half the price. As such we decided to make a direct comparison between the ASUS GTX 760 OC model and the EVGA GTX 760 with ACX cooler.

ASUS GTX760-DC2OC-2GD5

Website www.asus.com
RRP R5,499

- A custom designed card which features a great cooler and a non-standard PCB. This isn't to maximise performance however, but more about saving costs.
- The card is by default overclocked with a base clock of 1,006MHz. Not much more than the standard 980MHz reference clock, this isn't going to do much for in-game performance.
- Once again memory is the standard SKHynix GDDR5 at 6GHz so overclocking capabilities will be well and truly familiar with most. This is the same memory that's been used on several NVIDIA graphics cards on both the 600, 700 and series adapters and of course on the GTX TITAN.
- The price is very high in comparison to a reference card. What you are paying for here is the cooler and the customized PCB which is ironically made to save costs more than anything else. The overclock is negligible at best. Because of the cooler however, you may be able to increase the clock speeds a little further than you would with the standard NVIDIA GTX 760.
- The 4+1 phase PWM isn't much better than what you get on a standard card at all. It's adequate however and perhaps even a little better because of component type.



Hardware Award

SPECS

CORE
GK104 (28nm)
1,085MHz
PROCESSORS
1,152
RENDER OUTPUTS
48
MEMORY
4,096MB GDDR5
6.0GHz (192.3.4GB/sec)
API
DirectX 11
OpenGL 4.3
OpenCL 1.x
PhysX

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: EVGA GTX TITAN

3DMARK - Fire-Strike	9,993 9,116
CATZILLA - Tiger	15,434 13,483
HITMAN - Absolution	78.79 fps (DX11 ultra detail) 4xAA: 68.97 fps

GIGABYTE GV-N760OC-4GD SLI

Supplier Rectron **Website** www.gigabye.com **RRP** R4,799 each

NVIDIA's GTX 760 is the latest GPU to join the 700 series family. It is also quite possibly the last one this year. As with the GTX 770, the 760 does not make use of a new GPU but rather reconfigures the existing GK104 GPU into something a little different than what the GTX 660Ti offered.

On paper, the 760 is weaker than the GTX 660 Ti in two ways. Firstly it has fewer CUDA cores (1,152 vs. 1,344), and secondly it has fewer texture units (96 vs. 112). These are two important aspects of any GPU for sure. However, to compensate for that and as an attempt to rebalance the GPU, NVIDIA has found it fit to increase the number of raster units from 24 to 32 and boost the memory bandwidth by enabling the full 256-bit bus. So ultimately the 760 makes some sacrifices in processing and sampling power, for increased bandwidth and rendering performance. In our testing we found that for the most part this actually works well for the 760 as the GTX 660Ti was memory bandwidth starved. Coupled with the fewer raster units resulted in a GPU that struggled unnecessarily at higher resolutions or with AA enabled.

Sometimes it didn't work however, where compute performance was pivotal, in such cases the GTX 660Ti was marginally ahead. It's important to note that even though the 760 doesn't come out ahead in every single test, it is for the most part faster and in the vast majority of games it's a better GPU to have than the GTX 660 Ti it replaces.

Oddly enough, with the changes NVIDIA made to the GPU configuration, the TDP has gone up from 150W to 170W, but the price has gone down as well in comparison to what the 660Ti was commanding at the time of release.

The GIGABYTE cards we received however, actually cost more than most 760 cards. The reason is not the result of the advanced PCB (completely custom) or the overclock, but it's instead due to the increased frame buffer each card has. This model here packs 4GB of Hynix GDDR5 memory which should in theory allow the graphics card increased performance at very high resolutions. Sensible decision on the part of GIGABYTE perhaps, but unfortunately we've yet to find a scenario where 2GB of memory isn't enough for 1080p gaming. There is an increasing number of 1440p screens on the market, but most people who buy such monitors are going to buy GTX 770 or better graphics cards. As such, it makes us wonder why exactly 4GB would be necessary.

Another oddity about the cards was the very limited maximum board power adjustment. Only 2% above 100% was available which is to say meaningless when it comes to overclocking. Do not be put off though; when we did our overclocking we found that even at maximum load the TDP was never above 55% at the reference clocks. That means even with a GPU clock around 1.4GHz (if you're able to get that far) you'd still not hit 100% board power. It would only be the extreme overclockers who would need a higher power limit who may need a different BIOS.

As for the performance in SLI, well, the numbers speak for themselves. Two of these cards will outpace any single GPU solution there is on the market handily. There is no GTX TITAN or 780 available anywhere that can match these two cards in SLI. For surround gaming and 3D Vision this is even more important. You'll want the power of two cards for the smoothest gaming performance possible. Depending on how much these two cards will set you back, you may perhaps consider a pair especially if you are fortunate enough to own a high resolution monitor. Consider these cards if you're in the market. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko

8

One of these cards is impressive, but two take it to a new level. It's probably the cheapest way to get GTX TITAN matching performance without paying GTX TITAN prices.

