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Looking back... <

rAge 2010

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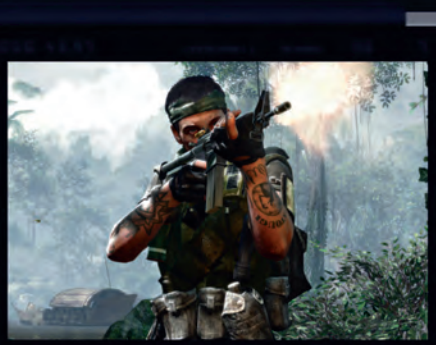

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NEWS OF THE WORLD

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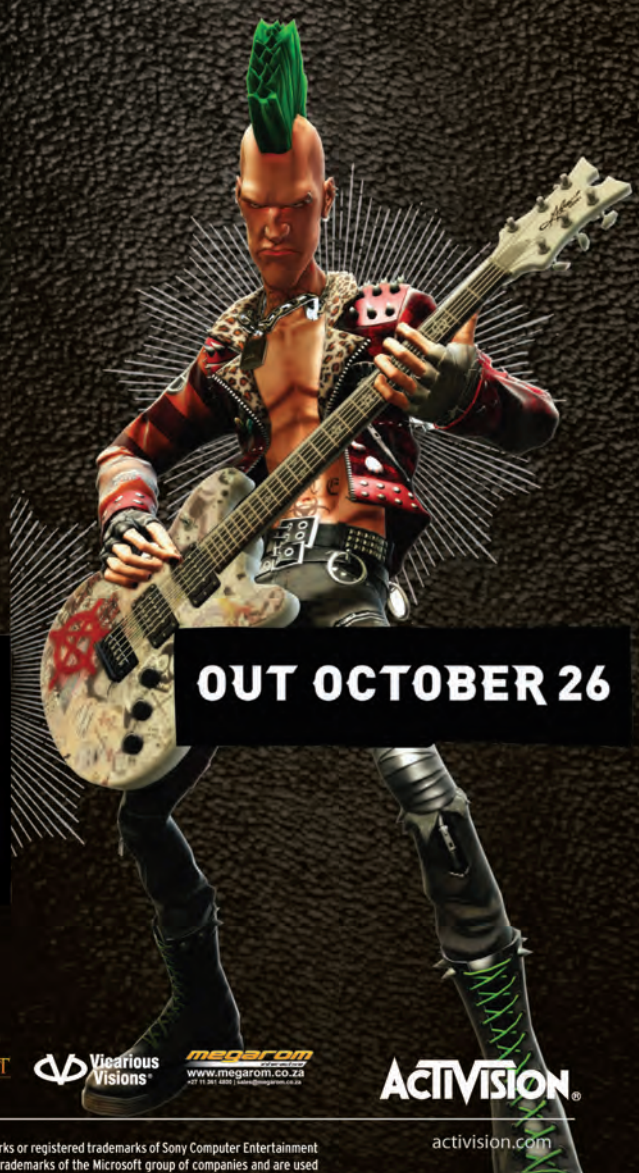

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<REGULARS>

12 Ed's Note
14 Inbox
16 Bytes
58 Looking Back: Raptor: Call of the Shadows
62 StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty Strategy Guide – Part 2
98 Game Over

<OPINION>

74 Hardwired
76 Life, Hardware and Ch@ps

<FEATURES>

26 Gran Turismo 5
We locked Russell Bennett in a room with a tiger, some paperclips, a PS3 and a demo of *Gran Turismo 5*. We refused to let him out until either the tiger had his way with him or he had some words to say about the game.

32 rAge 2010
If you missed rAge 2010, take a 60-percent penalty to your Coolness stat. Luckily, you can reduce that penalty by half if you read our ultra-special rAge feature. You're welcome.

80 MSI MOA 2010: May the X-Power be with you!
OMG Star Wars-themed show! Neo was in Taiwan recently for MSI's Master Overclocking Arena 2010.

82 NVIDIA GTX460 Hardcore Round-up
Which GTX460 is worthy of your cash?

<PREVIEW>

30 Vanquish

<REVIEWS>

38 Reviews: Introduction
39 Short Reviews: Heavy Rain Move Edition | Hydrophobia
40 Sid Meier's Civilization V [PC]
44 Dead Rising 2 [360]
48 Enslaved: Odyssey to the West [360]
52 R.U.S.E. [PC]
54 FIFA 11 [360]
55 Borderlands: Claptrap's New Robot Revolution [360]
56 Pro Evolution Soccer 2011 [PS3]

<HARDWARE>

66 Tech News
68 Dream Machine
70 Tech Q&A
72 Lazy Gamer's Guide: Xbox 360 S
78 DIY: Hands-on with Dremel – Part 9
86 ASUS Xonar Xense
88 SUPER TALENT Speed Series WS220UX4G8 4GB DDR3-2200 CL8 Dual Channel Kit
90 Corsair P256 and V256 SSD Drives
92 Antec DF-85
94 IntelliPen PRO | NETGEAR N300 Wireless Gigabit Router
95 Corsair Hydro Series H70
96 GIGABYTE GV-R577SL-1GD | SUPER TALENT RAIDDrive GS
97 Antec Veris Multimedia Station Premier | Thermaltake Toughpower 1.5KW

On the DVD

<DEMOS>

Blade Kitten | Civilization V | FIFA 11
House M.D | Pro Evolution Soccer 2011
Ship Simulator Extremes | WRC FIA World Rally Championship

<EXTRAS>

Civilization V Manual | Evochron Mercenary Soundtrack | Free Game: Plasma Pig | Split/Second Soundtrack
StarCraft II Replays | the BiT.pdf

<VIDEOS>

71 Game Trailers | 2 Miscellaneous videos
3 ScrewAttack Video Game Vault videos

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Honesty

I have no idea this month. No idea about what I'm going to talk about here... or here, or even here? *[Pause for effect]*

It's after rAge and I'm going on a one-week holiday in two days. Needless to say, I'm having a little trouble pretending to be an intelligent game journalist today. Not that you can call what we do here (strictly speaking) journalism.

So, what I did was ask the office for some suggestions about what I could write about, and this is what I got back.

Geoff: Bananas
Dane: I'm more of a man than you'll ever be
Chris Savides: The *Avatar* sex toy
Chris Bistline: rAge and Xbox live launch
Cheryl: I have no thoughts (she was off sick the next day)
Jacqui: Post rAge stuff and Christmas
Neo: Why are you even asking?

With one or two exceptions, they're a useless bunch as you can see, and this was on a good day. Sigh, because I get paid the big bucks, I'll try and make the best of the situation. ;)

RAGE 2010

Despite a crazy lead up, rAge 2010 was a real blast for me this year and really felt more alive than ever before. Don't know why – just a vibe. We had a just over 20,000 people through the doors during the weekend (1-3 October) showing the various exhibitors and media – and anyone else that cared to pay attention – that gaming is serious business in South Africa. The good news is that we actually have a rAge feature in *NAG* this year. In the past we've had so many readers asking us for something on rAge in the issue right after rAge that we did a whole huge feature on it this month. It feels like too much self-promotion to me, but anyway – you asked for it. I think the reason why I 'forget' to do a feature like this is once the show is done I get over it quickly and start thinking about the following year already. Hope you like it and start planning to get there next year already. Before I close off this paragraph there is one more thing that people keep asking me – when will rAge come to my part of the country (DBN and CPT). The short answer is not in the foreseeable future. The reason is a simple logistical one – rAge is a monster event that is fully supported by the different players in the industry each year. It costs a lot, not only in money but also time and other resources. It takes us around 10 months to plan and put the whole shindig together. It's not something that can be packed up and moved around. I would love to take rAge around the country but it's just not possible, so please understand it's not because we don't like you.

THE MARKETING PEOPLE MADE ME DO IT...

Please take note of our new subscription offers and tell all your buddies. As *NAG* and the industry as a whole expands we've noticed more and more serious console gamers buying the magazine. They all say the same thing – love the *NAG* but don't have any use for the DVD. So, what we've done is put together three new subscription offers to try and keep everyone happy. Go and have a look on page 60 if you want to subscribe for six or 12 months and then with or without the DVD. Also, take a look at our official mouse pad. It's the same style and material that we all use at the office. You can order one on that page too and, because we're nice people, you don't have to subscribe to order yourself a mouse pad.

From here to April 2011 is really going to be crazy times. Next month watch out for a special cover feature and in the January issue (out 23 December) we should be looking at another NAG favourite on the cover – that I can't talk about right now. ;) Also, Christmas is coming, yay.

Enjoy this one.

Michael James
[Editor]

On our reviews introduction page (38) we usually have a little LOL at the different writers in NAG. We didn't have space for all of them this month... Here's the one that thought he could get away.

Chris B. I'm secretly making a giant female body in *Minecraft*, complete with two hills and a tunnel-of-love cave. I spend my time roaming her peaks and then running in and out of the cave lighting dynamite until it starts 'snowing'.

NAG

editor
michael james
ed@nag.co.za

technical writer
neo sibeko

tree-dwelling simians
geoff burrows
dane remendes

contributing editor
lauren das neves

international correspondent
miktar dracon

contributors
derrick cramer
alex jelagin
rodain joubert
walt pretorius
miklós szecsei
tarryn van der byl
Ettienne Venter

art director
chris bistline

assistant art director
chris savides

photography
chris bistline
dreamstime.com

sales executive
cheryl bassett
cheryl@nag.co.za
+27 72 322 9875

marketing and promotions manager
jacqui jacobs
jacqui@nag.co.za
+27 82 778 8439

office assistant
paul ndebele

contact details
p o box 237
olivedale
2158
south africa
tel +27 11 704 2679
fax +27 11 704 4120

subscription department
subs@nag.co.za

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We ran out of funny here too. We can't print the suggestions from the idiots in the office without risking a raid by the FPB.

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Letter of the Moment

From: Morne
Subject: Do priorities change as you grow up? I think not.

"**I WAS 8 YEARS OLD** the day it all started, my dad had just returned from America bearing gifts as was customary for whenever he went travelling for work. I received a box wrapped in thick bubble wrap. I feverishly opened it, and from the packaging and bubble wrap emerged a grey rectangular piece of electronics. This is the day I became a full-fledged gamer. It was the first Sony PlayStation ever and I got it before it was released in SA and I still remember my dad cutting the bulky, weird pronged American plug off and fitting one of our plugs onto it – so started a new phase in my life.

My dad made a deal with me that if I wanted something I had to come up with half of the money for whatever I wanted. This worked fine because I would pump my pocket money into all my gaming expenses. So I started off with one game a month, then that started becoming a problem as I started spending all my free time playing and finishing a new game in a matter of days. Every trip to Makro became this crazy bargaining-and-begging session where I would ask my dad to just use this month's pocket money for this game, and he would say "but this pocket money is going to last month's game where you pulled the same trick." And so it carried on, I did so many random jobs/services to pay off all my gaming debt. From washing all the cars/dogs/dishes to cutting grass etc. etc.

As I eventually grew older and started high school, I had the opportunity to get weekend jobs to earn extra cash, my gaming consoles upgraded from PlayStation 1 to PS1 slim to PS2 to PS2 slim to Xbox 360 (don't judge! PS3 was bloody expensive when it came out) and eventually to my current console: my PS3.

Now to the point of my whole story... One day I was at my local gaming store and was buying a new game that just released but I was R50 short, I remembered that I had a R50 note stashed under my scooter seat in case I ever got stuck somewhere without cash for petrol. I quickly popped out to fetch it and as I was getting it from my under my seat when I noticed that my tank was empty and I probably didn't have enough gas to get back home. So here was my dilemma, either I bite the bullet and leave the game to fill my scooter so that I could get back home or I chance it and buy the game with my emergency petrol stash and risk having to push my scooter 5km to my house.

Long story short I drove for about 4km before my scooter died beside the road, but it was totally worth it, I had a smile on my face as I kept glancing down at my brand new game still in its plastic knowing that in about 40 minutes I'll be in front of my TV watching the opening cut-scene to yet another great game.

Fast forward to present day. I have just started my first job at a big engineering company as a junior and my first pay just came through today. Now my dilemma is that today is the 1st and tomorrow I will be attending rAge with a full month's untouched pay. Have my priorities changed? I shall find out this weekend. Hopefully, I will make responsible decisions as a young "adult" and not have to ask my girlfriend for help pushing my Polo back home... Randburg to Edenvale is about 35km and my Polo is slightly heavier than my old scooter."

I laughed when I read this letter because it rings so true. I'll bet about half our readers are nodding and smiling right now. How about for the next month you people write in with your own gaming-dedication stories. Keep them short. Ed.

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

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Important: Include your details when mailing us, otherwise how will you ever get your prize if you win...

From: Wentzel
Subject: Consumer Rights

"**GOOD DAY TO ALL.** As an avid reader of *NAG* I must commend you on a great magazine that has been getting better and better through the years. Before I started this letter I was busy typing out a complaint letter complaining about poor support services from a renowned distributor, however my request today is not to write/type a complaint as I have just resolved the issue but to ask that a complaint section be added to the magazine where the gaming community can voice their grievances about poor services and support. The reason for this is because you are THE gaming magazine in South Africa and where better to voice your frustration than in a medium where everyone shares the same passion. I'm aware that this might not be possible but it might lead to issues being resolved earlier than later as I myself have had numerous issues with distributors and retailers concerning PC games that I have purchased in the past."

Thanks for the mail. I don't think I want to dedicate a whole page in NAG *just for one-sided bitching. Isn't that what the Internet is for? Consumers have two choices. Choice 1 – whine and complain. Choice 2 – spend their money somewhere else. Additionally, many issues are resolved with a simple phone call and at the end of the day just vote with your money. If a place / product sucks then don't support it anymore. Ed.*

From: Michelle
Subject: Poor quality

"**HEY, I AM REALLY** miffed about this. I pay good money for your magazine but when I get it home and start reading it, the middle pages fall out and this wasn't the first time either – last month same thing. This month I was really bummed out, not only because of the middle pages but because I had to tear, yes tear, some of the nice, glossy pages to read them which is really sad, because I like your magazine, it's very helpful to me, and I buy it as often as I can. Please could you try sort it out?"

We raised this issue with the printers and they addressed the problem with an elegant and simple solution – increase the length of the staples. As you may have noticed with the October issue, the internal pages are more secure. This whole writing, producing and printing a magazine process isn't an exact science yet and as we change and grow, things don't always work out perfectly. Thanks for the feedback and this goes to show that we do listen. ;) Ed.

From: Michael
Subject: Crazy Mass Effect 2 Stats

"**WHEN I PLAYED** *Mass Effect 2* (on my trusty Xbox 360), my total game time ended being something like 55 hours. I thought that that was a pretty normal amount of time considering that I had played through the two free DLC packs offered and that I had completed every possible mission in the game (Main- and side-missions). Then, a couple of months later, I was astounded when my brother also completely finished the game, just as I had, but with a total time of plus/minus 33 hours. This struck me as odd, so I did some experimenting... and found that, when one is in the 'pause' screen (i.e. the circle of options that come up when one presses the start button), the game timer counts it towards actual game time! I remember leaving my game for ages on the pause screen – which explains how some people ended up with such long completion times. You wouldn't expect such a reputable and awesome development company like BioWare to overlook as crucial an issue as this! For their efforts, they have some much skewed stats on completion times. That is all. :)"

This is typical and your letter goes a long way to proving that when a company releases a few fun statistics about the habits of their customers a horde of Internet people start comparing and discussing and then arguing and then blaming and so on. There's only one statistic that matters and that is 93% of all statistics are made up on the spot. Ed.

From: Kate
Subject: Gaming n00b Frustrations

"**SO I AM A** n00b at computer gaming and always have a nervous feeling when I turn my laptop on knowing that I have Vista, problem number one. I went to rAge for the first time and was very impressed with what I saw. I had played a few games before but never was a true gamer (I plan to change this.) Anyway, my boyfriend and I decided to buy 3 games: *Overlord, Hitman* and *Dead Space*. I really wanted to play *Dead Space* because I like the horror side of gaming. So all went well and I put the CD in my Vista infected laptop and the installation started. It took forever to install and then a little nasty popup said I needed the Internet to run the game... I laughed in irritation as we tried to figure this one out... I thought to myself, just my luck. I later discovered, quite ironically via the Internet that I was not the only one with the installing problem of this game, this made me feel a little better. After many attempts all I wanted to do was play a new game. We then tried *Hitman*. It loaded perfectly, except for one small, rather important feature... the sound! At this point I... *[Goes on a bit, Ed]*"

Ah yes, gaming on the PC... It's a great

Shorts [extracts of LOL from NAG reader letters]

"I recently played Infamous on a friend's PS3 (I know, I know a bit late) and was quite literally blown away (more like electrocuted) by its interesting premise and cool powers, but my feelings of awe and impress were short lived as those feelings were swiftly overtaken by a deep and everlasting sorrow, I don't own a PS3 but a 360." **– Bongani**

"On another note, I only sent this email out of sheer, undiluted boredom. It was either this or I attempt to kill people in imaginative ways...in games, of course."
– Tempest

"Spots games are dead!" **– Herman**

NAG Fan artwork

This is the best of what we received during the month. If you can 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.

Jerome Steyn: had nothing to say...

Motheo Sehlako: "I introduce the NAG BMW M3; it took me a while to model and texture and 9 hours to render. I used 3D Max, Photoshop and a brilliant render called V-Ray. Well I hope you enjoy it."

This month, Phoenix Software is giving away software bundles from AVG and Sony, plus Musica is thowing in a R500 voucher!

experience but it can certainly test the patience here and there. I suggest using Google and reading up on solutions to the problems you experiencing (just type in the whole error word for word) – in most cases people have already encountered these problems and fixed them. In general, you should also update all your drivers (graphics, sound, motherboard, etc.) Also look online for patches for the games before you run them. Serious PC gaming is a brave world full of adventure and excitement but you have to pack the right gear (and attitude) to survive. ;) Ed.

From: Jan
Subject: rAge experience

"**3RD OF OCTOBER 2010,** a scorching morning sun baked down on me from above as I stood adjacent the Coca-Cola Dome, eagerly waiting for my once a year experience. Two Chinese walls stood outside at 9h45, all a-buzz with anticipation for the day. 15 minutes felt like an hour, but finally, the doors to gaming heaven opened... Inside as I walked in with the hoard of fans, the majestic view grabbed my heart right out of my chest. This place is huge! It looks bigger every year! Hot girls, huge TVs, awesome gaming rigs, and stands as far as the eye can see, this was going to be great. The first game I played was some Formula 1 simulator thing. Sitting in a cockpit, I got ready to kick donkey, only ending up kicking myself (stupid simulations). Out of the many games I played, pretty much all of them were filled to the brim with fun, even if I sucked at most of them (simply because I am a complete n00b playing with PS3s or Xbox 360s, and didn't know any of the buttons. Hey, at least I came first in a *WRC Rally* race, and a race in *Hot Pursuit*, all against the AI... Sulking aside, it was all fun. I had a blast. 3D is going to be huge, and each year keeps getting better and better! All in all, a terrific experience – from 9:45 right through to 16:10. Even the aimless wandering and drooling at expensive stuff was fun. :) Thank you for all your trouble. It was the most fun I have had this year! Keep it up."