PLUS

Overclocks really well / 4GB memory
Beefy cooler

MINUS

Could potentially be very expensive / 102% board power limit



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SPECS

CORE
GK110 (28nm)
993MHz
PROCESSORS
2,304
RENDER OUTPUTS
48
MEMORY
3,072MB GDDR5
6.0GHz (288.4GB/sec)
API
DirectX 11 /OpenGL 4.3 / OpenCL 1.x / PhysX

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: EVGA GTX TITAN

3DMARK - Fire-Strike	9,420	9,116
CATZILLA - Tiger	12,175	13,483
HITMAN - Absolution	65.65 fps (DX11 ultra detail)	4xAA: 68.97 fps

MSI GTX 780 Lightning

Supplier Corex **Website** www.msi.com **RRP** R10,999

Nothing is as frustrating as watching MSI go about making the best graphics cards money can buy then following up with motherboards that don't quite hit the ground running. After the questionable and rather pointless Z87 XPower motherboard we reviewed last issue, MSI graced us with what is probably the best graphics card ever built.

We do not say that lightly, as it is a huge commitment on our side, but one only needs to look at it to see that MSI was looking to build the ultimate GTX 780. To that end, they just may have managed to do it. There's simply nothing to fault on this card. From the packaging, which is some of the best we have ever seen, to the presentation, the cooling, and everything else. This card aims to be number one and may very well have achieved it.

Despite that this card costs a fortune when, it will still be a worthy purchase, if only to say that you've owned the best graphics card ever produced. It's simply staggering what MSI has managed to build with their latest Lightning product. Initially we had not expected much that we hadn't seen previously on the 580, 680, 7970 and so forth, but when greeted by one of the sexiest cards ever built we were compelled to give this card a go and found that it delivered in virtually all respects.

The only chink in this card's amour is the existence of the GTX 780 Classified from EVGA (also reviewed in this issue) which presents a clear and very real threat. Other than that, every other offering from other vendors is just not close enough to present a challenge to the Lightning.

There's a lot that this card has to offer that we simply do not have the space to get into but suffice to say it has a very good cooler. A familiar one in some ways, but this time featuring three fans. You get LEDs that indicate load, a dual BIOS and an enhanced PWM, a 16-phase PWM to be exact. This may be overkill to some, but it's actually not. When pushing the GK110 GPU to the limits, the VRM becomes increasingly important and, since this card is built for overclocking and claiming world records, it's of the utmost importance that the GPU is provided with the cleanest and most reliable power possible.

To that end, even the memory has a separate power source which allows it to overclock better than other GTX 780 cards. Solid capacitors, DrMOS 4, military class components; all of the marketing talk is essentially highlighting to you that the power circuitry on the GTX 780 is unmatched, or at least unbeatable. Ultimately though the test is in the performance which is where it will either succeed or fail.

Fortunately because of the impressive nature of the card, built from the ground up for performance, even the worst sample of the GTX 780 will outperform and out-overclock a reference or standard GTX 780 by a large margin. This is another area where we feel MSI didn't quite capitalize on what is easily the best graphics card they have ever produced. The memory speed is left at the default 6GHz. This is understandable because some GTX 780 Lightning cards will ship with Hynix GDDR5 while others just may ship with Samsung GDDR5 which overclocks significantly better. As end users you can't know what memory you will get, so it's best to leave the memory at its rated 6GHz clock speed.

Ultimately if you're looking for the pinnacle of graphics cards, look no further than the MSI GTX 780 Lightning. NAG

- Neo Sibeko

9

MSI has produced possibly the best GTX 780 we've seen to date. There are equivalent alternatives, but there are no better cards.

PLUS
Very impressive cooler / Looks fantastic / Superb performance

MINUS
Pricey / In limited supply

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The Micro ATX case for high-performance system builds.

The Obsidian Series 350D Micro ATX PC case is designed for building compact high-performance systems with Micro ATX and Mini ITX motherboards. The compact size is ideal if your space is limited, but there's plenty of room inside for liquid CPU cooling, dual hard drives, dual SSDs, and dual full-length graphics cards.

Like all Obsidian cases, the 350D is designed for fast and neat builds, with tool-free access and drive installation. Smart features like a native 2.5" SSD cage make the most of its small size, and the cooling-focused interior has five fan mounting points, with room for two 240mm radiators.

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SPECS

MATERIAL
Polymer, mesh front bezel
COLOUR
Midnight Black
SUPPORTED MOTHERBOARD TYPE
Micro-ATX/ATX
FRONT PANEL
2x USB3.0, 2x USB 2.0

"The CM 690 III can house up to two 240mm radiators, one at the top and one at the front of the case for all your liquid-cooling needs."

Cooler Master CM 690 III

Supplier Sonic Informed **Website** www.coolermaster.com **RRP** R1,249

If you were a fan of the original CM 690 case and more especially its second iteration, the CM 690 II, then chances are the latest incarnation is going to appeal to you. Cooler Master has refined a good case by making it even better than before but without making it a competitor to its more high-end brethren.

Chassis are always going to be a matter of preference, so deciding which one to buy will always come down to what appeals to you personally and the choice of hardware you have at your disposal.

With that said, it doesn't mean there aren't some basic principles by which we measure all cases. Of the more important aspects is the amount of cooling any case allows you to have. With the CM 690 III you can install a maximum of nine fans. That's right, an impressive nine fans for some serious airflow and plenty of noise. If that seems excessive for you then you should consider using three 200mm fans, which this case supports as well. Not only will you get better airflow going this route, but you'll have a significantly quieter case. Whichever solution you decide on, the CM 690 III is capable of supporting your chosen configuration.

As more users turn to liquid cooling kits, it's become increasingly important for case vendors to manufacture chassis that can handle at least a single dual radiator (240mm). The CM 690 III can house up to two 240mm radiators, one at the top and one at the front of the case for all your liquid-cooling needs. To complement that, you may also use the rear exhaust fan mount for a single radiator unit.

The highlight feature of this case for us is the ODD toolless EZ-tray. A hard drive tray can be compacted to support SSDs without having to use those annoying brackets. Initially when reading up on this feature before using the case, it seemed to suggest that the entire case was toolless, but that isn't quite right. You had better ready your toolkit before starting to build into the CM 690 III, much like you would with any other chassis.

The control panel on the CM 690 III is your typical setup with two USB 3.0 ports and two USB 2.0 ports along with the headphone and mic-in connectors. We will keep complaining about this until case vendors get it right, especially ones of such status as Cooler Master. Why go for two USB 3.0 ports instead of four? There's no reason why they can't all be Super Speed ports. In addition, why is there no memory card reader included? Perhaps a memory card reader is expensive (not likely) but the USB 3.0 port limitation is rather annoying considering that there are an increasing number of USB 3.0 products in the market and every modern platform has native USB 3.0 support.

Other than that we've nothing to complain about. At the time of writing local pricing wasn't available but if USD prices are any indication, despite our grievances, Cooler Master has done well with the CM 690 III. You may want to decide carefully though between the window and the mesh version, since the windowed version cannot support three 200mm fans but only two and costs a little more. Therefore, even though it looks better, given the location of the graphics cards in the case, the mesh version may make for a very compelling choice, especially for those who employ multiple GPUs. If you're in the market, do consider the CM 690 III. It looks great and it's built well and as usual with Cooler Master products, it'll last you for years. **NAG**

- Neo Sibeko

7

Pretty much an evolution of the CM 690 II. Better in almost every way possible than its predecessor. A worthwhile purchase if you've been looking for a mid to high end ATX chassis.

PLUS

Typical Cooler Master build quality / Looks good / Up to three 200mm fans

MINUS

Not really tool-less as it claims

Logitech G700s Rechargeable Gaming Mouse

Supplier Logitech
Website gaming.logitech.com
RRP R1,449

As the extra "s" at the end of its name suggests, Logitech's G700s is an evolved version of the G700 – it's meaner-looking, boasts enhanced functionality and is generally just better. And while I personally don't see the point in wireless gaming mice, the G700s is an excellent option for those who prefer their PC gaming free of cords.

In the box you'll find the mouse, a single rechargeable AA battery, the discrete USB wireless receiver, a charging cable and an extender cable for the receiver. To get it functioning, all you've got to do is attach the receiver and install Logitech's proprietary gaming software suite. The G700s can be recharged while in use, which is always a welcome feature. As is usually the case with wireless mice, it's quite a bit heavier than its corded counterparts, which will likely take some getting used to initially.

In use, the G700s is comfortable (although it's quite a large mouse) and has all the customisable functions you'd expect, with recordable macros available for use via the extra macro keys and DPI settings that can be switched on the fly (complete with on-mouse indicator lights). There's a toggle button below the scroll wheel which lets you switch the scrolling mechanism from smooth free-scrolling to more precise click scrolling. It's a largely superfluous feature, but a nice one nonetheless.

The placement of the extra buttons on the G700s has been well thought out, most of them being easy to reach once you've spent time with the mouse and learnt their positioning. The software for customising the mouse is easy to navigate. It'll likely come down to the price then, because you pay a premium for the wireless functionality – but this is a great mouse. NAG

- Dane Remendes



SPECS

SENSOR Up to 8,200 DPI
GPU 13, programmable
BUTTONS 16GB DDR3 (supports up to 32GB)
ACCELERATION 30 G

9

The G700s is a highly capable wireless gaming mouse, if you're willing to pay the price.

PLUS
Sensible button placement / Comfortable

MINUS
Naturally heavy / Steep price



SPECS

CORE
GK110 (28nm)
993MHz
PROCESSORS
2,304
RENDER OUTPUTS
48
MEMORY
3,072MB GDDR5
6.0GHz (288.4GB/sec)
API
DirectX 11 /OpenGL 4.3 / OpenCL 1.x / PhysX



Dream Machine

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: EVGA GTX TITAN

3DMARK - Fire-Strike	9,591 9,116
CATZILLA – Tiger	12,203 13,483
HITMAN - Absolution	68.96 fps (DX11 ultra detail) 4xAA: 68.97 fps

EVGA GTX 780 Classified

Supplier EVGA **Website** www.evga.com **RRP** TBA

At the time we received this EVGA card in for review we also got the MSI GTX 780 Lightning in, which you can read about in this issue as well. For the most part these cards are evenly matched. In fact the nod actually goes to the Classified card for several reasons. It should then be easy to have this as the best GTX 780 money can buy.