That's right, a self-serving and self-promoting shameless use of letter space. Ed.

From: David
Subject: Blizzard bans single player cheaters

"**RECENTLY IN *STARCRAFT II*** several users had their accounts suspended or banned for using third-party programs known as "trainers" in single player campaign and skirmishes vs. A.I. Trainers access the games data and edits it in a way which gives users an advantage over a game, e.g. unlimited health, money etc. These are different from built-in cheats, as they often allow several other options to be implemented into the game. These trainers only work in single player, and have absolutely no effect on online multiplayer whatsoever, as they cause the game to de-sync when playing online. The only thing they can is help you earn the achievements easily. Blizzard has claimed that "Achievements carry weight and prestige in online play," but honestly, I don't see how that affects anybody else but me? Would it make any difference to you if I cheated my way to all the achievements? Of course not. While this is completely unfair there isn't much we can do to avoid the ban hammer, seeing as how it states in their EULA (which we all agreed to when we installed the game) that any third-party cheating programs are cause for a ban. I still strongly disagree with what Blizzard is doing, and if I do get my account suspended I will refuse to ever play another Blizzard game, and advise all my friends to do the same."

I really don't understand why people cheat to get achievements in the first place – if you can't play your way to glory then you don't deserve to get the particular badge, symbol or ribbon – probably why they call them achievements. Even those people that play Barbie's Pony Express *just for the Xbox Gamerscore still have to go through the misery of playing a game like that to earn their achievements. I say good job to Blizzard for teaching everyone a lesson. Cheating for achievements is the ultimate in lame. Ed.* NAG

On the Forums

QUESTION: Do you see hype as beneficial, a negative influence, or a little bit of both?

Demikid: Hype is like a double sided sword, it makes you believe you got your money's worth on good games but makes average games look like turds.

dammit: Hype is only good if the game delivers. Otherwise it has the same effect as crying wolf.

Graal: A bit of both, as it can seriously ruin a good game that might have done good had it not had its expectations set too high, or make a horrid game sell perfectly.

Cleric: Hype is wonderful. It gives me something to talk to my friends about in my boring, mundane life.

echo: Hype is what you make of it personally. Too much leads to disappointed, too little leads to games going under the radar and bombing.

Shadowrend: Hyped hype is hyped. 'Nuff said.

NightWalker567: Hype is only as good as the game that the hype is about. :D

Unreal Arbiter: Hype is necessary to sell games, but when it's exaggerated there's too much potential to disappoint.

SC(+)PE: Hype generated by the publisher is often good marketing. Hype generated by fanboys, the internet and your own anticipation is generally the kind leading to disappointment.

Tankiouse: Hype is good I guess, it brought us Duke Nukem Forever.

LazyDemoni: I can't afford to let hype get to me because I'll feel compelled to buy the game and share in the excitement. This is sometimes a good feeling but some games are so overhyped that even veteran reviewers fail to do their job (GTA4).

wisp: Hype=money. Can you say Hellgate London was a great game just cause the hype told you so.

sualk: Hype is a killer. It pumps you up to a level where you must get the games etc. blow the cash and then be utterly disappointed with the end product. Wait for the bargain bin rather.

bullet: Agreed, hype is a killer, I remember all the hype about Op. Flash. Dragon Rising and it turned out average to poor. Shame.

wadismad: With too much hype you usually just get disappointed in the end, but note "usually" And then you get gems like Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, that were worth all the hype!!

OllieTheDog: Hype is bollocks dreaded

HamR0ll: Hype is a good thing if it's a good game you waste you money on.

Shaderow: It will sooner or later kill a major game studio i have seen the future in my enemies blood

cov1e_stalker: Hyping a game is like herding sheep, only those who follow blindly fall for it, and are sometimes disappointed. A good adverting campaign does not equal a good game.

King bob: Almost all games i have bought due to hype have been a huge let down (think MW2 and BF: BC2). Developers love it though, more hype = more profit.

M2K: It Depends on whether the hype affects you or not.

It's a tiny voice because it's a tiny mind, everyone is welcome: http://www.nag.co.za/forums/

I, Gamer

by Miklós Szecsei

Green Ring of Live

XBOX LIVE IS COMING to South Africa. I care, and you *might*, but you know who doesn't? PC gamers. Well, they're probably just indifferent or too busy judging consoles from the ramparts of their lofty gaming towers, occasionally pausing between benchmarking or whatever they do instead of actually playing games, to look up and mutter some condescension about how online gaming is free with a PC. But whatever! This column is meant for those who have transcended beyond a platform-blinkered gaming existence. It's for those gamers with a big enough bank balance to afford every gaming platform! Or it's for those with a pathetic bank balance because of owning every gaming platform. Take your pick; you might want to choose the wealthier option as I hear it makes other expensive things (like kids or alcoholism) easier to fund.

Be nice to each other; there's nothing worse than sharing a racetrack with an adolescent kid who compensates for schoolyard bullying by screaming profanities into a headset over Live.

Xbox Live could be here by the time you read this! If it isn't, then I pray we're still *actually* getting it otherwise I'm just going to look stupid, especially in front of the crowd I just totally offended. But I'd deserve that.

The imminent landing of Xbox Live means one of two things: either it'll be nothing new seeing as you've got a sneaky, workaround Xbox Live account already; or it'll herald the moment when your training wheels are removed from your Xbox 360. If the latter, then expect it to be something akin to having always owned a Ferrari (yes a Ferrari – hush, PC gamer – just go with the analogy and stop fretting about how much faster your rig is) but now being able to drive it around a racetrack properly. Naturally, your newfound racetrack is going to be chock-full of similar Ferrari owners eager to race alongside you. Be nice to each other; there's nothing worse than sharing a racetrack with an adolescent kid who compensates for schoolyard bullying by screaming profanities into a headset over Live. Sadly, with the good side of Xbox Live comes the bad, but the best way to approach it would be to treat it like you would any other public, social occasion.

See you on XBL, unless of course you're one of the aforementioned adolescents – in which case I'll mute you and try my hardest to trash your star rating.

Heart of the Swarm next year? LOL no.

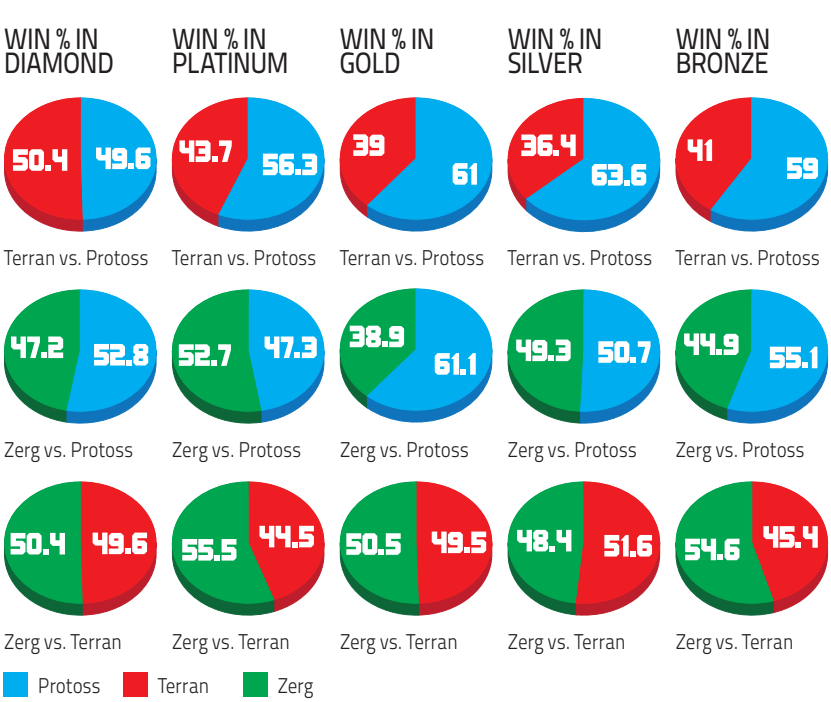
Also – some patch news and stat action Blizzard

WE'RE GOING TO HAVE to wait a bit longer than we were initially led to believe for the next two parts of the *StarCraft II* saga. Blizzard reckons that the first of those two parts, *Heart of the Swarm*, is at least 18 months away. That's many months. Oh well – at least it's not 12 years.

In other *SC II* news, Blizzard hopes to focus on the 23.5% of players who play as Zerg in 1v1 matches with their next balance patch. Here are some of the changes that Blizzard expects to implement in the next balance patch:

- Increased Roach range. This will allow Roaches to be more effective in large groups, giving the Zerg more options in the mid to end game.
- Fungal Growth will now prevent Blink, which will give Zerg a way to stop endlessly Blinking stalkers which can be very challenging to deal with in large numbers.
- The Barracks are going to require a Supply Depot, which will impact a lot of early Terran Reaper pushes.
- The Reaper speed upgrade will require the Factory, which is meant to weaken a lot of the early Terran Reaper attacks that dominate so many matches, especially in team games.
- Blizzard is making a number of increases to the health of Zerg buildings, which will make the very vulnerable Zerg technology structures more resistant to raids. The developers don't expect these hit point changes to have a super significant impact on the game, but the current numbers "felt way too low."

Blizzard has also released some interesting stats that have been harvesting from the leagues.



BANCRAFT II

Cheating is bad. You, of course, knew that already, but here's another reason to wake up and smell the grey import Game Genie cart that just melted your NES: When you sign up for a Battle.net account, you agree to the terms laid out by Blizzard which explicitly state that if you cheat, you will be banned from Battle.net. Blizzard has made good on that warning by banning 5,000 filthy cheaters and hackers from *StarCraft II*. This news makes us happy, because using unsavoury methods just to improve your win/loss ratio is pretty pathetic.

"Maintaining a stable, safe, and secure online-gaming experience for legitimate players is a top priority for us, and we'll be continuing to keep watch on Battle.net and take action as needed," states Blizzard when you log into *StarCraft II*. If you're thinking about cheating: don't. Unless of course you're happy forfeiting the cash you handed over for your copy of the game.

Redefining the term "starving artist"

Professional and budding musicians alike will soon have the "as real as it gets" Pro Mode of *Rock Band 3* to challenge them in ways they never thought a videogame could. While the game will ship with Pro versions of each song in its library, additional downloadable content isn't going to provide buyers with a Pro version as standard. If you want that privilege, you'll have to pay extra for it. One dollar extra, to be precise.

"If you wanted to buy Pro Mode for guitar on top of that dollar ninety-nine, it would cost a buck," says MTV Games' Paul DeGooyer. "So it's not going to be five bucks or anything. We think it's a really fair price. The alternative would be of course to include it (in the regular download) and up the price for everybody, which I don't think is really fair."

Considering the RRP for the Mad Catz 122-button, six string controller is aimed at $150 (R1,000), and the Fender Squier unit is still not priced but no-doubt even more expensive, going Pro in *Rock Band 3* is almost going to cost as much as starting a real band.

Hell yes! Zombies confirmed in Black Ops

We all suspected that this announcement was coming, but there was always that tiny sliver of doubt in the back of our minds, forcing us to ask: what if it doesn't? Turns out we should never have doubted Treyarch, because they've officially announced that cooperative zombie bashing is returning in *Call of Duty: Black Ops*. We cried tears of joy like excitable schoolgirls at a *Twilight* premiere when this news broke and we expect you to cry a little as well. In a press release, Treyarch head honcho Mark Lamia said that Treyarch has "taken extra special care to retain the essential ingredients of our Zombie game, and have also crafted a nice surprise for the fans." Any guesses on the surprise? We're hoping they include a versus mode where the zombies are controlled by players. Or at least the ability to come back as a zombie after you've been taken down by the brain munchers. So many possibilities!

»

WHAT A STEAL

Grand Theft Auto IV might not have been everyone's cup of tea, but its two expansions – *The Lost and the Damned* and *The Ballad of Gay Tony* – managed to make up for anything the game lacked. For some time, gamers have been able to purchase the expansions separately or as a standalone combo pack, and now Rockstar is releasing the whole business, including *GTA IV* itself, as a bundled deal. What makes this so special is its RRP, which is only $39.99, so expect to see it in stores for the same price as a budget console title (R350-R500). You should be able to pick up *GTA IV: The Complete Edition* by the time this text reaches your hands.

»

DCUO PREPARES FOR TAKE-OFF

Development of *DC Universe Online* is still chugging along, although its release window has slipped a notch or two down to "early 2011."

"As the game heads into external beta testing, this extra time will allow us to address community feedback in a meaningful way," says Sony Online Entertainment president John Smedley. "When we get deeper into external beta, we'll be able to share more information regarding the new launch date."

DCUO will put players in control of a custom character within the DC universe, and will include characters such as Aquaman, Catwoman, Harley Quinn, Green Lantern and Wonder Woman. If you think you're cool enough to get into the beta program, head over to **www.dcuniverseonline.com** and sign away your life.

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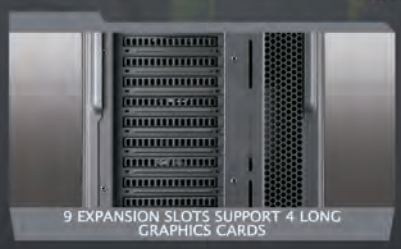

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2 FRONT USB 3.0 PORTS

SATA DOCK FOR EASY INSTALLATION WITHOUT REMOVING SIDE PANEL

DREAM CASE
HAF X NVIDIA EDITION

The much anticipated HAF X NVIDIA edition arrives to become the flagship of the popular HAF (High Air Flow) series. It is SLI certified by NVIDIA to cool nvidia next generation Tri-SLI GPU including NVIDIA GTX 480 in multiple GPU configurations and comes packed with specialized support and cooling with the help of up to four gigantic fans, and easy access to installed components. This is as close as it gets to a system builder's 'Dream Case'.

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The Indie Investigator

by Rodain Joubert

Retro: it's sexy

IN THE SAME WAY that the fashion industry occasionally loves to dredge up clothing from an earlier era and try pass it off as the next "new thing" – albeit with more modern touches – the gaming industry also brings us many callbacks from all ages, whether it be a new version of Pac Man on the Xbox or a free-to-play web version of the original Prince of Persia.

The retro gaming movement, however, isn't just about rehashing and representing oldies for a newer audience: it's about keeping what's great about older games while evolving what was lacking. Sometimes, on the shallower front, there's the simple graphical makeover: approximately 99% of redone arcade classics, in other words. For those who aren't complete gaming philistines, however, there's a much richer world available: one where the aesthetic and charm of an older generation of visuals and sounds can be kept in an evolved, more detailed or just plain ol' fun gameplay system.

Recent downloadable Xbox titles such as the Scott Pilgrim videogame and slightly older offerings like Cave Story are fine examples of games which aren't ashamed of their 2D origins, their pixellated avatars or their chiptune soundtracks. Nay, they take an entirely different creative direction and actively revel in this stuff, bringing joyful nostalgia to older gamers and perhaps a broader mind to the newer ones.

Retro gaming isn't just about rehashing and representing oldies for a newer audience: it's about keeping what's great about older games while evolving what was lacking.

From an indie point of view, retro games are important because they represent so many things: they're a lesson in resource management, they generally have focused gameplay, and the lasting appeal of these titles often means that they've got something to teach other developers. Still, for all of those serious reasons, it's still nice to kick back and understand the pure fun value of the "retro look." Sure, it may not be everyone's cup of tea, but if you're not inclined to judging a book by its cover – or indeed, judging the cover itself by a very strict set of criteria – then casting aside preconceptions about a game that simply looks retro can yield incredible and rewarding gameplay experiences.

The indie community is filled with gems that lack conventional presentation but provide awesome systems of play. The key to being a good audience is to not merely look past that, but understand why it's awesome.

Love the game, love the movie?

An update on the Halo, World of Warcraft flicks

IT'S TIME FOR A quick update on the progress of a couple of big game-to-movie conversions. First up: *Halo*. Microsoft's plans to bring Master Chief to the big screen have been on hold for many, many moons now, but if a rumour floating around the Internet is to be believed, then Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks Pictures is eager to revitalise the project. A report has surfaced which states that certain unnamed "insiders" have revealed that DreamWorks is "renewing its efforts to obtain the rights and revive the project" and "focusing on using novelizations of the video game." They plan to use the books as a basis for the film, because according to these "insiders," DreamWorks wants to avoid the responsibility of reimbursing Universal Studios the 12-million dollars they've already sunk into a film based directly on the games.

Rumours such as this have popped up before. Last year, film site IESB reported that Mr Spielberg was "blown away" by screenwriter Stuart Beattie's script, which was based on the novel *Halo: The Fall of Reach*. The site went on to say that Spielberg was in "active negotiations" for a piece of the *Halo* pie. Microsoft recently said that it's still considering bringing *Halo* to Hollywood, but "won't move on it until there's a great reason to do it." If this rumour turns out to be true and the director behind *Jurassic Park*, *Minority Report* and *War of the Worlds* is interested in doing the *Halo* movie, we can't think of a better reason for Microsoft to jump in headfirst.

Next up: the *World of Warcraft* movie. While we're not sure exactly how its creators plan to make fetch quests exciting on the silver screen, a movie based on the rich lore of the *Warcraft* universe is reason enough to get excited. Don't expect to see the movie soon though, because the man who's supposed to be directing it, Sam Raimi, has committed to another film for his next project. The director of the *Spider-Man* trilogy has chosen Disney's *Oz: The Great And Powerful* as his next film. Production on Oz isn't due to begin until early next year, so the WoW movie is likely still a long, long way off. This comes as no surprise, however, since Raimi recently revealed that people would need to be patient for the *WoW* movie – the film's script and characters are still a work in progress. Our guess is that starring in big-budget movies is part of "the really good stuff that makes up for all the grinding" that characters can only access once they've hit level 80...

NEW DEVIL MAY CRY ANNOUNCED, FANS HAVE A LITTLE CRY ABOUT IT

Ninja Theory (developers of *Heavenly Sword* and *Enslaved: Odyssey to the West*) are developing the next title in the *Devil May Cry* series. It's simply titled *DmC* and is the first in the series to not be developed internally by Capcom. Shown for the first time at Tokyo Game Show, fans of the series immediately displayed outrage at the new look of lead character Dante, screaming and weeping in agony and despair on forums across the Internet about how poop this next game is going to be because the lead character's look has changed, even though they've yet to play the game. They even went so far as to come up with their own, "improved" version of the new Dante, which they promptly sent to Ninja Theory and said "fix pl0x 'cause we're professionals." Entertainment value of all that senseless whinging and bitching aside, if Ninja Theory does as good a job on *DmC* as they've done with *Enslaved*, we don't care if the lead character's hair matches his belt or not.