For instance, this card uses an identical PCB to the one that was on the GTX 580 Classified, the GTX 680 Classified and now on the GTX 780 Classified. We are not ones to complain, as the PCB here is solid, with a proven PWM. There's nothing to improve here, but we do feel that the investment made by EVGA into this card is not the same as the one MSI made into the Lightning. Where that card features a completely new cooler, PCB and PWM, the EVGA card simply swops out the GPU. This is precisely why the MSRP for this card is only $50 more than the standard card, while the MSI card is commanding a whole $150 more. It is in these small advantages that the 780 Classified gets its edge.

At this point you may then think all the extras on the GTX 780 Lightning are not worth it, but keep in mind that there is a hidden cost to the 780 Classified. That is the price of the EVBOT. The EVBOT costs an additional $100. You don't have to use it at all, but for extreme overclocking it's necessary. This is in much the same way that the unlocked MSI Afterburner is only available to a select few that have proven themselves competent, competitive overclockers. Therefore, you will have to weigh out the pros and cons of each card before making your purchasing decision. If however overclocking is the least of your worries and you just want a fast gaming card, the EVGA GTX 780 Classified remains the highest clocked and hence fastest GTX 780 on the market.

It has a base clock of 993MHz, only 13MHz higher than the closest rival which isn't enough to make a noticeable difference in gaming. However, given that vendors fight for decimal points in game and benchmark performance, that extra speed doesn't hurt.

Concerning cooling, this card uses the familiar ACX heat sink we saw on the GTX 770 Classified last month. This is a fantastic cooler for open systems but a little extra airflow out of the case must be ensured because it isn't a blower type. That is, all the hot hair generated by the card is dumped into the case and it'll be up to your case fans to extract it as quickly as possible.

Given EVGA's attitude towards overclocking and the people they employ solely to build such products, it came as no surprise that this card overclocked higher than any other GTX 780 we have tried to date. The difference may not have been much but that 25MHz allowed us to reach some impressive speeds, in the order of 1,350MHz. Your own mileage may vary but you can be certain that not many cards will out clock this one. Ultimately you'll have to decide which is the best GTX 780 for you, but we would strongly recommend this one any day. It's a fantastic card. NAG

- Neo Sibeko

9

A rinse and repeat process for EVGA then. The 780 Classified uses a tried and tested PCB design that allows the GK110 GPU to reach its maximum potential. The GTX 780 Classified is a must have.

PLUS

Solid PCB Design / 3 BIOS settings / Built for extreme overclocking

MINUS

May be hard to find locally / Weak rand makes for bad pricing

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"The truth is that the Envy just doesn't match up to any of its competition, and only makes sense as a purchase for those who absolutely need to have Windows on the go..."



SPECS

CPU
Intel Atom Z2760 (1.8GHz dual core)
GPU
PowerVR SGX 545
RAM
2GB DDR2
STORAGE
64GB SSD; microSD & SD card support
DISPLAY
11.6" IPS @ 1366x768



HP Envy x2 11-g001

Supplier HP **Website** www.hpshop.co.za **RRP** R10,999

The concept of a tablet/notebook hybrid is not new, and for some time now the ASUS Transformer range has dominated this space, but this little device from HP comes in with a different approach: it runs Windows 8.

Take a glance at the Envy and you'd think it's a regular netbook: small, slim, no optical drive. That's testament to the build quality and unified appearance of the device, as the dock and tablet halves were designed to look good both together and apart. In terms of usability, the Envy in its docked form functions very much like a notebook, too. The keyboard is easy to type on thanks to its overall width and good spacing between its chiclet keys, and the touchpad works as well as you'd expect. A full set of function keys with alternate system and media playback controls round up the offering, and if it was left at this we'd be very happy, but this is much more than just a simple notebook.

The screen unclips from the dock with a bit more force and fiddling required than we'd like, and once its set free is surprisingly light. It's a bit large for a tablet, and its widescreen format means use in portrait orientation feels somewhat awkward. In landscape, however, the Envy feels great. You'll also get a cool 8-10 hours of battery life in tablet mode, with an additional four or so added when it's docked. The tablet itself lacks any USB ports, but there is space for a MicroSD card to expand its measly 64GB of storage (of which only 30GB is available). The dock addresses this with two USB ports and a full SD card slot.

If we rated devices on form-factor alone, the Envy would excel, but the concept and execution is where it falls flat. Let's take a moment to look at what one could buy instead of the Envy, all at lower prices: other Atom-powered netbooks will deliver equal Windows performance, but don't have the touch screen, yet start at R3K; the ASUS VivoBook range starts around R4K, gives you roughly the same performance, and has a touchscreen; the Transformer range of tablets come in at around the same price, and runs Android, or you could go with an iPad and keyboard dock combo. With Windows 8 on the Envy, you've got plenty of versatility in terms of notebook-suitable software but nowhere near the focused effort of apps designed for tablets that you'd get on Android or iOS. When combined with the weak processor and tablet-grade GPU, the result is a device suited for not much more than basic office work and web browsing.

The truth is that the Envy just doesn't match up to any of its competition, and only makes sense as a purchase for those who absolutely need to have Windows on the go, and can stomach Windows 8 as a tablet operating system. **NAG**

- Geoff Burrows

7

With so many alternatives on the market, the Envy will either be perfect for you or a let-down – you'll have to think carefully about whether or not this is the right product for you.

PLUS
Great battery life / Good build quality

MINUS
Poor performance / Pricey / Limited appeal

Huawei Ascend P6

Supplier Huawei
Website www.huawei.com
RRP R4,999

Hardware Award

In a market dominated by just a few brands, it's good to have a little variety to shake things up. Huawei is certainly not a new local player – they've spent most of their time concentrating on 3G dongles rather than mobile phones, and, looking at the Ascend P6, it seems rather a shame that they didn't enter this neck of the woods ages ago.

The P6 has a lot of visual appeal going for it, courtesy of its light, slim and well-balanced design. It feels quite a bit like the iPhone 5, but instead is an Android device loaded up with a custom interface called Emotion UI. This adds a few things like custom widgets and support for the phone's lack of dedicated navigation buttons, and supports standard widgets as well. Browsing through the phone is nippy thanks to the quick transitions and hefty amount of RAM. I'm not a fan of the combined apps/homescreen configuration, but it will likely appeal to users looking for a simplified experience over the standard Android offering.

On the hardware front, things are mostly positive, although a few issues crop up that might bother some people. The screen delivers bright and sharp visuals ordinarily, but it darkens slightly when viewed from an angle. While the display is large, some of that real estate will be consumed by the software navigation buttons. Internally, Huawei decided to go with their own chipset solution instead of the already established options, and the result is a hardware configuration that runs well, but falls short of even the ageing Tegra 3-based devices in AnTuTu benchmarks, scoring a decent but unspectacular 13,084. NAG

- Geoff Burrows



SPECS

CHIPSET
HUAWEI K3V2 (QUAD-CORE 1.5GHZ)
RAM
2GB
DISPLAY
4.7" @ 720x1280 IPS LCD
STORAGE
8GB internal; microSD supported
CAMERA
8MP with LED flash; 1080p video recording

"The P6 has a lot of visual appeal going for it, courtesy of its light, slim and well-balanced design."

9

The Ascend P6 is a solid device that will please anyone looking for a phone that just reaches into the high-end segment. If you can find one for the right price then you're sure to be pleased.

PLUS
Light and slim / Good performance / Nippy custom interface

MINUS
No dedicated navigation buttons



Sharkoon X-Tatic S7

Supplier Esquire
Website www.esquire.co.za
RRP R1,299

When it comes to headphones, most gamers have simple needs: comfort, performance, price – possibly in that order. Unfortunately, the Sharkoon X-Tatic S7 tries a little too hard to be more fancy that it actually is, but at the end of the day this is a solid headset.

Despite all the efforts made by many headphone manufacturers to make their sets as comfortable as possible, nothing beats an overall light weight, and it's here where the X-Tatic excels. Combined with its simple but very soft foam padded ear cups and faux-leather headband, you've got a recipe for extreme comfort, even during long gaming sessions.

On the performance side, this set mostly holds its own against its competition save for slightly fuzzy high-frequency output. In-game this is barely noticeable, however, and the Dolby-powered surround sound, while certainly not "7.1" (I wish manufacturers would stop making these claims), does a good job of immersing the player in their environment. The extra features – in-line amplification and "3D sound expander" – are thankfully entirely optional, as they do little to add to the overall performance of the headset. The amp seems to just create noise on the line, and the 3D expander simply adds a reverb to everything. Best to leave these features disabled, and it seems like a waste to include them in the first place. At least Sharkoon has decided to buck the trend and include cables for PC, console and anything that can output to optical or 3.5mm analogue, which is a bizarrely rare treat these days. NAG

- Geoff Burrows



SPECS

HEADPHONE DIAMETER
40mm
IMPEDANCE
32Ω
SOUND PRESSURE LEVEL
120dB +/- 3dB @ 1KHz
FREQUENCY RESPONSE
20Hz ~ 20KHz
POWER OUTPUT
30mW

7

Despite lacking in the high frequencies and making a few odd feature choices, the Xtatic S7 is a good performing, very comfortable headset suitable for all uses.

PLUS
Very comfortable / Multiple platforms supported / Generally good performance

MINUS
A few superfluous features / Slightly lacking high frequency output

PowerColor TurboDuo HD 7790

Supplier Wootware
Website www.wootware.co.za
RRP R1,749

Sometimes you only have a grand or two to spend on a video card. We get it, and if that's the case then you're probably looking at the HD 7790 as a viable upgrade. After all, this is the card that everyone is talking about as being "pretty close" to the GPU found in the Xbox One – it's next-gen super awesome, right? Eh, kind of.

Look, when it comes to mid-range cards, you get what you pay for. In this case, what you're paying isn't all that much, so do the math. With that said, after putting this HD 7790 through its paces we weren't completely disappointed in its benchmark scores. That fact that it scores just 3,764 in 3D Mark Fire Strike and 3,768 in Catzilla is irrelevant. What is impressive is an average frame-rate of 42 in *Hitman: Absolution*. It's not pushing 60 fps, sure, but anything over 30 in this price range is commendable.

With this particular version of the card, you get a slightly customised PCB that includes a couple of rear cut-out vents, and obviously there's an extra fan on here. The result is an impressive maximum operating temperature of 63°, and that number barely budged when we overclocked the core to 1,200MHz and bumped up the memory speed to 1,600Mhz. For our troubles, we only saw a boost of a couple fps, but it's free performance so we're not complaining.