Ooo, busted!

Blizzard aren't the only ones getting ban-happy with dirty cheaters. Bungie has recently clamped down on thousands of cheaters in *Halo: Reach* who thought they were being clever by exploiting a network bug to gain huge amounts of in-game credits.

According to reports, players were able to rack up 20,000 credits by repetitively performing a certain set of steps within the campaign, all within ten minutes. Bungie was quick to respond to the problem by resetting the credit scores of over 15,000 detected cheaters to zero. And that's just the preliminary pass.

A Bungie rep said "as our automated banhammer mechanisms grow accurate enough to satisfy our high bar for burden of proof," we can expect the number of bans and penalties to continue to rise.

Shaping it as you see fit

For as long as we care to remember, RPG sequels have allowed players to import their old characters into the new game. That's not really possible with *Dragon Age II*, because in this sequel, players are handed control of a new character. Never fret though, because BioWare has you covered. Rather than importing your character from *Dragon Age: Origins*, you'll be able to import your entire world. Well, sort of. We'll let *DA II*'s lead designer, Mike Laidlaw, explain it to you:

"The decisions your Warden made and the person they were all affects *Dragon Age II*. You know, who's in charge of Ferelden, what happened with the Dwarves, who's running Orzammar? All of these things are reflected and accounted for in Dragon Age II," said Laidlaw. "I've always seen *Dragon Age* as a franchise as about more than any one character. It's about entire an entire span of history and the whole world that's affected by what happens."

US Army testing PIPBoys for use in the field

...Except they're being really lame and calling them Wrist-Mounted Phosphorescent OLED Displays. Since when was the U.S. Army so boring? The devices are a result of a collaborative project between Universal Display, LG as well as L-3 Display Systems so each unit houses a ton of the three companies' technology.

Designed to be worn on the wrist of soldiers in the field, the ~~PIPBoys~~ OLED Displays incorporate an advanced communications tool and a full colour, 4.3" display. The testing went well and senior officials for the US Army's technology division were very pleased with devices. Perhaps they'll become standard issue? You've got to love it when games and real life collide.

NOBODY EVER REALLY QUITS

Following on from recent news that *World of Warcraft*'s next paid expansion, *Cataclysm*, will hit store shelves in December, Blizzard has now revealed that the number of active subscribers to *WoW* has officially hit the 12-million mark. Blizzard's Mike Morhaime describes *Cataclysm* as "a re-creation of much of the original Azeroth, complete with epic new high-level adventures for current players and a redesigned leveling experience for those just starting out." We describe it as just another way to get people hooked on *WoW* so that Blizzard and Activision can fill more empty swimming pools with money. The expansion will introduce two new playable races – the Goblins and the Worgen – and rearranges Azeroth's terrain and quests. The level cap is also being increased to 85, so you have more reason to grind.

AFRAID OF THE DARK

From Software has announced *Project Dark* – which is being hailed as a successor to their brilliant PS3 exclusive, *Demon's Souls*. They're headed the multiplatform route this time, because *Project Dark*'s official site lists both Xbox 360 and PS3 as the game's platforms. We know almost nothing about the game, but we do know that it's an action RPG, it's supposed to release next year and that there'll be a heavy emphasis on dungeon crawling, tension and terror It'll also probably be dark and stuff. Very dark.

Miktar's Meanderings

by Miktar Dracon

Gaming Relationships: A Consideration

I'M 30 NOW. HELLO reader! I've always wanted to say that, but didn't because I was afraid it would come across as *Huisgenoot* cheesy. You may not know me, but you see, I'm the guy who writes *Miktar's Meanderings*. It's been fun to write, the perfect parody of everything I'm utterly sincere about, because isn't parody the sincerest form of flattery?

I'm taking this little break to talk serious for a while, about the kind of unique problems the modern gamer has. Which is why being a gamer is so endearing to me. Because I can *relate*.

I'm sure most gamers have had this problem: having to go through your console's memory. Deleting game saves and profiles of people you no longer hang out with. Games you never finished. Games you *bloody forgot* you own. Sure, there's enough memory in the damn thing that it's not a space problem, but really, you just don't want to keep stuff you're now all weird about. If you get my drift.

I'm sure most gamers have had this problem: having to go through your console's memory. Deleting game saves and profiles of people you no longer hang out with. Games you never finished. Games you bloody forgot you own.

Another problem gamers may be facing is you're *Halo*, she's *Farmville*. Or, if it's a really weird relationship, you're *Farmville* and she's *Halo*. Either way, there may be mild contention as a result of what to do with the older consoles, gathering dust in the closet like a stack of mummified Lassies.

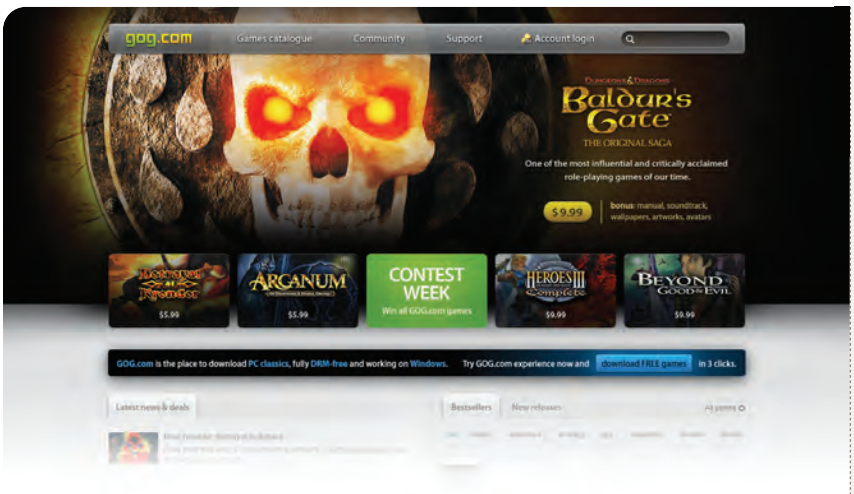
But there are benefits! Conversations aren't about cars, or sports, or that hot new show on TV (not *always*, anyway), but rather the finer points to what, say, PlayStation Move means for the FPS genre on the PS3, considering how proven a control scheme it is over the gamepad. (Opinion Dinosaur Strikes!)

You'd rather read a gaming webcomic than anything in the newspaper or find out how the stock exchange is doing. If you're nodding and pumping a silent fist, you are a true gamer. (Opinion Dinosaur Strikes: Again, then scampers off into the bushes).

To me personally, the best bit *besides* gaming being awesome?

Do this long enough and you discover one more thing: press start and the world begins again.

(rawr)



GOG is dead! Long live GOG!

Retro gaming website pulls a fast one

GOG.COM RECENTLY MADE US all very sad. From the 19th to the 22nd of September, the website – which feeds us a regular dose of high-quality retro games that have been made compatible with modern systems – was shut down with a message that Good Old Games *as we know* it is no more. It was a complete blackout, with accompanying Twitter accounts disabled and PR people unresponsive. As one would expect, the Internet was a mixed bag of emotions: most simply accepted the terrible news that Polish owners CD Projekt could no longer keep GOG afloat; many theorised an impending purchase by Valve; but a wary few (us included, of course), thought that the company was working their low-budget marketing mojo in aid of a big announcement.

Thankfully, the wary were correct, as the whole ordeal was simply a marketing stunt to drum up interest for their relaunch as they finally moved out of the comfort of beta status. Obviously, this caused a huge stir and upset plenty of their fans, and the company was ready to meet their response with a soothing statement:

"First of all we'd like to apologise to everyone who felt deceived or harmed in any way by the closedown of GOG.com. As a small company we don't have a huge marketing budget and this is why we could not miss a chance to generate some buzz around an event as big as launching a brand new version of our website and even more important, bringing back *Baldur's Gate* to life!"

The good news is that we're too blatantly in love with the games in GOG's catalogue to really give a damn, so our retro coverage will continue as always. On topic of their catalogue, it's bounced back stronger than ever, with a number of games from Black Isle Studio's selection: *Baldur's Gate, Planescape: Torment* and *Icewind Dale,* with a few more to follow.

Assassin's Creed 3 to be set in World War II?

The producer for upcoming *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood,* Vincent Pontbriand, has divulged some interesting possibilities for the future of Ubisoft's flagship IP. According to Pontbriand, a number of historical settings are possible, and they have "tried to take eras that [had] very important things happen in them that are known worldwide. So WW2 for example – we could have an *Assassin's* there. It would work."

He went further to say, "So maybe in this context you were a woman in England during World War II. Why not? Nothing prevents us from doing it."

A possible female lead? The plot thickens, as does the mist of pure speculation! That being said, Sébastien Puel (another producer at Ubisoft) has also mentioned the possibilities of *Assassin's Creed 3* being set during this period. What's more interesting is that Pontbriand's wording implies that Ubisoft is yet to nail down the period in which *Assassin's Creed 3* will take place. The rumours as to the setting keep circulating, but it's unlikely we'll get concrete information until sometime after *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* has released and the surrounding hype has calmed down.

XBOX LIVE REACHES LOCAL SHORES

Microsoft has finally confirmed a launch date for local Xbox Live support – November 10th. Until now, local Xbox gamers have had to circumvent signup polices to wangle their way into a UK or US Live account. Now, with the launch of full local support, you'll be able to do things by the book. Obviously, there are a lot of concerns with this, the biggest being the ability to migrate your existing account and purchases, which you'll be pleased to know is a possibility. All your saved games, game purchases, game add-ons, Gamerscore, Microsoft Points, active Gold subscription time, achievements and anything else you can think of can be migrated to your local account.

Price is another issue for many people, and that's where we're a little concerned. At R599 for a 12-month Gold subscription and R299, that's almost 50% more expensive than the going rate. The service is also a little light on features at the moment, and currently doesn't include support for NetFlix, Zune, Facebook, Twitter and all those good things, although Microsoft is actively working to incorporate these features. Another issue to be aware of is that while you can download game content prior to migration, there is currently no way to re-download it after migration. This is something else that MS is working on.

Dota 2: it exists

Elitism: it's like autism, but nobody's obsessively building LEGO skyscrapers

AFTER MONTHS OF RUMOUR and speculation surrounding Valve's involvement in a *DotA*-style game, they've finally come out and said what all the obvious signs were pointing to anyway. Valve has announced their next game: *Dota 2* (note the lower-case A). Due out next year, *Dota 2* is inspired by and features many similar design elements to *Defense of the Ancients* – the insanely popular custom map/scenario for *Warcraft III*. The man currently in charge of maintaining and improving *DotA Allstars*, IceFrog (whose real name is unknown), is working with Valve to create this new title and has been doing so since Valve hired him back in 2009.

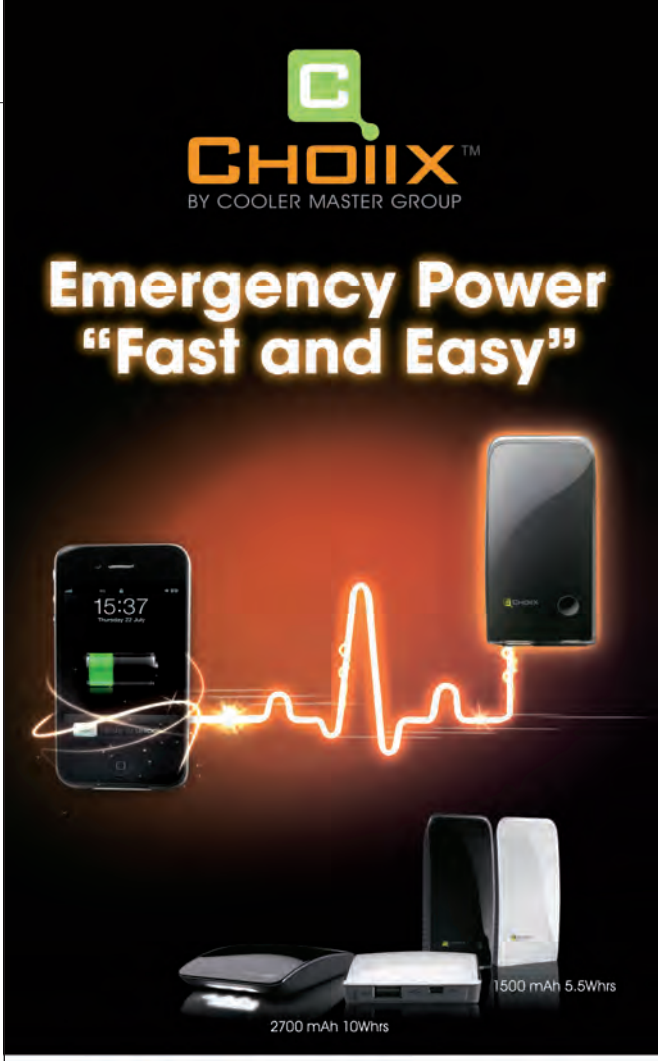
The gameplay itself will remain largely untouched. The entire roster of over 100 heroes is being brought over from *DotA Allstars* and the game is limited to a single map. That map is functionally identical to the original. Items and skills are unchanged. The aim is to make *Dota 2* instantly familiar to fans. Built on Valve's Source engine (which is getting a few upgrades like improved global lighting and true cloth simulation), *Dota 2* will benefit from Steam's list of nifty features. Team tactics and strategies, which play a pivotal role in deciding the outcome of *Dota 2* matches, will benefit greatly from integrated voice chat. There'll be AI bots to take over from disconnected players, or you can play unranked matches against the AI. Don't expect a single-player campaign though.

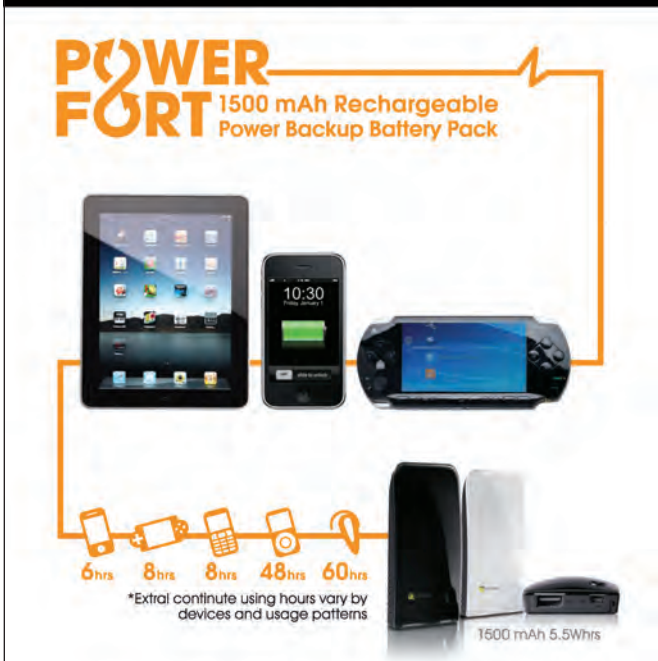
The elitist path that the *Warcraft III* map has followed, largely due to experienced players feeling that newbies were too much of a burden to have on their team, will be alleviated thanks to Steam's excellent skill-based matchmaking systems that are provided by Valve's Steamworks service. Steamworks is also being upgraded to focus on rewarding players for participating in the community. Write a strategy guide, help players out on the game's forums, coach new players – doing this sort of stuff will reward you with new skins for your heroes, titles that other players can see and more. Experienced players can spectate from a new player's perspective, using voice chat to provide hints and tips, highlighting which items and skills to purchase and generally teaching the new player how to be more successful at *Dota 2*. Hopefully this split emphasis on both veteran and new players will make *Dota 2* much more approachable for everyone. Considering Valve's tremendous commitment to constantly supporting and improving their games long after release, we're anxious to see what's in store for the game. Expect a full preview as more details emerge.

Raven Software hit with layoffs

The development team behind the recently released *Singularity* has just lost about forty members of its working force. Raven Software has been around since 1990 and has developed a string of titles including the *Heretic* and *Hexen* series as well as *Quake 4*, and the recent *Wolfenstein*. The company was purchased by Activision in 1997, which had this to say: "With the recent completion of *Singularity*, Raven Software is realigning its workforce to better reflect the studio's upcoming slate".

Prior to these layoffs, Raven Software had three separate development teams; they are now down to just one that is supposedly focusing on producing downloadable content. Hopefully this is just down-gearing into a more cost-efficient studio and not the beginning of the end for the veteran development team.





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The Evolution of...

Gran Turismo

1997 – Gran Turismo

1999 – Gran Turismo 2

2001 – Gran Turismo 3

2005 – Gran Turismo 4

2010 – Gran Turismo 5

More details emerge on Nintendo's 3DS

Yes, we're still going on about this...

DURING A RECENT NINTENDO conference, the company shared many new details on their upcoming handheld, the 3DS. The most important news was the confirmation of a Japanese release date – 26 February 2011. The Japanese version of the 3DS will include a game, a 2GB SD card and will retail for ¥25,000 (about R2,100). However, Nintendo has made it clear that the device will be priced by region, and the bundles are subject to change. Our guess is that the 3DS will launch locally at a price of R2,999 with an included 2GB card and first-party game (likely *Nintendogs*). As for a release date, history tells us that Nintendo tends to release their consoles in Europe a few months after Japan. When exactly we'll see it here is anyone's guess.

Tag Mode has had a bit of an upgrade that allows 3DSes to connect wirelessly and exchange game data, even if the game isn't in the device, and the device is switched off. As an example, Nintendo showed players who owned *Street Fighter IV 3D Edition* walking past each other, and their consoles wirelessly battled based on player stats. A winner was declared, and when the players next looked at their consoles, they saw the results of the battle. Those players can then go online and challenge their newfound rivals in a real battle.

Another exciting feature is charging via a docking pad; simply place your 3DS on the pad and it'll begin to charge. There are rumours that the pad's power cord can also be plugged directly into the 3DS to charge it while playing games, or if the whole idea of charging pads seems a little too hippy-like for you. The 3DS will also feature dual cameras for 3D image capturing, which can be used in conjunction with playing cards, similar to those found in *Eye of Judgement*, to create a seamless real-life playing experience through the 3DS's screen. The camera will also let you take photos of yourself to auto-create a Mii – yay!

Playdead working on a new IP

LIMBO is the greatest game ever made – fact*. It was the title that sold the most during the Xbox Live Summer of Arcade promotion this year and it was the indie developers' first project. These guys are good. It comes as little surprise then that they are working on something new.

The CEO, Dino Patti, just went on record to say that his studio is currently busy with their next title, which is an entirely new IP. "I can't tell much, but I can tell that if you liked *LIMBO*, it'll definitely be for you. The gameplay style, you'll really like. You'll feel it's the same team who made it, but everything will be changed."