Speaking of free, this is where things start to get very interesting. The next step up in PowerColor's range is the HD 7870 OC, which is just R650 more. For that price, not only do you get a substantial performance increase, but you get two free games as part of AMD's Never Settle bundle, as opposed to the single game included with the 7790. You'll have to think very seriously about whether or not you can stretch your budget to that level, but if you simply can't, then you'll do well enough with this card. NAG

- Geoff Burrows



SPECS

CORE GCN 1.1 1,075MHz
PROCESSORS 896
RENDER OUTPUTS 16
MEMORY 1,024MB GDDR5 6.0GHz (96GB/sec)
API DirectX 11.1 / OpenGL 4.2

7

A humble but well-meaning card. It's perfect for that lower mid-range gaming PC, or keeping your current machine just in touch with the upcoming "next generation".

PLUS
Easy but small overclocking potential / Low temperatures

MINUS
A bit pricey / Low performance ceiling

ASUS G750

Supplier ASUS
Website www.asus.com
RRP R27,999

As they're part of ASUS' ROG family of products, you can expect nothing less than the highest quality from the manufacturer's new range of high-powered gaming notebooks. The G750 is part of that family, and it shows. This is a very impressive piece of hardware.

Straight out the box it's aesthetically intimidating, with sharp curves supposedly modelled after an F-22 Raptor stealth fighter jet. Lift the hood and you'll find a backlit Chiclet-style keyboard that offers a pleasant typing experience once you've gotten used to its layout. The G750 feels sturdy, while actually managing to be somewhat slimmer than its competitors. It's got a number of useful features, like a Blu-ray drive and all the connectivity options you'd expect.

Performance is what really counts, however, and the G750 doesn't disappoint. 3DMark's Fire Strike test awarded the notebook a score of 3,357. While that's definitely not the highest score we've recorded for a gaming notebook (the GTX 770M in the G750 obviously can't match the GTX 780M in our record holder), it's still an excellent result.

You'll be able to play most games these days with the settings cranked up, or some of the meaner titles with a few of the options tweaked a bit lower. Bear in mind that there are different models of G750 with different hardware configurations, and depending on which one you opt for, your experience could differ.

One area where the G750 disappoints, however, is with its built-in speakers. They produce a tinny, lifeless sound, which just can't hold up to the always impressive audio on MSI's gaming notebooks. It's not a huge issue, and it's nothing that can't be fixed with headphones – but it's something to consider. Despite this, the G750 is an excellent contender for your cash if you're looking for a high-end gaming notebook. **NAG**

- Dane Remendes



SPECS

CPU Intel Core i7-4700HQ (2.4GHz)
GPU NVIDIA GeForce GTX 770M (3GB GDDR5)
RAM 16GB DDR3 (supports up to 32GB)
HDD 1TB HDD / 256GB SSD / 32GB ASUS WebStorage
DISPLAY 17.3-inch, 1920x1080 native resolution



9

It's not the most powerful gaming notebook money can buy right now, but ASUS' G750 is nevertheless a powerful contender.

PLUS
Looks mean / Impressive performance

MINUS
Expensive / Disappointing built-in audio



Hardware Award



SPECS

CHIPSET
Intel X79
MEMORY
8x 240-pin DDR3
CPU SUPPORT
LGA 2011
EXPANSION
5x PCI-E 16X,
1x PCI-E 4X
SIZE
E-ATX

BENCHMARKS

BASELINE: ASUS MAXIMUS VI EXTREME

3DMark 11	14,472	13,258
Cinebench 11.5	13.57	10.17
AIDA 64 copy	21,446MB/s	32,112MB/s

EVGA X79 Dark

Supplier EVGA **Website** www.evga.com **RRP** TBA

EVGA motherboards have had a treacherous history. When the team originally responsible for the X58 Classified left, it would be an understatement to say that the motherboard division fell apart. Simply put, there was no motherboard team to speak of. Coincidentally one of the key people to depart from the team was Peter "Shamino" Tan who has somewhat of a deity status in the industry and community. Defecting from EVGA he joined ASUS and the ROG team and, well, you are very much aware of just how complete their dominance has been over the last few years.

That however is the past; with the X79 Dark, EVGA has finally managed to produce something that is worthy of the brand. Everything after the X58 Classified and prior to the X79 Dark has been appalling, but now we have a new EVGA. The X79 Dark is almost two years overdue, but since the LGA2011 platform still has another 12 months or so in it, late is better than never. It is in light of this that the team at EVGA decided that they would, unlike other vendors, go forth and produce a brand new X79 board.

Speaking directly with many of the people involved we discovered just how committed the entire team was to producing a board that could go head to head with the prolific Rampage IV Extreme. After all this was the standard by which all X79 motherboards were measured and by which they all failed until the X79 Dark came along.

Feature-for-feature the Rampage IV Extreme still has the measure on everything, but as far as overclocking is concerned, the X79 Dark matches it and in some cases can exceed it. For example, where PCIe connectivity is concerned the Dark board is ahead. You can operate all PCIe slots in quad SLI at PCIe 3.0 speeds. Not many people are aware of this but on the Rampage IV Extreme it is not possible to have all cards operating at PCIe 3.0 when you engage three-way SLI or higher. The link speed drops to PCIe 2.0.

This isn't an easy feature to implement but with TiN and the rest of the team working endlessly at it, they managed to make it happen. Vincent "K|NGP|N" Lucido has been showing off what the X79 Dark is capable of doing for several months already, claiming virtually every multi-GPU world record on the planet. Granted very few people are able to compete at that level, it does prove that the board is capable when pushed to the limits. If it can survive the abuse that he puts the boards through, it'll certainly survive in a gaming machine.

At this juncture, it's pointless running through all the features that may be on an X79 chipset, the platform is old and just about everything here is familiar. This one is purely for those who are seeking overclocking records on this chipset. Overclocking aside and looking at features that are secondary, the Rampage IV Extreme still has the measure on this board. It's the overclocking profiles, the on board audio, the OC Key and such things that help present a more refined package on the ASUS offering than what is available on the X79 Dark.

Thus, if you're not too concerned with always having your graphics cards operating at the highest link frequency possible, then perhaps you may still be better off with the Rampage IV Extreme. However this would certainly not be a board to overlook as it really is an impressive piece of kit that we'd recommend any day. NAG

- Neo Sibeko

8

EVGA has finally produced a working X79 motherboard after several attempts. The X79 Dark however is possibly the best X79 board money can buy next to the Rampage IV Extreme.

PLUS

PCIe 3.0 on all slots / Performance / Great BIOS

MINUS

Can't update BIOS from within UEFI / Very late to market

We wouldn't be able to help you in this situation, but we wouldn't be suprised if you called us first.



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G.Skill TridentX F3-2800C12D 16GB Kit

Supplier G.Skill
Website www.compitum.co.za
RRP R6,850

The DRAM industry is on the rise again, but that doesn't mean it's a great time to be a consumer looking for performance DRAM. If you were hoping for even lower prices than we had in the last year, you may just have missed out for good. While we don't have the local pricing here in this review, this kit in the US retails for $600 USD excluding the tax you would then pay on it. So by the time it lands on our shores (if it ever does) expect to pay a lot of money.

What does this huge investment net you though? Well, you get some of the fastest memory: 2,800MHz at 1.65V is no joke to bin. The sorting process that chips must go through is taxing both electronically and financially for G.Skill, or any other vendor who sells such modules. Not only is this high speed RAM but it is also dual sided Hynix IC memory. That does not mean it is MFR though, which is probably why it is so expensive. The older or rather alternative ICs from Hynix and Samsung don't do the speeds as easily as single sided Hynix MFR based memory, but they do offer significantly better performance.

This RAM is not just for those frequency records and in fact, it will never come near the speed that MFR sets can reach. However, at 2,800MHz at its default settings it will run circles around MFR memory at 3,400MHz or even higher. Therefore, this is true gaming and performance memory. It's not just for high-speed validations which seem to be the order of the day for Z87 overclocking. Having said that, we still do feel that this RAM is very expensive and your money would be better spent on something else. If however you are building the ultimate machine, do consider this set. NAG

- Neo Sibeko



SPECS
FREQUENCY 2,800MHZ
TIMINGS 12-14-14-35

7

The G.Skill set may be expensive, but it is very fast. Exclusively for power users and overclockers looking for some of the best RAM money can buy.

PLUS
Performance / Overclocking headroom

MINUS
Local availability / Pricing

Patriot Viper 3 2133MHz C10 32GB

Supplier Syntech SA
Website www.syntech.co.za
RRP R2,699

Memory was dirt cheap a few months ago, but that isn't the case anymore. Still, if you consider how much 32GB of DDR3 would have cost you around three years ago, the price of any 32GB set today is significantly less. With that said, Patriot provided us with a set to test that is part of their performance Viper 3 series, but more focused on capacity rather than speed.

In the package you'll find four 8GB sticks, essentially two matched pairs of CL11 memory. Nothing to write home about, but given that you are spending on capacity here and not speed. CL11 isn't bad at all. Being the enthusiasts that we are, running the memory at the reference speed is always going to be boring so we took it upon ourselves to find out just how far we could push this memory.

The trick was however, that it had to be all sticks installed and not in dual or single channel mode (one DIMM per channel). To our surprise, with the help of the incredible Maximus VI Extreme, we were able to operate the memory at 2,400MHz by adjusting only the timings and not the voltage. At CL12, the memory not only produced better performance all around, but it was very stable after some slight tweaking. If you're willing to play around even more, we are confident that you can get the CAS latency down to 11 again, but there really isn't anything to be gained there in tangible performance.

What this kit provides is capacity without too much of a compromise on performance. It's a hard balance to strike without the price shooting through the roof and Patriot may just have pulled it off. This set is for power users who have massive workloads and are more concerned with productivity than gaming. For that usage scenario you should definitely consider this set. If you're purely looking for gaming memory consider the Patriot Viper 3 16GB 2,400MHz set we reviewed last issue. NAG

- Neo Sibeko



SPECS
FREQUENCY 2,133MHZ
TIMINGS 11-11-11-30

7

32GB is a lot of memory. Not necessary for most users, but a must have for graphics and video productivity suits.