Patti went further and insinuated that the team would like to go multiplatform for their next game. "To be honest, we want as many people to play our games as possible. If we end up going exclusive, we may do it for various reasons, but we just want as many people to play the game as possible."

*Not really fact but totally should be.

» PANASONIC'S GOT JUNGLE FEVER

It's been some time since we've heard the name Panasonic mentioned in the same breath as gaming. Aside from the freak show Panasonic Q – a GameCube media player hybrid released only in Japan – the last time this electronics manufacturer was seen in the gaming industry was during the fifth generation of consoles in the form of the 3DO. Believe it or not, the company is now returning to the market with a rather obscure angle: a portable gaming device targeted at MMOs.

Known as Jungle, this little fellow is about the size of the old DS "fat," will feature a QWERTY keyboard, touchpad and dual analogue sticks. That's what we know; what's rumoured is that it will run a Linux-based OS, feature Wi-Fi and 3G, HDMI output and will launch at around the $400 mark.

There are a few concerns, and running off the rumours for now, a Linux-based OS is our biggest one. Panasonic will need to pay plenty of attention to compatibility for various MMOs, including wrapping up control systems to fit the not-exactly-perfect combination of touchpad, analogue sticks and thumb-cramping micro keyboard. It doesn't matter right now, however, until all the rest of the details are confirmed. You can colour us interested, but it's going to take a lot to prove that the Jungle isn't the next failed attempt by a non-gaming-focussed company to jump into the industry.

Gaming Charts

Look & Listen

Look & Listen recommends

GfK

August 2010 figures provided by GfK
www.gfksa.co.za

Sales by game platform

PS3

Look & Listen recommends	Sales by game platform
Gran Turismo 5	Burnout Paradise: The Ultimate Box
FIFA 11	Need for Speed: ProStreet
Medal of Honor	Army of Two
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa
PlayStation Move starter pack	God of War III

XBOX 360

Halo: Reach	Halo 3: ODST
Fable III	Forza Motorsport 3
Kinect Bundle with Adventures	2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa
Assassins Creed: Brotherhood	Battlefield Bad Company 2: Ltd. Edition
Enslaved: Odyssey to the West	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

PS2

FIFA 11	Rugby 08
Ben 10: Ultimate Alien	Need for Speed: Most Wanted
Toy Story 3	FIFA 10
PES 2011	FIFA 09
Despicable Me	The Sims 2: Castaway

PC

Call of Duty: Black Ops	StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty
StarCraft II	The Sims 3
Sims 3 Ambitions	The Sims 3: Ambitions
CSI 6	Call of Duty: Deluxe Edition
World of Warcraft: Cataclysm	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

PSP

God of War: Ghost of Sparta	Ben 10: Alien Force
Bakugan II	Need for Speed: Carbon
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	Burnout Dominator
Football Manager 11	Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters
Lord of the Rings: Aragon's Quest	2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa

WII

Super Mario Galaxy 2	Wii Sports
Donkey Kong Country Returns	New Super Mario Bros. Wii
Wii Party	Super Mario Galaxy 2
Sonic Colours	Wii Fit + Balance Board
Just Dance 2	2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa

DS

Mario vs. Donkey Kong	New Super Mario Bros.
Sonic Colours	Mario Kart DS
The Sims 3	Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon	Super Mario 64 DS
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	Need for Speed: Nitro

Beyond Good & Evil gets a makeover

Every gamer has a handful of "those special games" that they've replayed a dozen times and will love forever. For many of us, *Beyond Good & Evil* is one of those titles. Thankfully, you'll soon no longer need to crank out the GameCube or sit fiddling with compatibility settings to get your piece of this fine pie, as an HD remake for current-generation systems is on its way for an early 2011 release. The remake will keep all of the game that you so dearly love intact, but will feature updated textures, character models and an improved musical score. The game will run at a resolution up to 1080p and is set for release on Xbox LIVE Arcade and PlayStation Network.

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The Beavatar

I'm in ur jungle, hiding from ur doods

The story so far: Our poor badger has disappeared (somewhere in the über jungle of Pandora). He's easily distracted by bright lights... so you can imagine. We are looking for him and will let you know.

In the meantime the awesomeness of *NAG* has attracted someone else, a pretty blue thing that's still a little shy (this is our awkward way of saying she's hiding in the magazine). So, to win the prize you must now find Ney'turik, she's hiding in the magazine somewhere... Get going. Send your sitings to **ed@nag.co.za** with the subject line 'November Beavatar'.

October Winner

Christo Strydom, p61

WIN!

One person who finds the Beavatar will win a QU4D Dock for PS3 controllers, sponsored by Bowline and Dream Gear.

Talibanned

Controversy killed the multiplayer factioN

SEEMS EA HAS FINALLY given in to all the pressure they've been under since the mainstream media caught wind of the fact that *Medal of Honor* would feature the Taliban as a playable multiplayer faction. This is in response to the reaction of the "friends and families of fallen soldiers" who displayed outrage at EA's decision to make the Taliban the opposing force that players wage war against in Afghanistan in EA's upcoming FPS. Instead, the opposing force is now called the Opposing Force.

"This is a very important voice to the *Medal of Honor* team," wrote *MoH*'s executive producer Greg Goodrich in a press release on the *MoH* website. "This is a voice that has earned the right to be listened to. It is a voice that we care deeply about. Because of this, and because the heartbeat of *Medal of Honor* has always resided in the reverence for American and Allied soldiers, we have decided to rename the opposing team in *Medal of Honor* multiplayer from Taliban to Opposing Force."

Old ladies, screaming women and crying babies everywhere are now free of EA's oppression and the sensationalistic rubbish prevalent in the mainstream press has prevailed. While we totally respect EA's decision to make those who've lost loved ones to the war in Afghanistan more comfortable with the game's existence, this does feel like a bit of a copout. It's not like the people who are whinging were ever going to buy/play the game anyway. Interestingly, some soldiers/gamers serving in Afghanistan right now are annoyed that EA didn't stick to their guns and include the Taliban as a playable faction. Oh, and if you're wondering if this means that *MoH* will be given the green light to be sold at US military bases, it doesn't – the game is still outlawed despite the change.

Wolfenstein: Captain America Edition

SEGA has unveiled the videogame tie-in to next year's *Captain America: The First Avenger* movie. They're calling it *Captain America: Super Soldier* and it's set in World War II, during the character's early years. In it, the Cap attempts to infiltrate Hydra's mysterious castle during the war's darkest days. It's currently in development at Next Level Games, whose previous games include *Spider-Man: Friend or Foe* and *Transformers: Cybertron Adventures*. Put aside for a moment that SEGA's previous tie-ins to Marvel movies (like those dodgy *Iron Man* games) have been far from excellent and consider that it's World War II, there's a mysterious castle and an evil Nazi mastermind in mechanical armour here. Remind you of anything? If you answered *Wolfenstein*, give yourself a cookie and a hug. The story is being written by Christos Gage, a comic writer known for his work on *Avengers: The Initiative* and *Avengers Academy*.

RE CREATOR'S NEXT GAME IS SHADOWS OF THE DAMNED

Back in 2008, it was revealed that Shinji Mikami (creator of Resident Evil) and Goichi Suda (also known as Suda51, whose previous works include No More Heroes and Killer7) were working together with EA to create a new horror game. The game was finally revealed at Tokyo Game Show to be Shadows of the Damned. Due for release next year on Xbox 360 and PS3, Shadows of the Damned follows the exploits of Garcia Hotspur, a motorcycle-riding, demon-killing badass who sets out to battle the evils of hell to save his true love. Played from a third-person perspective, the game promises to combine the styles of Suda and Mikami to create a psychological action thriller with a punk-rock edge. That's what we've been told, at least.

SUBSCRIPTION WINNERS

September:

SBK X Xbox 360 hampers: Jan-Hendrik Victor; Riaan Van Wyk

SBK X PS3 hampers: Ryan Rabe; Darren Erasmus

October:

Eset Smart Security: Hendrick Jordaan; M Ackerman; Josh & Shai Kadish; Nathan Pretorius

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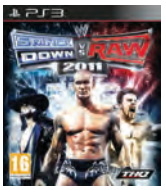
If your company isn't listed here, phone *NAG* on [011] 704-2679

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 *WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2011* for PS3 from Ster-Kinekor Entertainment. Send your captions to **ed@nag.co.za** with the subject line 'November Caption'.



NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT AT HUMOUR: "Come give grandma a big hug!"

LAST MONTH'S WINNERS:
Yellow-suite: 'Uh, Captain, we're being flanked by the Covenant.'
Guy on palm computer: 'Keep your pants on, I'm just updating my facebook statu... I mean coordinates.'

– Santa Claus

The "games as art" argument ends here

If you like books, and you like classic Sierra games, then this is the book about Sierra stuff you've been waiting for! *The Art of Sierra* is a hardcover book that collects, well, the art of Sierra's games, spanning an as-yet unconfirmed but no-doubt extensive period of history. Think back to the luscious art direction in games like *Quest for Glory* or *Space Quest*, and even the ultra-naf *King's Quest* series. Now imagine forever enshrining that artwork on your coffee table where the cat will probably end up sleeping on whatever part hasn't had orange juice spilled on it. However you plan on treating this book when you inevitably buy it, we know you'll cherish it in your own special way.

The Art of Sierra is currently without a launch date but the project has been going since 2003. Expect something soon. In the meantime, stay glued to **www.artofsierra.com** for more information.

BT GAMES™ Release List

Dates subject to change without notice

NOVEMBER: WEEK 1

Gran Tursimo 5	PS3
GoldenEye 007	Wii
Monopoly Streets	PS3, X360, Wii, DS
God of War: Ghost of Sparta	PSP
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast 2	PS3, X360
Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs	DS
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	PC, PS3, X360, DS

NOVEMBER: WEEK 2

Call of Duty: Black Ops	PC, PS3, X360, Wii, DS
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	PS3, X360, Wii, DS
Kinect Sports	X360
Dance Central	X360
Kinect Joy Ride	X360
Kinectimals	X360
Xbox 360 Kinect	X360
Fighters Uncaged	X360
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier	PS3, X360
Street Cricket	PS2,PSP
BEYBLADE: Metal Fusion	Wii, DS
SAW II: Flesh & Blood	PS3, X360
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved	X360
SingStar Dance	PS3
The Fight: Lights Out	PS3
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	Wii

NOVEMBER: WEEK 3

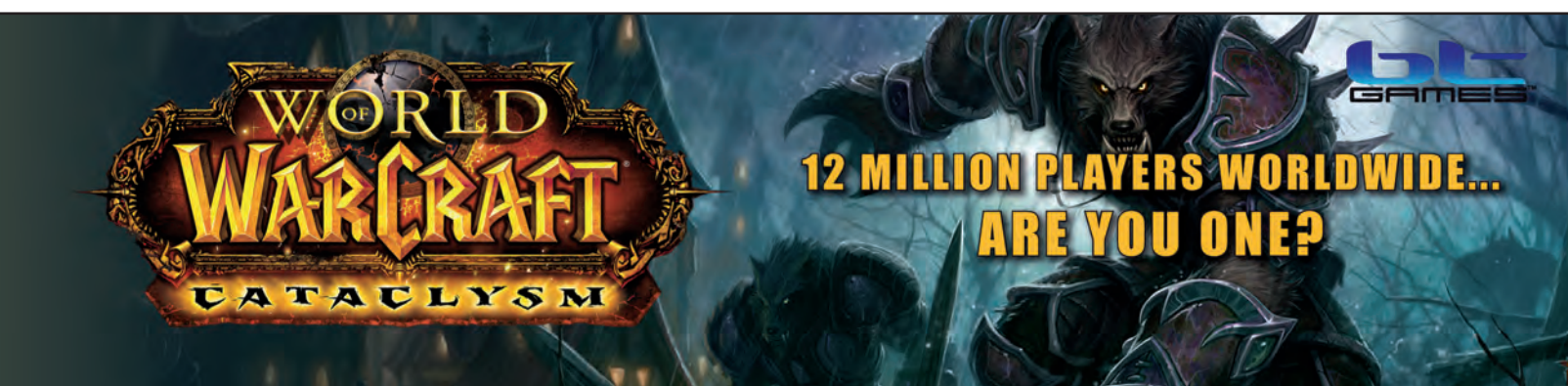
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 1	PC, PS3, X360, Wii, DS
Assassin's Creed Brotherhood	PS3, X360
DJ Hero 2	PS3, X360, Wii
EA SPORTS Active 2	PS3, X360, Wii
Need for Speed Hot Pursuit	PC, PS3, X360, Wii
Blood Drive	PS3, X360
Apache: Air Assault	PC, PS3, X360
The Sims 3	Wii
Create	PC, PS3, X360, Wii

NOVEMBER: WEEK 4

Tony Hawk Shred	PS3, X360, Wii
LittleBigPlanet 2	PS3
Megamind	PS3, X360, Wii, PSP, DS
Michael Jackson: The Experience	PS3, X360, Wii, PSP, DS
Splatterhouse	PS3, X360
Raving Rabbids Travel In Time	Wii
CSI 6	Wii, DS
Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom	PS3, X360
Def Jam Rapstar	PS3, X360, Wii
Split/Second: Velocity	PSP
PDC World Championship Darts: Pro Tour	PS3, X360, Wii
Disney Epic Mickey	Wii

NOVEMBER: TBC

Donkey Kong Country Returns	Wii
Sonic Colours	Wii, DS
Vanquish	PS3, X360
Fist of the North Star: Ken's Rage	PS3, X360
Scribblenauts 2	DS
Game Party 4	X360
Conduit 2	Wii



Gran Tu

DEVELOPER > Polyphony Digital **PUBLISHER** > SCEE **RELEASE DATE** > December 2010
WEB > www.gran-turismo.com **GENRE** > Racing **PLATFORM** > PS3

HANDS ON

ANYONE WHO ADORES CARS knows of the epic, evocative significance of the words gran turismo. It's a type of race, it's a specific kind of highly emotive car, and the acronym has spawned countless subtle variations, usually denoting something special about the version of the vehicle it finds itself affixed to.

So deep, so rich is the heritage of this Italian phrase, it's all the more astounding that when the digital age arrived, a team of visionary PlayStation developers successfully managed to replace all of this history with another more modern concept. *Gran Turismo*, or *GT*, became the definitive console driving game, or as it's still called today, The Real Driving Simulator.

That makes the latest iteration of this legendary game, the first *GT* written to take advantage of the capabilities of what we not too long ago still called the next-generation consoles, particularly worth waiting for. All the more, because we've been waiting for it for a long, long while now...

Developers Polyphony Digital first announced the title even before the PS3 itself was actually launched, way back in 2006. The demo began making regular appearances at shows and conventions in 2008, and in '09, the man behind it all, one Kazunori Yamauchi, said it would be with us by March of this year. Now it looks like December will be the magical month, maybe – definitely.

That seems like one awful, monstrous hype cycle to go through for a game which is by its very definition already going to be eagerly anticipated!

Either way, when our Ed called and asked if I wanted to try the preview code on their special PS3 Debug, all the effects of this overactive hype machine hit home like a freight train. This was it, at last. *Gran Turismo 5*, the game which will to me make or break the appeal of the PS3 is just about here – seriously this time.

This game is no less than the Holy Grail for digital-age petrol heads, pure and simple. Yes *Need for Speed* was popular on the PC before consoles even got out of their HD nappies, and arcade racers like *Sega Rally* were a blast in those specially-built race-seat setups you get in the arcades, but if you're too old for all the flashing lights and hallucinogenic noises it never came close on any home entertainment system. Yet *GT* actually managed to combine these elements into a game which was more over-endowed with choices than any game of the genre, ever.

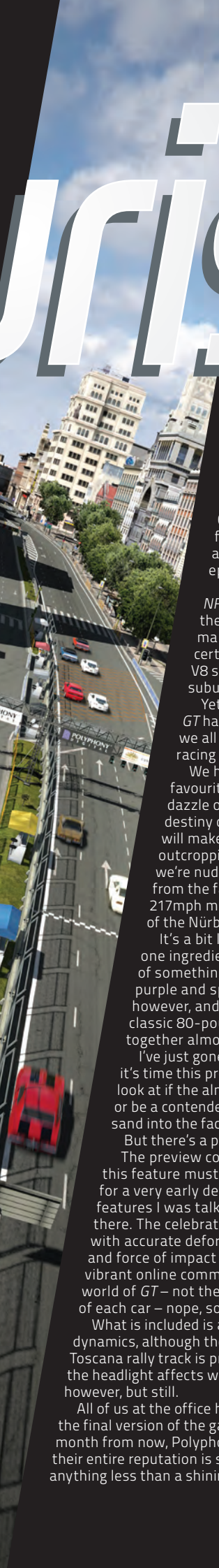
And it does that without being dauntingly options-heavy either. *GT* is the racing game that should be equally playable by hardcore driving Gods and pre-teens alike. And as well as being a total hybrid of genres, no game can match the epic scale of vehicles this franchise has become synonymous with. One could almost say the developers of this game have tried their utmost to include every single car currently available, or ever to achieve any measure of motoring recognition!

Just a quick look at the highlight statistics for this latest incarnation will cement that claim. More than 1,000 cars will ultimately be included, it's said. Sure at least a dozen of those will be various race-team versions of the Nissan Skyline, but still. That's a lot of cars.

However, all that good stuff being said, I believe *GT 5* actually has a bit of a problem on its hands. To walk away with ultimate racing game honours, it's going to have to do more than dazzle the committed car enthusiasts with sheer overflow of the tastiest metal and composites available this time.

It's not like Polyphony is going to be able to get away with dazzling graphics and meticulous attention to detail on every car model, inside and out. We've all played titles now that nail both of these elements perfectly, a judgement which surely

urismo 5



can't really be improved upon. Just look at any of the latest ex-Codemasters racing games, or *Forza 3* – probably *GT 5*'s most-direct competitor.

Speaking of the company that until recently was Codemasters, these guys have also done incredible work on fluid dynamics of late – thanks to DX11 rendering code paths. So any improvements in the environment will have to be beyond epic to impress.

How about mind-blowing audio? Have any of you guys heard *NFS Shift* played at high volume on a quality audio system? At the launch, a mate of mine who was hosting a business process management round-table in the conference room next door was certain the streets of Sandton had been overrun by an army of V8 street racers who were proceeding to rip the tarmac of the suburb from the Earth one stone chip at a time.

Yet despite all of these new challenges, the one aspect which *GT* has to recreate flawlessly, is the "feel" of driving – the reason we all (or at least, I do) get totally, incurably addicted to a good racing game.

We have to get the sensation, as we crest that jump on our favourite rally stage and the gorgeous new lighting effects dazzle our minds, that we're solely responsible for the immediate destiny of that WRC machine and only our own massive skills will make the difference between crashing-out on an unseen outcropping of rock or popping that champagne cork later, that we're nudging right up against the limits of the grip available from the fat Pirellis beneath our Porsche GT2 RS as we seek the 217mph maximum speed of this car down the long back straight of the Nürburgring.

It's a bit like Getafix, the Druid's magic potion then. Just one ingredient not quite fresh enough, or a milligram too little of something vital, and you get people turning green and purple and spotted all over the place. Get the arcane mix right however, and Popeye *and* his spinach suddenly look like the classic 80-pound beach nerd. The mix, for *GT 5*, has to come together almost magically.

I've just gone over 1,000 words now (*998, actually, Ed*) – I think it's time this preview got a little serious and we actually took a look at if the almighty *GT 5* can trounce the Roman Legionnaires, or be a contender which *Forza* and friends are going to be kicking sand into the face of religiously.

But there's a problem.

The preview code we were sent for the purposes of writing this feature must (we fervently hope) have been put together for a very early demo. Absolutely all of the crucial "hook" features I was talking about earlier in the article just aren't there. The celebrated visual and mechanical damage models with accurate deformation characteristics based on position and force of impact – not in the preview code. The rich and vibrant online community available for the first time in the world of *GT* – not there. The accurately sampled audio samples of each car – nope, sorry.

What is included is a single glimpse of the adaptive weather dynamics, although there's no rain, the setting sun on the Toscana rally track is pretty glorious to behold. Not so much the headlight affects which come with this change of daytime however, but still.

All of us at the office had to agree, that if this is anything like the final version of the game, supposedly launching less than a month from now, Polyphony wouldn't send it out. As a company, their entire reputation is staked on just this one title. Producing anything less than a shining jewel in the PlayStation crown

would be corporate suicide.

No, we still expect *GT 5* to be dazzling. And what's more, not only HD as the original title suggested, but also fully 3D, which could just be the game-changer many maintained James Cameron's *Avatar* was in the movie entertainment business – the watershed moment which leaves all the punters gasping and anyone without 3D left several giant steps behind.

Based on the snippets released and the more hands-on previews by more easily-accessible European game review experts, *GT 5* should eclipse all comers and emphatically lay claim to its proper position as the king of the racing-game genre. Bursting with technical car goodness, overflowing with detail and accuracy and perfectly-modelled simulated feedback, and charging unstoppably through on the inside line of any competing title to dare get into a street race with it.

But on the "strength" – or rather lack of – of the preview code, there's no way we can reliably adjudicate it against any of its competitors. So now we, like you, are still going to have sleepless nights during the run-up to the release date with uncertainty, anticipation, and raw wallet-emptying curiosity.

THE GRID

Thing is, what at first appears to be another "Wing and a Prayer" decision making moment by our *NAG* Ed, actually turns out to be some rather impeccable thinking on his part. Two things qualify me for the daunting task of passing some form of judgement on this title. One, I've driven many of the latest cars this game will be putting in your hands come November in real life. And two, I can lay claim to having driven every single one of the most notable racing games ever made, since gaming was born! Here are some highly competitive favourites that *GT 5* will have to beat to succeed.

Forza 3: An Xbox 360 exclusive (and the reason I eventually caved and went out and bought one), *Forza* is a technical *tour de force*. What some have accused it of lacking visually, it makes up for with a physics model that is second-to-none I've ever played – and I've played them all. Developers Turn 10 stormed out of nowhere to create a genre-defining product with this series.

F1 2010: The race-addicted fiends at what used to be Codemasters may be taking their first crack at F1 with this title, but as usual they've done it to the best of their abilities, and these are very impressive indeed. Most notable is the astonishing accuracy of the simulated water, spine-chilling soundtrack, and engaging Campaign mode. Sure it's focussed on only one motor racing formula, but let's be honest, it remains the apex if heart-pounding action is your thing.

Colin McRae DIRT 2: Almost a year old, *DIRT 2* still represents the most fun I've ever had with a rally game, and rally being my favourite motorsport discipline, I've put countless hours into titles with this theme. It's no wonder the developers moved on to F1 for their big 2010 release, as doing something more impressive than *DIRT 2* is going to take technology which is still a couple of years away. Most epic? The deformable tracks. Killer.

NFS Shift: Focussed exclusively on track racing action, *Shift* mixes its own magical brew rather nicely. There's a healthy selection of cars, a very competitive physics model, a track which has to be heard with the volume at 11 to be believed, and a franchise with an even bigger history to live up to. EA wanted to make so sure that it was absolutely right that they bought in the entire team behind classic simulators *GTR* and *GT Legends*.

PURE: No, I'm just kidding. Not really. Pure arcade racers don't compete in this league.

THE RIDES

GT 5 will, absolutely beyond any shadow of a doubt, feature the most complete list of available vehicles ever seen on a racing game, including all the current and future DLC packs for *Forza 3*. It's immense, more than 1,000, and that includes just about everything ever worthy of a mention.

This is, it must be said, one of the major draws of a racing game for us hopeless enthusiasts. The ability to race some metal so exotic it's unlikely we'll ever even see one, let alone get to sit in it, let alone get to pitch it against competition on our favourite track or stretch of road. Here are some of the highlights and rarities.

Mercedes SLS AMG: Recently launched in South Africa, this evocatively-styled gullwing super-GT packs probably the

greatest V8 on the planet today in the shape of the naturally aspirated, 6.2-litre bespoke AMG development. A true blood-and-thunder soundtrack in a cabin featuring all the luxury and technology you'd expect of a modern AMG – instant classic.

Ferrari 458 Italia: It's said the new 458 is Ferrari's first "digital supercar" which should make it perfect for accurately simulating in *GT 5*. It's also one of the most beautiful shapes to have emerged from Modena in a long time, and features a development of the flat-plane crank V8 churning out epic power. Let's hope the game includes the "recalled" example, which doesn't erupt into flames at the first sign of some hard pedalling.

Sportec SPR1: It's a 911 built specifically to trounce the 21st-century daddy of them all, the Bugatti Veyron. The Sportec modifications cost twice as much as the donor 911 Turbo itself, but get you a more slippery custom body made entirely from carbon fibre, and an engine which comes within 150bhp of matching the mouth-watering 1001bhp of the original Veyron 16.4. Despite this deficit, it recorded faster acceleration and V-Max figures than the Veyron in the hands of several motoring magazines.

TVR Cerbera Speed 12: Yes, it's been in *Gran Turismo* (and many other games) before, but it is more than a legend – it's almost a myth. Only one of these cars ever made it to the road, and that one was a detuned Frankenstein made from bits of the race cars which were entered on the promise of their being a production version at some point in the future. As unreal as real cars get, the Cerbera supposedly runs a pair of TVR straight-sixes spliced together on a common crank to create a V12 of over 8-litres in capacity producing comfortably more than 800 horses (over 600kW), in a circa 1000kg package...

VW Citi Golf 1.6i VeloCiTi: Yep, our very own SA special, the Citi Golf, has earned its place. Over three decades of production of what is essentially a Mark 1 Golf first released in the early 70s make this car just about as special as the ubiquitous Beetle, particularly to South Africans where it survived longer than anywhere else. It should really have been the final, limited-Edition Mark I version actually.

GT by Citroen: This car was designed and built specifically for inclusion in *GT 5*, and although six real cars were promised, none have actually been delivered as yet and there's rumour that none ever will. Although powered by a V8 engine in real-life development mule form, in the game this car features ultra-modern propulsion – hydrogen fuel cells feeding an electric motor in each wheel hub together supposedly producing the equivalent of around 800bhp (588kW).

Silver-screen stars: Ever fancied strapping yourself in to the wheelie-popping 632 ci Chevrolet Monte Carlo Vin Diesel almost gets killed in at the end of the first *Fast and Furious*, or the Lancer Evo VII GSX that our intrepid hero prefers in *2Fast 2Furious*, or even the legendary *Back to the Future* DeLorean or the '69 "General Lee" Charger 426 of *Dukes of Hazzard* fame? All of these, and more, are in *GT 5*. NAG

Russell Bennett

Vanquish

HANDS ON

OMG robot tank!

GENRE > Third-Person Shooter

PC **360** **PS3** WII PS2 PSP DS

IT'S THE FUTURE. FUTURE humanity has caused all sorts of future problems with futuristic population booms that rapidly diminish Earth's future resources. Everybody hates everybody else for having more toys than them and the US launches a space station into orbit around the earth to harvest solar energy that'll provide an alternate source of future fuel for the country. Some dirty future Russian ultranationalists overthrow the Russian government of the future and attack this space station, taking it for themselves. They divert the harvested energy into a powerful futuristic energy beam that they then point at future San Francisco and happily hit the fire button.

Next, they threaten to point the giant space laser at New York City if the Americans of the future don't surrender to the will of the Russian ultranationalists. Queue a "LOLno" from the Americans and suddenly the future is threatened. Naturally, this is when the Americans order a bunch of space-faring marines with only the gruffest of gruff voices to take back the space station and punch some ultranationalist crotch. They enlist the aid of Sam Gideon, protagonist extraordinaire who also happens to have some very cool armour, and send him on his merry way to shoot insane amounts of Russian robots.

That's sort of what's going on in *Vanquish*, but it doesn't really matter – we're only here to watch stuff explode spectacularly and there are many, many spectacular explosions to be had here. *Vanquish* is effortlessly stylish – it's like if *Gears of War* had a slow-mo mechanic and the ability to slide around on your knees like a rock star wearing reproductive-organ-damagingly tight leather pants on stage. Except there are no leather pants, only super-stylish white battle suits.

The suit is called ARS (Augmented Reaction Suit) and it instantly transforms Sam Gideon into a super soldier, capable of standing toe to toe with some of the biggest, most ludicrously awesome robotic enemies you can imagine. The suit's got jet boosters all over it that make the rock-star sliding (called "boosting" in *Vanquish*) possible, allowing you to dart from cover to cover in style, complete with fancy pirouettes when you let go of the boost button. Most of the suit's special abilities are limited in that the ARS will overheat after excessive use of boost, or melee attacks, or the super-slick slow-mo that can be activated after dodging, boosting or hopping over cover. Take too much damage and the suit will automatically engage the slow-mo to allow you to retreat safely while shooting stuff.

Then there's Sam's weapon – a piece of experimental tech called BLADE, which will scan any weapon you find on the battlefield and then transform itself into a perfect replica of that weapon. Three weapons can be memorised by BLADE, all accessible via the D-pad, with the fourth D-pad direction allowing you to select what type of grenades you'd like to toss in the direction of enemies. Scan a weapon while you're already full on ammo for said weapon and you'll gain points towards upgrading it, increasing ammo capacity, damage and the like.

This all comes together to form a fast, frenetic, frantically fun take on traditional cover shooters. Duck behind cover, shoot some robots, hop over and execute slow-mo, shoot a couple more robots before your feet touch the ground, then immediately boost to rapidly get to the next piece of cover. Do this well enough and you'll get a score at the end of each level which highlights the skill you display in dispatching foes. That score will then be posted to the online leaderboards. It's slick, it's insane, the mini-bosses we've seen are inventive (and satisfying to kill) and everything is executed with flair and a fantastically flamboyant disregard for realism.

The short time we've spent with *Vanquish* has us eager to get our hands, eyes and trigger fingers on more of the game. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

» Shinji Mikami, creator of *Resident Evil*, is directing development on *Vanquish*. It's the first game that Mikami is developing under the Platinum Games brand.

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All the rAge 2010

Three days with SA's gaming scene crammed under one (massive) roof

IF YOU HAVE A large enough group of people with a common interest, it'll only be a matter of time until some phenomenon unites them under one roof as a single, heaving mass of shared revelry. Be it religious gatherings, movie audiences, concert crowds or sports spectators, a common interest eventually unites likeminded individuals. For South African gamers, rAge is that uniting phenomenon. But the annual three-day event has become more than a mere tradeshow or convention; it's become an event that brings local gamers (and non-gamers) together regardless of age, race, gender or platform creed. For the three days that the Coca-Cola Dome transforms into a gaming Mecca, people flock on a sort of pilgrimage so that they can gaze over what all agree is exciting, and be amongst those who understand what makes them tick.

For those who didn't make it this year, there's in all likelihood a gnawing sense of "what if" lurking in the back of your mind. What did I miss out on? What could I have seen or played? Well, we have you covered. Over the next few pages I'm going to attempt to meld together a synopsis for rAge 2010; the best bits, the worst bits, the bits that will live on in memory and the bits that I pray will leave my memory (Poker Face and Funky Town immediately spring to mind).

THE SHOW FLOOR – YOU ARE HERE

A total of 61 different exhibitors had stands on the showroom floor this year. Not all of them were showing games, however. In fact, the diversity was substantial and there was something for anyone with an interest in technology, games, anime, role-playing, board games, over-clocking or hardware. There was even representation from the various colleges and game programming courses, so for school-leavers looking to get into graphic design, programming or technology, rAge was a good place to get an idea of what's locally available.

What was fantastic to see is that amongst the numerous stands were newcomers to the expo; a sign that rAge is gaining more and more momentum.

The main gaming retailers had stands, with BT Games, Look & Listen and Incredible Connection all making an appearance. While BT Games and Look & Listen had loads of games and consoles available, Incredible Connection focused more on hardware and gaming peripherals. Some good deals could be found especially for the new Xbox 360 S, but sadly there weren't too many "rAge only" specials from the big retailers. Smaller, non-franchised hardware supply companies made up for this with some great offers. Of course, Alienware's local debut was brilliant and added some international gaming flair to the expo. The fact that a PC gaming brand as widely recognised as Alienware has officially launched in our country is yet another sign of the gathering momentum of our local gaming scene.

GAMES! GLORIOUS GAMES!

Nearly all of the local game distributors were present, with Megarom showing off titles like *Enslaved*, the multiplayer for *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*, *Guitar Hero Warriors of Rock* and *DJ Hero 2* to name but a few of the yet unreleased titles that were made available for the public to try out. Nu Metro also had a stand complete with an awesome set of racing chairs, big screen TVs and steering wheels for playing *F1 2010*. With Nu Metro being the distributors for Capcom in South Africa, *Dead Rising 2*, as well as *Marvel vs Capcom 3: The Fate of Two Worlds* were also available. Sadly, *Fallout New Vegas* did not make an appearance despite posters for it adorning the Nu Metro stand – bummer.

Electronic Arts South Africa added a bit of flavour to their offerings by including a

CAUTION: EXTREME AWESOMENESS

proper, caged fighting ring with XFC Africa exhibition fights being held to promote the new EA Sports *Mixed Martial Arts* game. In between bouts the public was free to beat the living hell out of each other while wearing Sumo suits. My lasting memory of this bizarre, yet strangely appealing, addition to rAge is of a person double fly-kicking their opponent across the ring, all while trussed-up in the padded, and by that stage very sweaty, Sumo suit.

Of course, three of the most anticipated EA game releases were there: *Dead Space 2*, *Dragon Age 2* and *Medal of Honor*. Sadly, *Dragon Age 2* was a hands-off showing, but the rep demoing the game was very interactive and eager to answer as many questions as he could. Hands-on time with the new *Need For Speed Hot Pursuit* (you can spot Criterion's *Burnout* influence a mile away – which is a good thing) as well as *The Sims 3* For Consoles (awful, awful, awful control scheme that had me lost in a warren of menus and sub-menus) was also possible on the EA stand.

Personally my favourite moment on the EA stand was undoubtedly hands-on time with two single-player missions from *Medal of Honor*. I have to admit that before my time with the game I was feeling decidedly ambivalent about the reboot, but what I saw and played got me very excited for its release (it'll be out by the time you read this). Perhaps EA will experience a spike in local sales because of this early, public showing; the same happened for *Borderlands* when it debuted locally at rAge 2009.

Naturally the two big names were there: Sony (under Ster Kinekor) and Microsoft. Both were kitted with their latest offerings to the peripheral, move-crazed market. Of course, Core's absence (and by extension Nintendo's) was made all the more conspicuous by the sheer effort that Sony and Microsoft put into their displays. That's not to say that there was no Nintendo presence at all, but the few Wii and DS units that were there was thanks to other companies. Megarom made use of Wii consoles to demo the latest Ubisoft titles like *Raving Rabbids: Travel in Time* as well as *Just Dance 2* amongst other titles. Still, it would have made rAge feel more complete had there been some official Nintendo presence.

NAG LAN

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Arriving at the Dome at 5:30am on Friday morning, my rAge LAN experience started well enough. Standing in the queue with hundreds of like-minded gamers, my small group of 25 friends was soon chatting away to others in the queue, and by the time the doors opened three hours later we all had lists of names, nicks and numbers of new friends from all over the country. Once inside, the testing process was painless enough and we got through the info station in a matter of seconds. Then it was a case of up the stairs, find a spot, and setup for rAge 2010.

THE NETWORK

For the first few hours on Friday morning the network was running smoothly from a gaming perspective, with plenty of servers up for the most popular games such as *COD4* and *Warcraft 3: DotA*. Everything was running well and this looked to be a good LAN. Soon though, lag crept into some games and rAge veterans knew exactly what happened, the DC++ server was up. DC++ (or any other version of this software type) is the program used at the LAN that allows the lanners to browse each other's PCs and copy files across the LAN. Once the copying started, a huge load was put on the network and, as a result, gaming suffered. As the LAN progressed the lag in game became less of an issue, but it was only late in the morning on Sunday when gamers started leaving rAge that all games became totally lag free.

THE ATMOSPHERE

By far the best rAge LAN atmosphere I have ever experienced, 2010 was the year of the social gamer. All the gamers I met at this year's LAN were polite in person and sociable, and for the most part quite talkative. If there is anything that disproves the myth of the antisocial nerd who sits in a corner and plays games alone, it's the NAG LAN. On the Saturday evening as we got back from supper, we were greeted by one of the lanners rapping to Jack Parow on the mic, followed by a group who were dancing to the *Gummy Bears* song. After this there was an impromptu situps competition, and to top it all off we had a large crowd of lanners running around one of the sections while the VC crew threw prizes out. The best part of all of this was it felt right at home, and everyone who took part left the area with a smile on their face.

THE LESSER-SPOTTED GIRL GAMER

2010 NAG LAN once again saw an increase in attendance by girl gamers. While there were a few stereotypical girlfriends who were just there playing the Sims, for the most part the girls were fragging away in *COD4* and *CS:S*, ganking in *DotA* and in general having a good time. While one or two guys tried their luck flirting over in game chat, the guys in general treated the girls like any other lanner there, which is part of the reason why we'll see more girl gamers at rAge 2011.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The NAG LAN @ rAge 2010 was a great success, and despite some annoying in-game lag, turned out to be an amazing event. Kudos to VC crew for putting on one of the best NAG LANs in recent years, many gamers are eagerly counting down to rAge 2011 when we do it all again.