PLUS
32GB of memory / Can easily run 2,400MHz

MINUS
2,133MHz isn't impressive at all / Not all motherboards play well with 32GB of memory

BIOSTAR Hi-Fi Z87X 3D

Supplier Kaira Technologies
Website www.biostar.com.tw
RRP R1,999

There was a time when BIOSTAR was one of the more popular brands in the enthusiast markets. That was around the P45 era, but since then BIOSTAR has taken a different approach to their products. Just because BIOSTAR isn't actively perusing the very high end, doesn't mean their products are not worth considering when looking to build a gaming PC.

The Hi-Fi Z87 board we received from BIOSTAR is a classic example of this. It's basic in layout, with the standard power, reset and CMOS clear buttons. A POST LED and all the typical connectivity options you find on a Z87 motherboard. It supports CrossFire but sadly lacks SLI capability. This isn't due to a mechanical or electrical shortcoming but most likely the absence of an SLI licence. Not a big deal, but perhaps something you might consider before deciding to make a purchase.

To offset that however, BIOSTAR has built onto the motherboard one of the most impressive audio solutions available today. It's by no means comparable to what you get on the Sniper 5, but then again this motherboard is likely to cost you a fraction of the price. Even then, normal on-board audio does not compare to what the Hi-Fi Z87X can deliver. It has a built in 600-ohm pre-amp for use with even the most high-end high impedance headphones. Not only that, but the audio circuitry is built for minimizing noise and producing as pristine an audio signal as possible. With this motherboard, what you are essentially buying is a low to mid-range audio card that just happens to come with a motherboard. There's nothing to be said about the board where overclocking and related features are concerned, but the audio does sound good and, depending on the price, this just may make this a board worth investing in. NAG

- Neo Sibeko



SPECS

CHIPSET
Intel Z87
MEMORY
4x 240-pin DDR3
CPU SUPPORT
LGA 2011
EXPANSION
3x PCI-E 16X,
3x PCI-E 4X
SIZE
ATX

7

Biostar has produced an ok to good motherboard that's made even more appealing by the on board audio

PLUS
PuroHi-Fi audio

MINUS
Nothing

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50 shades of grey

GG



I am a feminist. I'm all sorts of things, actually, including but not limited to coffee drinker, shoe hoarder, secret Roxette fan, crazy cat lady-in-training, and renegade winner of the Good Hope Caravan Club's 2013 potjie cook-off[1]. I'm also a gamer, obviously, and that's where being a feminist gets complicated.

And grossly *misunderstood*. Being both a feminist and a gamer, it seems, is also being some kind of traitor.

Let's back up for a moment first, though. What exactly constitutes contemporary feminism is difficult to define because it comprises multiple sociocultural ideologies, some of which can be contrary or otherwise incompatible with one another. Collectively, however, feminism could be described as a movement that advocates equality for women. That necessarily includes thinking critically about how women's status in society is undermined by systematic gender stereotyping and the expansive but sometimes subtle consequences of that.

And sometimes not so subtle. Recently, feminist blogger Anita Sarkeesian published a series of short videos, *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*, looking at the way gender is represented in games. The response from gamers[2] has been tediously predictable – an organised hate campaign that included attempts to hack her social media accounts, vandalising her Wikipedia page with explicit sexual images, threatening her with violence and rape, flagging her YouTube account for terrorism, coordinating DDoS attacks on her personal website, and a browser-based game rather unambiguously – and very unimaginatively called *Beat Up Anita Sarkeesian*.

Somebody tried to suggest that, *maybe*, video games are promoting a precarious perception of women that could result in real life repercussions, and gamers unironically proved it. You know why gamers say "there are no women on the Internet"? Because whenever they speak up, they're immediately shut down. Part of that, I've realised, is that some people are unable to distinguish between criticism and unequivocal condemnation. It's not a binary thing, like saying *x*, *y*, or *z* is problematic means it's AN ABOMINATION AND MUST BE EXPUNGED FROM THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT[3], nor should saying it in the first place be a one-way ticket to the gulags for thought crimes against the status quo.

The "damsel in distress" trope discussed in Sarkeesian's videos, for example, is not something that instantly makes you or your favourite game Stalin. More like it's something a *bit* questionable that we should, you know, question. And that's totally okay.

You'd think this would be entirely self-evident to gamers who obsess over the largely insignificant differences between 72 and 73 in review scores, but apparently nuance is strictly at the consumer's discretion.

I mean, it's not even that I agree with everything Sarkeesian claims in her videos because I definitely don't. I do, however, agree that everything she claims is worth thinking about at the very least and that when the result of that is ultimately *dis*agreement that murder is not the solution. There's a lot of space between "yes" and "no" in controversial topics like sexism in games, and something perhaps not being relevant to you personally does not preclude its importance to others. Play nice, everybody. **NAG**

- Tarryn van der Byl

1 Long story.

2 *Some* gamers, more specifically, but more than most of us would like to think.

3 Although I daresay the assumption is quite revealing of that person's own zero-sum thinking. Feminist? More like *feminazi*, amirite.

"Somebody tried to suggest that, maybe, video games are promoting a precarious perception of women that could result in real life repercussions, and gamers unironically proved it."

Extra Life

*By Scott Johnson – ©2013 All rights reserved – **Myextralife.com***





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