Derrick Cramer

KINECT WAS EVERYWHERE

Microsoft's stand was all about Kinect, complete with its new trademark green and purple branding. A total of six Kinect cameras were available to try out, each one connected to a new Xbox 360 S. Kinect-enabled games on hand included *Kinectimals*, *Dance Central*, *Kinect Joy Ride*, *Kinect Adventures!* and *Kinect Sports*. If you ever had any inclination to give the new peripheral a spin before it hits stores, then rAge was by far your best opportunity to do so. Having so many of the launch titles available for anybody to have a go at was one of the biggest draw cards to the Microsoft stand. Of course, the fact that there was a giant column with a perpetually dancing booth babe on top might have had something to do with that as well – she was demoing *Dance Central*... it wasn't *that* kind of dancing so get your mind out of the gutter.

Local Xbox 360 representatives were available to take people through various features of, strangely enough, Windows Live, but of course the number one question everyone kept asking was "when is Xbox Live launching in South Africa." The answers were always coy and it took an inordinate amount of nagging before I managed to get an "unofficially-officially on 10 November 2010" from somebody.

Overall, the Xbox 360 stand was good. Their aim was to market and demo Kinect to the masses and they certainly got the job done. Whether or not Kinect is something you're interested in is entirely up to you. The possibilities are there but most of the games demoed didn't seem all that accurate in tracking player movement. On a more amusing note: it amazed me how every single guy who tried *Kinectimals* immediately attempted to beat the poor things, while most women were no match for the Kinectimal's overt cuteness.

Possibly the biggest disappointment on the Xbox stand was the lack of *Fable III*. The upcoming Lionhead game was supposed to be playable at rAge but had to be removed at the last minute. In its place was *Halo: Reach*, just in case you hadn't been able to play the latest *Halo* game on one of the eighteen *Halo: Reach* demo units littering the Dome.

THE SONY STAND – THE POWER TO MOVE YOU

The PlayStation stand was equally impressive with an array of Move and regular PlayStation games available to play. Crowd pleasers included *Start The Party*, *Sports Champions* and *The Fight: Lights Out*. The overall reaction to the Move was positive and there was a constant stream of people getting hands-on time with many of the peripheral's launch titles. Additionally, 3D gaming was on display for those still wondering what all the fuss is about. Arguably the biggest pull that Sony had at rAge was *Gran Turismo 5*.With two *GT 5* racing pods on the show floor, racing game enthusiasts were finally able to give the much anticipated driving simulator a spin.

WORTHY MENTIONS

Most won't realise that THQ had overseas representatives present at rAge, you just needed to know where to look. Richard Stickler, the Export Sales and Marketing Manager for THQ managed to – ahem – obtain a screen on the Sony stand to show off trailers and answer questions on upcoming THQ games including: *Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine* (which looks deliciously gritty and in your face), *Homefront*, *Devil's Third* and

Hardware and Tech

Another rAge expo has come and gone, leaving us in suspense for what will happen next year. For those of you who were not there, do not worry, I am here to tell you about all of the latest hardware reveals, overclocking achievements and other related hardware news. I arrived at rAge five minutes before ten on Friday morning; a massive line stood before me. After a brief wait, the doors were opened and a flood of gamers stampeded through. I pushed my way through the ocean of people inside and made my way into the expo itself. I stood amazed for a while (first time at rAge) staring in awe at the sheer size of the event. My bottom jaw lay on the floor, so I picked it up, wiped the drool off my chin and made my way to the first stand that caught my eye, the Frontosa stand. There were many 3D rigs on display this year. Frontosa had *Bioshock 2* running in stereoscopic 3D. The 3D really brought the game to life, adding yet another layer to the already brilliant atmosphere and setting of Rapture. Unfortunately I could not play long, so I wasn't able to experience combat. Then again, had I been faced with a Splicer appearing out of some dark corner, I probably would have needed an underwear change. This got me thinking: *Dead Space 2* in 3D (shivers). I explored the Frontosa stand for a while before finding the overclocking team, they were trying to get a very stubborn Core i7 980x to overclock. It only reached a clock of 5.5 GHz before becoming unstable, so they moved on to the next chip. They had brought an AMD Phenom 2 970 Quad core along with them for a world record attempt. They placed the chip into an ASUS Crosshair 4 Formula and slotted an ATI Radeon 5970 in for the benchmarking. I left them for a few minutes to get a drink. When I returned they had already overclocked the chip to 6.65 GHz; the temperature had been brought down to -160 degrees Celsius using liquid nitrogen. They overclocked the 5970 to a decent 800 MHz before starting the first benchmarks.

- 3D Mark 06 (29673)
- 3D Mark vantage (P23499)
- 3D Mark 03 (115987)

They increased the GPU clock to 825 before running 3D Mark 06 once more. The final score was 29762. Unfortunately there were no world records broken. The final CPU clock was 6.85 GHz, only 50 MHz away from the world record. The Quad core CPU was soon replaced by the AMD Phenom 2 X6 1095t chip. With all six cores running, it reached a clock of 6.5 GHz. With only 1 core running, it squeezed a clock of 6.77 GHz using a 30.5 multiplier.

At this stage I was very intrigued by the over clocking, so my next stop was the ASUS stand. The rig consisted of an AMD Phenom 2 X2 processor, an ASUS Crosshair 4 motherboard and two ATI Radeon 5850s. The CPU reached a stable clock of just over 6.5 GHz on liquid nitrogen. The benchmarks were run at different frequencies to improve stability.

- Super Pi 32m (6.2 GHz) 11 minutes 25 seconds
- wPrime 1024m (6,255 GHz) 400 seconds
- AquaMark (6.3 GHz) score=302,000
- 3D Mark 1 (6.4 GHz) score=77168

I put a tick next to overclocking on my imaginary check list. Next on my list was the AMD/ATI stand, I arrived to find a huge crowd of people gathered in front of it. At that time they were throwing various items into the crowd, pens, water bottles, lanyards and even the occasional *Far Cry 2* game disc (I nearly got smacked in the face when someone jumped to grab a pen that was thrown overhead). Graphics cards, motherboards and processors were given away every few hours; all you had to do was fill out a raffle ticket. I managed to speak to the guy in charge of the stand and tried my best to get any information about the upcoming ATI Radeon 6000 series out of him. Unfortunately, all he said was that he could not reveal anything to the public before the cards release next month. I was hoping to get a few specifications, but a release date will just have to do.

Moving onto the Alienware stand, I found that their new range of laptops was on display: the MX11x, M15x, and M17x. These may be some of the most powerful mobile gaming laptops known to man, but with such high prices it may put them well out of reach of most humble gamers.

At the GEC stand, the ultimate dream machine was being raffled off for R100 a ticket (full list of specs can be found in the October edition of NAG). With all of the powerful tech out now, it got me thinking. What will be on show at the next rAge? The answer to that can only be revealed with time.

Kyle Lautenbach

Red Faction Armageddon. The trailers shown were extended versions of those shown at this year's E3. Of course, on top of answering questions and discussing THQ titles, Stickler confessed that he was doing a spot of market research on the South African scene; he also expressed his desire to have an official THQ stand at future rAge expos.

Looking back there really was too much to try and cram into an article of this size. To a certain extent, I've only scratched the surface of what the show floor held at rAge 2010. There was a lot more to see including appearances by Pippa Tshabalala (The Verge) and Lalla Hirayama taking each other on in WWE matches; Magic the Gathering workshops; live multiplayer matches with professional international gamers Pierre Emeric, Sebastian Siira and Conney Sjöberg; live MSI over-clocking demonstrations by South Africa's top over-clocker; live presentations for *Guild Wars 2*; anime, graphic art signings, figurine sculpting and Steam Punk clothing in the Artist's Alley section; impromptu Cosplay gatherings (including a *TF2* Scout!); the list goes on.

NAG LAN

From a mere 200 attendees in 2002 to a total of 2,080 in 2010, the NAG LAN was once again a huge success. There was official sponsorship by Alienware; R2.5 million of HP networking equipment; 12 Intel servers; a total of 2,100 network points and 12kms of cabling connecting thousands of computers in a sort of three day digital orgy – I hope you had (virus) protection if you took part! The crew running the LAN, VC, did an amazing job in ensuring everything ran smoothly, and after I chatted to a number of people at the LAN the overall feeling was that the event was slick and efficient. There were a few gripes from people saying they couldn't play *Modern Warfare 2* or *StarCraft II* but I witnessed numerous matches of both games from Saturday morning onwards.

While this might not have been the largest NAG LAN, it was certainly the longest clocking in at 53 hours and achieving a new Guinness World Record in the process. Of course, there's a lot more to discuss on the LAN, but I'll leave that up to Derrick, seeing as he actually attended the entire event.

CLOSING TIME

The gaming industry in South Africa really is growing up. Many people consider rAge our own E3, but perhaps the comparison is an unfair one. Shows like E3, Gamescom and GDC cater towards a massive international market and as such attract huge publicity for developers and publishers. Expecting rAge to be on par with shows like those is perhaps unrealistic. That's not to say that rAge will never become that; the show has all the potential to do so but, like so many things, it will live and die with the local, South African gaming scene. So long as our home-based market continues to grow, you'll see rAge grow. And I think that is the lasting impression that rAge 2010 left me with: we've come a long way and we have a thriving gaming scene in our country. But as I wondered the show floor and witnessed the tangible joy flowing through the people present, I had this exciting thought that this surge in local gaming is only the beginning. NAG

Miklós Szecsei

Hardcore Gaming

Call of Duty was alive and well in a competitive format in the NAG LAN this year. Gaming Inc hosted a *Call of Duty 4* LAN Championship where eight of SA's *Call of Duty 4* teams competed for the title of being the best squad in SA. Bravado eventually triumphed over =BFB= muPtarDs in what was a tense and entertaining battle that lasted well after the LAN had officially closed on Sunday afternoon. Bravado won a Acer netbook, Alienware vouchers and Logitech headsets. BFB won portable hard drives from Verbatim.

Being an avid *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* fan, most of my time was spent watching some of the most epic gaming I have seen in a while. The KK clan organised a *MW2* FFA and also a Clan comp in the LAN, and some of SA's best *MW2* players were there to take each other on.

The FFA Comp, sponsored by iGame, was an opportunity for players to show their overall individual skills over an elimination series of four random maps per round. Map 1 was SMG only, map 2 was Assault only, map 3 was Sniper only and map 4 was anything goes (and yes, that meant any combination of noobish class setup that they wanted).

THE FINAL RESULTS WERE:

1. Pro PurplePuppy | 175 Kills | Prize: Intel i3 CPU, Intel Motherboard
2. Pro Dancing Rasta | 155 Kills | Prize: Intel i3 CPU
3. KK Krazed |140 Kills | Prize: Intel Motherboard

With the FFA comp starting on Friday night and only ending late on Saturday afternoon, everyone took a break for a couple of hours before starting the Clan comp early on Saturday evening. Five clans participated in this event – KK A team, KK B team, Pro, DSW, A10 and aE. I'm going to use the word epic here again, since that's the best way to describe what went down. Some of the most adrenalin-filled and edge-of-your-seat rounds took place during this competition, and in the end Pro showed why they are one of the hardest clans to beat online. The end result? Pro beat KK A team 2-0 (12-9 Karachi, 12-8 Quarry). The thing that struck me the most after I got home on Sunday evening to play *MW2* online was how inspired I was by watching all these guys (and gal) play. They take competitive gaming to a whole new level. Respect peeps!

Lauren Das Neves

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The Reviewers

We passed around anonymous confessions slips the other day about working in the gaming industry as 'journalists'. The idea was simple – tell us your deepest darkest secret. We won't put names to the confessions or how will they ever trust us again.

ALEX J.

I'm having so much trouble with Telkom, this line of mine never stays up lo...

MICHAEL J.

I really know nothing about what's going on in the office, this industry or even on my own computer. I'm getting too old to keep up with the younglings. I disguise this by making jokes and acting superior.

MIKTAR D.

I'm obsessed with Nintendo even though *NAG* doesn't do much Wii or DS stuff. I never moved on past my childhood obsession with Mario and it's hurting my credibility today.

TARRYN V.

I'm so obsessed with my Gamerscore (G) that I fail to fully realise it's just a measure of how much of a life I don't have. I even played (and finished) *Barbie's Love Pony* just for the points.

MIKLÓS S.

I really want to be a world famous game journalist but I'm starting to think that *NAG* has no real reputation beyond the borders of South Africa and the websites here are a joke.

GEOFF B.

I once surrounded myself with small power tools and set them all to vibrate and exposed my *[snip, you can thank me later. Ed]*

DANE R.

I used to be a cool cheery guy until I got a car and moved far away from the office. Now I live on the highway in traffic. I want to kill myself. Help me. I don't care that this isn't about games!

WALT P.

I hate sports games but the *NAG* guys just keep shovelling that garbage my way. They think I'm just a dumping ground for all the rubbish nobody else wants. They will pay. Oh yes, they will pay...

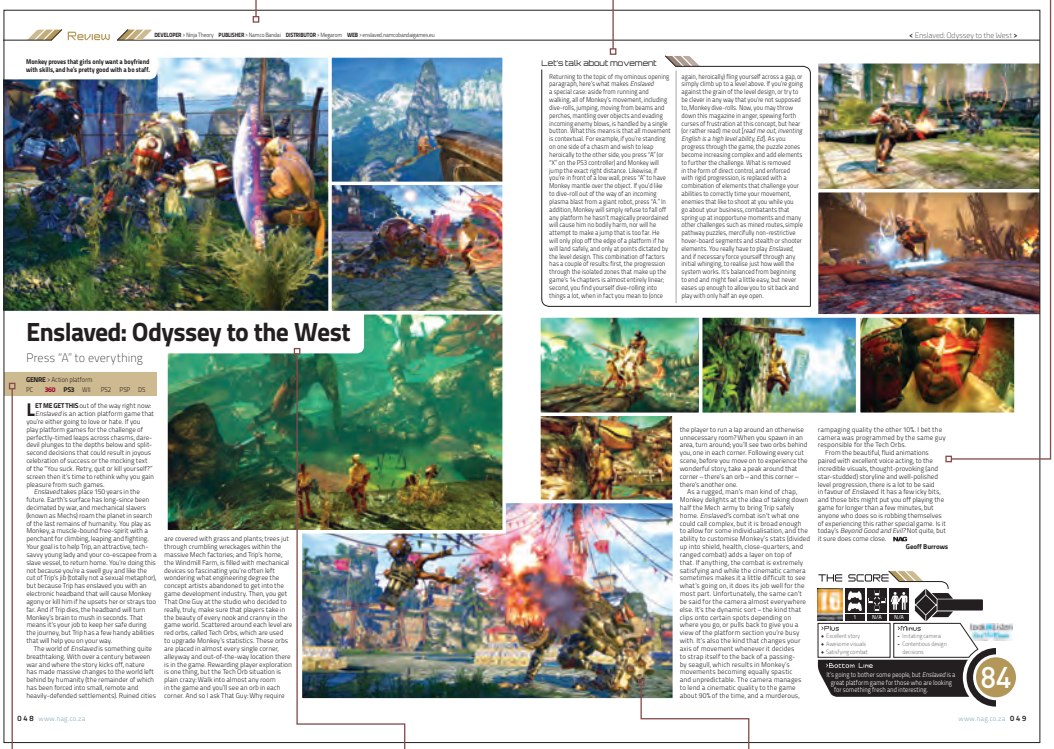
Anatomy of a Review

A quick guide to the NAG reviews section

Vital Info: Who made it, who's putting it on shelves and where to find more information

Box Outs: More good stuff. Just in a box.

The Review: These are words that make up our opinion on the game. You didn't really need us to tell you that, did you?



Genre and Platforms: What kind of game is it and what will it run on? All available platforms are bolded. The one we reviewed it on is red.

Game Name: It'd be a bit confusing if we left this bit out. There's also a summary line for added spice!

Screenshots and Captions: A picture's worth a thousand words. The captions are mostly just fart jokes...

The Score Box

Age Rating: Lets see some ID, son

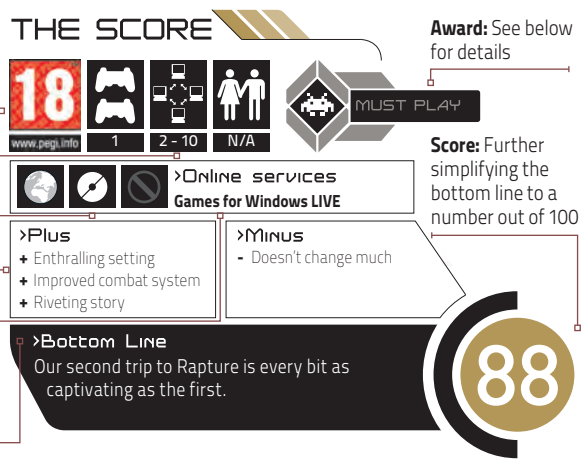
Multiplayer Icons: How many players per copy, players per server, and players in co-op, respectively

DRM: Applies to PC games only: Internet connection required, disc required, or no DRM beyond a serial key

Online Services: Is the game distributed/available over an online service, or does it gain additional features such as multiplayer by connecting to said service? Required services are bolded.

Plus/Minus: What we liked and didn't like, in convenient bullet-point format

Bottom Line: Here's where we boil down the entire review to one sentence. Because reading is hard...



Award: See below for details

Score: Further simplifying the bottom line to a number out of 100

Editor's Choice Award
If a game bears this award, then it rocks. It does everything right – pure and simple. We don't hand these out every issue.

Must Play Award
Essential playing for fans of the genre. These awards aren't as rare as the Editor's Choice award, but if you see one, take note.

Pony Award
This isn't an award anyone can be proud of. If a game gets this award, then it's rubbish and you should avoid it like moss on a sandwich. We keep it only for the worst garbage.

Quick Hits

HEAVY RAIN MOVE EDITION

Heavy Rain was always destined to have motion control of some sort. Quantic Dream's funny way of building a control system was designed to engross the player, to pull them into the actions their on-screen counterparts perform and create a deeper connection between player and character. Move support has also been responsible for endless bloody delays of more *Heavy Rain* DLC, so let's see if it's been worth the bother.

The controls are certainly accurate. They're also incredibly representative of the action your character performs, like opening a fridge door or drying your hair after a shower (a rapid, vertically-aligned up-and-down movement that I'm not entirely comfortable with while looking at a mostly naked guy). As a result, *Heavy Rain Move Edition* works quite well, but is not necessarily any better than the dual analogue approach.

Bottom line: *Worth buying for a first-time player, or those who are inquisitive about Move and are in search of a proper game.*

HYDROPHOBIA

It's the future. The Earth has been flooded by melting polar ice caps. Humanity turns to massive floating ships for survival, and everyone is getting along just swell until some terrorist guys turn up and decide to hijack The Queen of the World for their nefarious purposes. That's where you, Kate Wilson – coincidentally award-winning climber and swimmer – decide to save the day and speak with an annoying accent.

When you first see *Hydrophobia* in action, you might be tempted to think "Cool! A survival action game with creepy lighting and the ever-present danger of drowning thanks to realistic water simulation." If you did think that, you're on the right track, but woefully optimistic. *Hydrophobia* really tries hard to be that game, but is marred by horrible controls, a camera prone to seizures, and animations so ugly they'll make almost every action you perform in the game a nauseating experience to watch.

Bottom line: *Play it for the cool technology and few Gamerscore, but don't expect much more.*

Web Scores

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

NAG // Metacritic average // Game Rankings average

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION V

PC 89 90 91

DEAD RISING 2

360 88 79 81

ENSLAVED: ODYSSEY TO THE WEST

360 84 80 82

R.U.S.E.

PC 84 77 78

FIFA 11

360 80 88 87

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2011

PS3 76 76 75

Tt eSPORTS By Thermaltake

PREFACE CHALLENCE IS THE GAME

"Challenge is the game" highlights the philosophy to bring out gamers' addiction in gaming excitement and the ambition of reaching to the extreme. Tt eSPORTS, a gaming obsession division from Thermaltake, is uniting gamers from all over the world in a unique & fascinating eSPORTS culture, inherited the spirits of Thermaltake, Tt eSPORTS is an energetic, powerful, bold and intelligent challenger who never says "no" to the extreme competition. Tt eSPORTS not only provide gamers the ultimate gaming gears but also fulfills the passion to achieve the ultimate success.

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Shock GAMING HEADSET ONE

DTS 5.1CH CERTIFICATION
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Hex is the new awesome.

Sid Meier's Civilization V

You've settled too close to my borders (i.e. I want your horses). WAR!

GENRE > Turn-Based Strategy

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

THERE'S A DIMINUTIVE MAN with a funny accent leering at me from the edge of my great nation's border. I've spent almost 6,000 in-game years showering the little guy with gifts of gold, resources and the finest prostitutes my proud civilization has to offer in a bid to keep his warmongering eyes focussed on anyone other than me. Seems there's nobody left for him to bully, because he's wiped them all off the face of this randomly generated world. Clearly there's no way out of what I know is coming, because I'm going to need all the gold and resources I can muster if I hope to buy myself the time I need. Oh, and I've officially run out of prostitutes.

This has always been the way this was supposed to end. This tiny dude has finally turned his attention to me and he's threatening the way of life that I've spent all these millennia working towards. In one child-sized hand, he holds a pistol. In the other, he holds a cigarette. In a third, he holds a baby plucked from one of the peaceful, idyllic villages that lie near my border. No idea where that third hand came from, but I imagine it's born of the same twisted technology that's kept this little tool alive for 6,000 years. He's threatening to put cigarettes in the mouths of babies all over my glorious kingdom, forever tarring the innocent lungs of an entire generation of my people – or something equally dramatic. He mumbles something about some stuff that I don't really care about. All I need is a little more time. I watch as more troops slowly assemble at my border. Eventually, the wait is over, and the tiny man shouts "WAR!" in a voice that's a laughable combination of Jar Jar Binks and Kermit the Frog. I watch as they march through my lands, burning villages, handing out free cigarettes and stealing all my snails. Just then, the tiny man's eyes are turned skywards as I launch towards the final frontier in the comfortable, surprisingly spacious space shuttle it's taken me so long to research and build. "So long, little guy," I yell triumphantly to Tiny Funny Accent Guy far below. "You can have this all to yourself – but the heavens are mine, b1tch." Numerous cries of "sacré bleu" and "OMGhax" follow. They then pack up their

» Civ V provides access to extensive modding tools that'll allow you to create new civs, add new units, change game rules, alter the game's graphics and even create total-conversion mods. There's a useful mod browser in the game menu that lets you browse mods that users have created, then download and rate them. One user has already added the Viking civilization, complete with its own unique unit and unique building. Widgets like in-game clocks have also already been made. We're just waiting for someone to create the inevitable Star Wars and Lord of the Rings mods.

For the n00bs

If you've somehow never played or heard of *Civilization* before, you need to get out more. If you haven't researched the prerequisite tech to leave your house or use the Internet to find out more about the game, here's a quick breakdown. *Civ* sees you picking a civilization (each with their own leader – the Japanese leader is Oda Nobunaga, for example) and leading them from prehistoric times all the way through to the modern age. You found new cities, research technology, expand your borders and go to war with (or take a more diplomatic approach) opposing civilizations in a rush to reach one of the game's many victory conditions. Cultural, scientific, military and diplomatic victories are all possible, or you can aim to have the highest score when the clock hits the year 2050. It's an excellent turn-based strategy/4X series that definitely isn't for everyone (games progress at a slow pace and require a large time investment – there are many who will find the game to be boring for those reasons), but those who love it would happily die for Sid Meier, *Civ*'s creator.

If you don't feel like waiting for your city's borders to expand so you can grab more resources, you could always give up some gold in exchange for a little extra real estate.

This is still a game where spearmen can kill tanks. You've gotta love Civilization.

Now with RPG elements

Religion and espionage are gone in *Civ V*. In their place are social policies, which can be purchased by spending the culture accrued by your civilization. There are ten separate social policies that can be adopted, each favouring a different play style and each featuring a number of different bonuses that can be unlocked for your civ by spending more culture. The Honour social policy, for example, will eventually allow you to earn double XP for your military units once you've unlocked the prerequisite bonuses. Each social policy purchase increases the price of the next and some of them are mutually exclusive, so you won't be able to adopt certain policies if you've already adopted another that clashes with it. A cultural victory is obtained by completely filling five of the social policy trees. The social policy system is a nice change to the Civics system of *Civ IV*, allowing you to customise your civ as you would a character in an RPG, with players able to gradually develop preferred builds that complement their specific play style.

junk and leave, defeated and despondent. They keep the snails though – bastards.

Anyone who's played *Civilization* before knows what I'm going on about up there. *Civilization V* isn't an evolution of the series: it's more of a refinement. It's taken everything that makes *Civ* great, polished it, streamlined it, prettied it up and sent it out into the world to make complete addicts out of us once again. The biggest, most immediately noticeable change is the hex grid used by the game. Gone are the square tiles of old, replaced with fancy, awesome, important new shapes that make the randomly generated maps more natural and plausible. Geographical features are now more easily distinguishable from each other, partly due to the beautifully detailed visuals. The hexagonal tiles bring with them a brilliant new combat system as well, one that has made those ridiculous Stacks of Doom extinct. Military units cannot complete their turn stacked atop each other, meaning that unit placement is a pivotal part of a combat system that now relies on actual tactics rather than a totally overwhelming stack of units. Previously in *Civ*, all you really needed to do to succeed using military might was create a stack of millions of units and march them through enemy territory to capture cities and murder things. Now, you're forced to strategically position troops to gain an advantage. It also means that a player with fewer troops but better tactics can fend off a much stronger, but poorly organised military – useful for anybody going for a peaceful victory. Place hoplites in a ravine to mimic King Leonidas and force enemies to break their backs on your superior defensive position. Place archers behind your Swordsmen to keep them safe from melee attacks and bombard cities and enemy units from afar. The new combat system is fantastic and going back to *Civ IV* after all the tactical variety provided by this new title makes its predecessor's battles feel archaic.

City-states are another new feature in *Civ V*. These are non-expansive, AI-controlled minor civilizations that can be crushed or befriended. Ally with a city-state and they'll provide you with units and resources, or you could just walk all over them and annex the city (or make it a puppet state – which leaves the city under AI control but decreases the unhappiness that your citizens feel towards the foreign city). The city-states

are a cool addition, adding another layer of depth to an already complex game, but they can be turned off if you'd prefer not to have precious real estate and resources hogged by them.

Civ V is filled with many other minor changes and tweaks. Land units can now automatically embark onto water tiles when certain research is completed – a major blessing because instead of having to wait a thousand turns for your group of transport ships to build, you can now spend that time building other naval units to defend your transports. Cities now have a ranged attack and can still be garrisoned with a single unit, making city sieges much more interesting, especially now that the combat system offers greater tactical variety.

Graphically *Civ V* is excellent. These aren't hyper-realistic graphics, but the amount of detail that has been put into animations, textures and every single part of the game world is phenomenal. The attention to detail gives life to a game that is still very much a mechanical beast, making it feel like what is essentially a virtual board game made up of If/Then statements has real heart and soul.

All this fawning over *Civ V* can't hide some obvious problems the game has. The most annoying issue is something that has forever plagued the series: stupidly aggressive AI. It's annoying that you can never completely focus on being a peaceful civilization because you always have to have a preventative army waiting just in case the AI suddenly decides it doesn't like the way your face is arranged. In one game, George Washington settled a new city near my borders, then in a stunningly idiotic (and admittedly pretty funny) feat of backwards thinking, declared war on me because I'd settled too close to him. I watched Otto von Bismarck declare war on a city-state, only to swear to protect that city-state from attacks two turns later. In yet another game, Montezuma seemed to have picked a specific turn in the game to declare war on me. Loading from numerous previous saves did nothing to change this: every time that turn came

knocking, so did Monty, no matter how many extravagant gifts I sent and non-aggression pacts I signed with him.

Most of the time, it's quite pathetic as much weaker civilizations snap at your heels and force you to kick them around a bit before they offer to give up all their spices, sheep and gold in exchange for peace. The aggression doesn't break the game, but it is annoying that the AI's hostility is something that's never been fixed. At least it means that games against the AI are never boring and predictable, aside from the fact that it's guaranteed that you **will** have war declared on you many, many times in a single game. Other than that perpetual niggle, there are random technical issues like crashes and graphical glitches that plague the game, but thankfully the developers are rapidly fixing these with regular game updates via Steam.

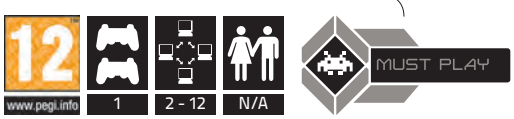
Despite these complaints, *Civ V*'s numerous improvements and refinements all come together to create a brilliant game that is accessible to both newcomers and long-time fans alike. It's simple, yet wonderfully complex. Almost every change is for the better and it's still as furiously addictive as you'd expect.

Now if you'll excuse me, Catherine is massing troops at Elizabeth's border and I need to end a few turns to see what she's up to. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

Rocket artillery shells enemies from afar. Not a Stack of Doom in sight here.

THE SCORE



›Online services
STEAM

›Plus
+ Awesome combat system
+ Streamlined features
+ Gandhi's such a nice guy

›Minus
- Overly aggressive AI
- Occasional bugs/tech problems

Look & Listen For the Fans

›Bottom Line
I researched Printing Press a couple turns ago and now this magazine is in your hands. True story.

89

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A WORLD AWAITS

DEVELOPER > Blue Castle Games **PUBLISHER** > Capcom **DISTRIBUTOR** > Nu Metro **WEB** > www.deadrising-2.com

Is this the lovechild of Wolverine and Beatrix Kiddo*? No, it's Chuck mother**ing Greene, zombie scum! Too few games have this many awesome things in the same screenshot.**

Dead Rising 2

You can't keep a good zombie down

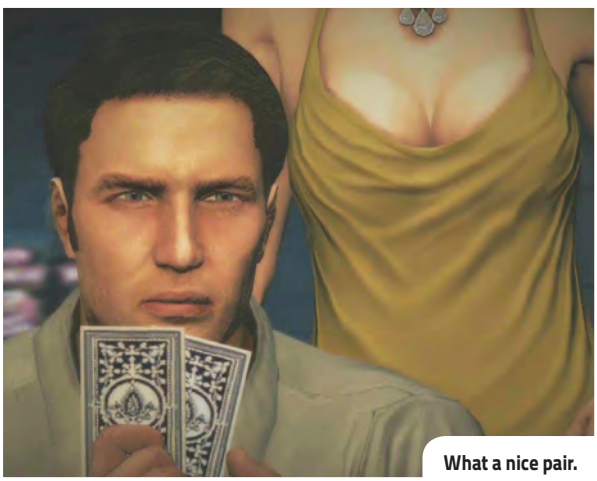
GENRE > Action

PC **360** **PS3** WII PS2 PSP DS

***DEAD RISING* HOLDS A** special place in a lot of gamers' hearts. Sometimes especially frustrating, painfully difficult and quite contently Japanese, it managed to prove itself to be a commercial success, and gamers who enjoyed its sandbox zombie-slaying action were eager to get their hands on a sequel – hopefully one that fixed all the little issues. After four years, that sequel has arrived; not only has it improved the save game system and been given a dose of normality when it comes to character progression, but it adds a ton of new stuff, features a bigger and more interesting game world and is absolutely a game that any self-respecting zombie fan should go out and buy right now. You don't even have the excuse "but it's not available on my gaming platform" anymore.

If you've somehow managed to miss our extensive coverage of the game, here's why you're a guy in a yellow jacket who likes to cut up the undead in interesting ways: Chuck Greene, former motocross champion and current zombie apocalypse survivor, has spent the time following his wife's zombie-inflicted death earning money to keep his daughter, Katey, alive, thanks to the expensive temporary cure for zombification – Zombrex. Since it's so pricey, Chuck has put his bike-riding skills to use in the TV show *Terror Is Reality*, where the payoff to slaughter as many zombies as possible in a given time limit (and beat back the same attempts from your three opponents) is the huge wads of cash Chuck needs to keep his daughter on the happy side of death. Shortly into the game, things go horribly wrong after an episode of *TiR* is filmed: thousands of caged zombies have broken lose and are terrorising the fictional gambling den of Fortune City, Nevada. Chuck will need to save himself, his daughter and anyone else, get to the bottom of the escape, get caught up in the inevitable conspiracies and get rescued by the military within 72 hours of game time.

It's clear from early in the game that *DR2* has a greater focus on storyline; if you follow the main quests, it will feel more like a story-driven game set in a sandbox environment that *DR1*'s "sandbox game with some story stuff thrown in" approach. Cinematic sequences, believable characters delivered through strong voice acting and character animation, interesting dialogue and a deeper story all contribute towards this, and make you feel more attached to Chuck and the other characters than what was possible



What a nice pair.

*That crazy broad from Kill Bill, in case you heathens didn't figure it out.

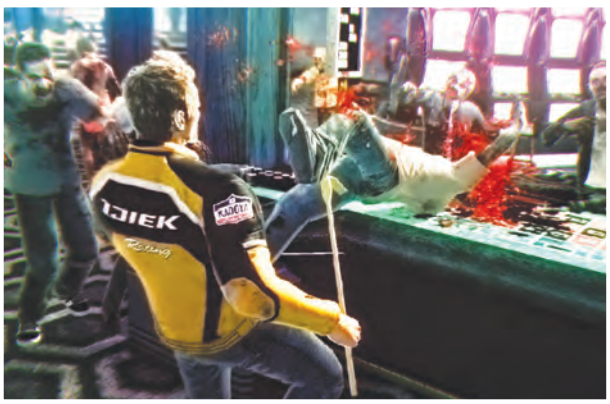
with Frank and the crew from *Dead Rising 1*.

Returning from *DR1* is the concept of Case Files – main quest lines that engage at specified times and dig Chuck a little deeper into the apocalyptic mess he finds himself in. As before, you can choose to follow or ignore the Case Files, as well as every single side quest (of which there are many) that appears in the game, often on a timer but also based on your location and activities. The trick is that it's not always possible to accomplish every challenge, especially not if you've spent a good bit of time maiming random zombies for Prestige Points (that's experience points to you and me) and visual delight. What results is an action game that is only as complex, and often only as challenging, as you want it to be. If you're a stickler for completion, you'll want to maximise the time you spend rescuing survivors and completing the quests that are given to you, but to do this you'll need to be strategic with your use of time and the order in which you attempt each mission. Some missions, especially those that involve Psychos (boss fights) are almost impossible to beat if you don't have enough time, the right weapons or the right abilities that are unlocked as you gain levels from earning PP. This is where *DR2*'s merciful save system comes into play. No longer are you limited to a single save slot and forced to deal with the repercussions of your poor time management skills; now you can bounce between three save game slots and re-attempt missions that didn't work out for you. If you die, or find that you've spent too much time throwing money into slot machines or entertaining yourself with co-op zombie wheelchair races, simply go back a couple of saves and re-attempt the day in a more efficient manner. Or, if you're only in this for the carnage, bugger the whole notion and just play the game with the intent to kill as many of the endless horde as possible before the military comes to pick you up.

Cool stories are cool, but let's not kid around; death and anarchy are the real reason why you're going to buy this game. *Dead Rising 2* takes the concept of mass zombie slaying to a whole new level. While *DR1* boasted a few hundred zombies on screen at once, *Dead Rising 2*'s developers claim that the game can comfortably handle upwards of 3,000 zombies you could face at any moment. And you can feel the difference, especially when you're making use of some of the larger or explosive weapons, or the star of the show – the chainsaw bike. Combo weapons are incredibly satisfying, both in application and discovery; and small delights like power-up potions mixed in a blender, hidden passages through the city and incredibly silly weaponry will keep you giggling like a schoolgirl or cackling like a mad scientist all the way through to the end.

Dead Rising 2 brings with it a lot of technical improvements, more interesting combat, an actually interesting story and so very many ways to slaughter the undead, but it does have a couple of pitfalls. The most contentious of these are the timed missions, and indeed the entire span of the game which runs on a timer. If

Uncle albert always gets weird at Christmas time.

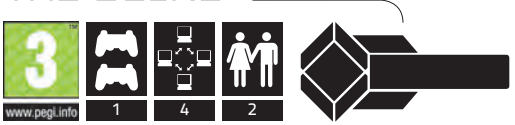


you played from start to finish without dying, restoring or watching any cut-scenes, you can expect just over seven hours of game time, but chances are that you'll finish the game in more like ten hours. While some may find the idea of chasing timed objectives to be tedious, stressful or plain irritating, many will find the entire process to be ultimately rewarding once you realise that it's not (always) the end of the world if you miss out on a couple of survivors, or don't manage to get to the bottom of every dark secret in the game. This is, after all, still *Dead Rising*, and you'll do well to play through the game a couple of times to get the most out of it. Another issue worth debating is the difficulty of the game. Sometimes it really does get frustrating, especially when you realise that you simply cannot beat a certain Psycho or get yourself out of a particular pickle with only a bottle of shampoo and a handbag. Once again, however, persistence pays off and sooner or later you'll find yourself enjoying the game's pace and challenge level if you're willing to turn a few hairs grey for your trouble. From a technical point of view, there are a few issues that might bother you: every zombie and almost all items respawn when you enter an area, which can become frustrating and might lead to item "farming," which in itself could either irritate you or be considered a blessing; the game also tends to lag a bit when the action picks up; the survivor AI, while much better than that of *DR1*, still needs a bit of baby-sitting and a watchful eye lest you leave them behind during area transitions; which leads me to the biggest gripe I have: the loading times. Even with an installation to the Xbox hard drive, you'll soon get annoyed by the length of time it takes to load an area. It's not terrible, but as you open up more areas of Fortune City and find yourself travelling almost as much as fighting, you'll quickly become irritated by the amount of time you spend staring at loading screens.

Even with its share of issues, *Dead Rising 2* manages to be not just the best zombie game available right now, but an excellent sandbox action title that anyone looking for a bit of fun should pick up. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

THE SCORE



›Plus
+ Great visuals
+ Satisfying combat
+ Good story [*Bro? Ed*]

›Minus
- Can get frustrating
- Painful load times

Look & Listen For the Fans

›Bottom Line
Dead Rising 2 has something for everyone: old-school Japanese charm mixed with over-the-top action in a playful sandbox world.

88

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Look & Listen
For the Fans

MN9984

DEVELOPER > Ninja Theory **PUBLISHER** > Namco Bandai **DISTRIBUTOR** > Megarom **WEB** > enslaved.namcobandaigames.eu

Monkey proves that girls only want a boyfriend with skills, and he's pretty good with a bo staff.

Enslaved: Odyssey to the West

Press "A" to everything

GENRE > Action platform

PC **360** **PS3** WII PS2 PSP DS

LET ME GET THIS out of the way right now: *Enslaved* is an action platform game that you're either going to love or hate. If you play platform games for the challenge of perfectly-timed leaps across chasms, dare-devil plunges to the depths below and split-second decisions that could result in joyous celebration of success or the mocking text of the "You suck. Retry, quit or kill yourself?" screen then it's time to rethink why you gain pleasure from such games.

Enslaved takes place 150 years in the future. Earth's surface has long-since been decimated by war, and mechanical slavers (known as Mechs) roam the planet in search of the last remains of humanity. You play as Monkey, a muscle-bound free-spirit with a penchant for climbing, leaping and fighting. Your goal is to help Trip, an attractive, tech-savvy young lady and your co-escapee from a slave vessel, to return home. You're doing this not because you're a swell guy and like the cut of Trip's jib (totally not a sexual metaphor), but because Trip has enslaved you with an electronic headband that will cause Monkey agony or kill him if he upsets her or strays too far. And if Trip dies, the headband will turn Monkey's brain to mush in seconds. That means it's your job to keep her safe during the journey, but Trip has a few handy abilities that will help you on your way.

The world of *Enslaved* is something quite breathtaking. With over a century between war and where the story kicks off, nature has made massive changes to the world left behind by humanity (the remainder of which has been forced into small, remote and heavily-defended settlements). Ruined cities are covered with grass and plants; trees jut through crumbling wreckages within the massive Mech factories; and Trip's home, the Windmill Farm, is filled with mechanical devices so fascinating you're often left wondering what engineering degree the concept artists abandoned to get into the game development industry. Then, you get That One Guy at the studio who decided to really, truly, make sure that players take in the beauty of every nook and cranny in the game world. Scattered around each level are red orbs, called Tech Orbs, which are used to upgrade Monkey's statistics. These orbs are placed in almost every single corner, alleyway and out-of-the-way location there is in the game. Rewarding player exploration is one thing, but the Tech Orb situation is plain crazy: Walk into almost any room in the game and you'll see an orb in each corner. And so I ask That Guy: Why require

Let's talk about movement

Returning to the topic of my ominous opening paragraph, here's what makes *Enslaved* a special case: aside from running and walking, all of Monkey's movement, including dive-rolls, jumping, moving from beams and perches, mantling over objects and evading incoming enemy blows, is handled by a single button. What this means is that all movement is contextual. For example, if you're standing on one side of a chasm and wish to leap heroically to the other side, you press "A" (or "X" on the PS3 controller) and Monkey will jump the exact right distance. Likewise, if you're in front of a low wall, press "A" to have Monkey mantle over the object. If you'd like to dive-roll out of the way of an incoming plasma blast from a giant robot, press "A." In addition, Monkey will simply refuse to fall off any platform he hasn't magically preordained will cause him no bodily harm, nor will he attempt to make a jump that is too far. He will only plop off the edge of a platform if he will land safely, and only at points dictated by the level design. This combination of factors has a couple of results: first, the progression through the isolated zones that make up the game's 14 chapters is almost entirely linear; second, you find yourself dive-rolling into things a lot, when in fact you mean to (once again, heroically) fling yourself across a gap, or simply climb up to a level above. If you're going against the grain of the level design, or try to be clever in any way that you're not supposed to, Monkey dive-rolls. Now, you may throw down this magazine in anger, spewing forth curses of frustration at this concept, but hear (or rather read) me out [*read me out, inventing English is a high level ability, Ed*]. As you progress through the game, the puzzle zones become increasing complex and add elements to further the challenge. What is removed in the form of direct control, and enforced with rigid progression, is replaced with a combination of elements that challenge your abilities to correctly time your movement, enemies that like to shoot at you while you go about your business, combatants that spring up at inopportune moments and many other challenges such as mined routes, simple pathway puzzles, mercifully non-restrictive hover-board segments and stealth or shooter elements. You really have to play *Enslaved*, and if necessary force yourself through any initial whinging, to realise just how well the system works. It's balanced from beginning to end and might feel a little easy, but never eases up enough to allow you to sit back and play with only half an eye open.

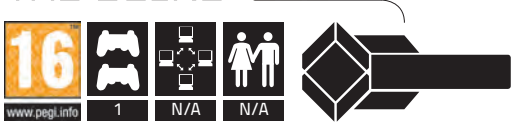
the player to run a lap around an otherwise unnecessary room? When you spawn in an area, turn around; you'll see two orbs behind you, one in each corner. Following every cut scene, before you move on to experience the wonderful story, take a peak around that corner – there's an orb – and this corner – there's another one.

As a rugged, man's man kind of chap, Monkey delights at the idea of taking down half the Mech army to bring Trip safely home. *Enslaved*'s combat isn't what one could call complex, but it is broad enough to allow for some individualisation, and the ability to customise Monkey's stats (divided up into shield, health, close-quarters, and ranged combat) adds a layer on top of that. If anything, the combat is extremely satisfying and while the cinematic camera sometimes makes it a little difficult to see what's going on, it does its job well for the most part. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for the camera almost everywhere else. It's the dynamic sort – the kind that clips onto certain spots depending on where you go, or pulls back to give you a view of the platform section you're busy with. It's also the kind that changes your axis of movement whenever it decides to strap itself to the back of a passing-by seagull, which results in Monkey's movements becoming equally spastic and unpredictable. The camera manages to lend a cinematic quality to the game about 90% of the time, and a murderous, rampaging quality the other 10%. I bet the camera was programmed by the same guy responsible for the Tech Orbs.

From the beautiful, fluid animations paired with excellent voice acting, to the incredible visuals, thought-provoking (and star-studded) storyline and well-polished level progression, there is a lot to be said in favour of *Enslaved*. It has a few icky bits, and those bits might put you off playing the game for longer than a few minutes, but anyone who does so is robbing themselves of experiencing this rather special game. Is it today's *Beyond Good and Evil?* Not quite, but it sure does come close. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

THE SCORE



›Plus
- \+ Excellent story
- \+ Awesome visuals
- \+ Satisfying combat

›Minus
- \- Irritating camera
- \- Contentious design decisions

Look & Listen For the Fans

›Bottom Line

It's going to bother some people, but *Enslaved* is a great platform game for those who are looking for something fresh and interesting.

84

BETRAYED BY DARTH VADER FOR THE LAST TIME,
STARKILLER HAS ESCAPED AND FACES A
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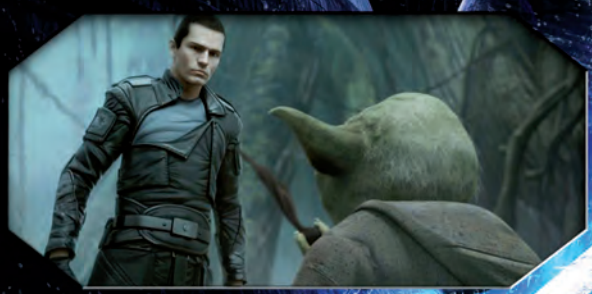
STAR WARS™ THE FORCE UNLEASHED™ II



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LUCASARTS

UNLEASH TRUTH

DEVELOPER > Eugen Systems **PUBLISHER** > Ubisoft **DISTRIBUTOR** > Megarom **WEB** > www.rusegame.com

"Hans - I'm really touched that you've brought me to Lovers' Lookout, but ze Americans are coming..."

R.U.S.E.

Look over here! A distractio

GENRE > Real-Time Strategy

PC **360** **PS3** WII PS2 PSP DS

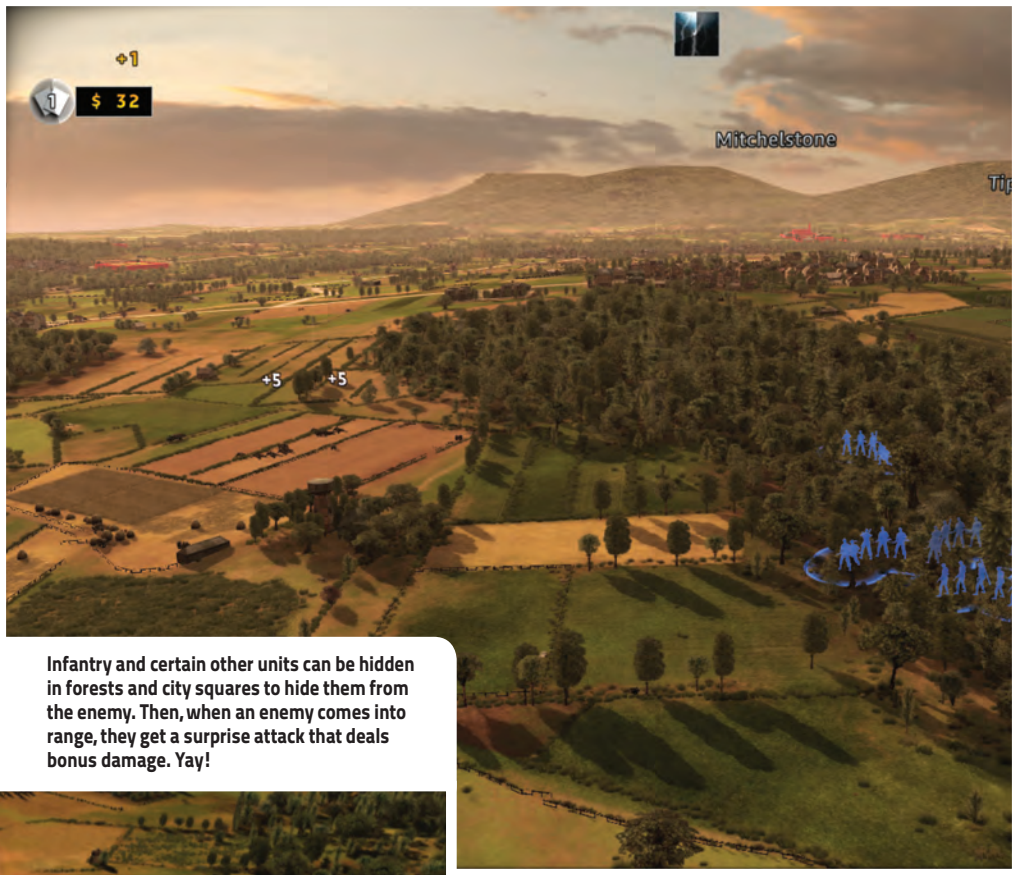
IT'S BEEN A GOOD year for RTS fans. Early on we were handed the awesome madness of *Supreme Commander 2*'s robot dinosaurs. Then we were treated to the anger that *Command & Conquer 4* incited in *C&C* purists everywhere with its lacklustre single-player campaign and complete gameplay overhaul, despite it still being a really good RTS offering. A few short months ago we finally got our hands on *StarCraft II*, which is as brilliant as we all knew it would be. Now we've got *R.U.S.E.* (hereafter referred to as *Ruse*, because OMG punctuation), which has slipped onto store shelves (and Steam) under the radar after many months in beta – appropriate considering the game's focus on subterfuge and trickery.

Ruse's claim to fame is its focus on bringing underhanded tactics and deception to the forefront of its design checklist. *Ruse* hands you everything you need to deceive and obfuscate by periodically providing you with ruse cards that can be played to skew your opponent's perception of your plans and forces. Other RTS titles provide (very few) ways of confusing and misleading foes (Protoss Sentries in *StarCraft II* can create hallucinations, for example), but in *Ruse* the use of trickery to hide your intent feels much more prominent and worthwhile.

The reason this is all so important is because *Ruse* is devoid of any form of fog of war. You can see the entire map, right down to the buildings your opponent has built and where they've placed their units. It'll even tell you what type of units they have (light or heavy), but you'll have to get visual confirmation to find out exactly what units they are. Taking all this information at face value in a game of *Ruse*, however, is not a good idea, because opponents skilled in the use of the ruse cards can turn all of this information into misinformation and lead you into a trap. Light units can be disguised as heavy and vice versa, fake offensives can be launched on your base, buildings can be hidden from sight and units can enforce radio silence to hide them from your all-seeing gaze. This makes recon an all-important factor in the game, because knowing what your opponent is **really** up to can decide whether or not you're left staring at a victory screen at the end of a game.

The idea behind the ruses is great, but it's a shame that they still manage to feel underused. There aren't very many ruses, and not all of them actually deal with deception – some are unit buffs and debuffs (like Blitz – which increases unit speed, useful to get your economy going and to field units quickly in the early game). You don't **need** to use the ruses to win games, but a player who masters the ruses together with the more traditional elements will own faces online. To be fair, no RTS has ever put this much focus on bluffing and deceiving opponents, but the ruses still feel secondary to unit and base management, meaning that for all the game's hyping of the deception mechanic, Ruse is much more of a traditional RTS than it'd have you believe.

It's more along the lines of *World in Conflict* than *StarCraft*, in that it focuses more on micro/unit management and less



Infantry and certain other units can be hidden in forests and city squares to hide them from the enemy. Then, when an enemy comes into range, they get a surprise attack that deals bonus damage. Yay!

Exemplary trickery

What's that? You'd like an example of the ruse cards in action? Sure thing buddy – I'm sure all this deception and subterfuge mumbo jumbo has you scratching your head. In one of the first games of *Ruse* I played against a human opponent, my enemy launched a fake tank offensive on my base. This causes a bunch of wooden units to be produced from your actual production buildings, so that the other player (in this case me) can see that you're getting ready for a push. At the same time, this person began creating actual, non-wooden, very real tanks armed with very real, very big bullets to shoot at me and rallied them to the same point as his fake wooden stuff. Watching this the whole time, I didn't think much of it because I was under the impression that, even with all the production my foe had just undertaken, my little army of tanks, anti-tank weaponry and hidden infantry would be more than enough to defend my precious base. Soon those units disappeared under radio silence and I readied myself for the assault. When they eventually popped up on my radar again, I moved all my forces to the side of my base that they were rolling towards. When my bullets eventually started hitting them, the text shouting "Decoy!" that popped up above the destroyed enemy tanks revealed the folly of what I had done. Just then, his actual army ended their radio silence on the other side of my base and started making my pretty things explode. For me? Facepalm. For you? An example of what a player skilled in the use of ruses is able to accomplish in *Ruse*. I still shed a tear whenever I think back on that match.

on base building/resource gathering. Money, the game's sole resource, is gathered from supply depots scattered across maps. Supply trucks ferry cash from these depots to your headquarters and these trucks can be destroyed by enemies, taking any cash they're carrying with them when they explode spectacularly, so protecting your supply lines from enemy raids is crucial. These depots are also extremely limiting in the amount of cash you'll get from them and once you've bled them dry, you'd better have alternate means of income (like administrative buildings that you can construct – they'll provide a small amount of cash every few seconds, but these buildings are extremely expensive, so building them is a gamble as they could severely restrict your production capacity and leave you open to attack). Most of the games I played online ended with the majority of the players completely broke, having to rely on micro and ruses to make the most of the units they'd already built to try to keep them alive, because no cash means no reinforcements.

The IRISZOOM engine that the game is built on is brilliant, allowing for an instant overview of larger battlefields. Your view can be zoomed in close enough to see the dust kicked up by tank treads, or you can pull the camera all the way out to the point where you're left staring at an in-game representation of a war room (complete with lackeys at work decrypting stuff and eating delicious sandwiches in the background), overlooking a table covered in pins representing units: a nice little touch that emphasises the idea that you're a commander in control of a large-scale conflict. The gradual transition from all-encompassing overview to being right there on the ground with your units is smooth and natural. Battlefield awareness being as important as it is in *Ruse* makes this impressive zoom capability more than just a cool added extra – the ability to see the big picture helps loads when mapping out your next move.

Ruse is best played multiplayer. The single-player campaign starts off a bit wobbly, but starts to pick up the pace and begins to really challenge you as you progress. The awfully voice acted, overly pantomimed cut-scenes do not improve, however – they're totally crap to begin with and they never get any less crap. Not everyone will like *Ruse*'s peculiar pace. At times it feels painfully glacial as you watch units slowly move across the larger maps, while sometimes you'll struggle to keep up with the action when full-on miniature wars break out between armies. The many months of beta have paid off, because it feels smooth and polished, and the six nations are well balanced. If you can manage to pull yourself away from *StarCraft II* or *Civ V* for long enough to play something else, try *Ruse*. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

THE SCORE

›Online services
STEAM

›Plus
+ Smooth and polished
+ Ruses are great
+ Great tactical/strategic variety

›Minus
- Ruses aren't game changing
- Horrid single-player cut-scenes

Look & Listen For the Fans

›Bottom Line
The ruses aren't as revolutionary as we'd like and the slow pace might not be for everyone, but *R.U.S.E.* remains an RTS that's worthy of your time.

84

DEVELOPER > EA Sports **PUBLISHER** > Electronic Arts **DISTRIBUTOR** > EA South Africa **WEB** > fifa.easports.com

FIFA 11

Baby steps...

GENRE > Sport simulation

PC **360** **PS3** **WII** **PS2** **PSP** **DS**

IT'S FANTASTIC WHEN A long running franchise takes a massive step forward, offering innovation and new dynamics to fans and newcomers alike. But there is an associated problem, which comes about if the game after the 'big step' isn't quite as innovative. That's the problem that faces *FIFA 11*. While *FIFA 10* took things to a new level on many different ways – and the associated World Cup celebration game added even more tweaks – *FIFA 11* feels like little more than a mild upgrade on the previous title.

Yes, there are new aspects to the game, but many of them are under the hood, while others are relatively minor in comparison to last year's title. And, worst yet, a handful of long standing issues still haven't been addressed.

FIFA 11 introduces Personality Plus, a new system that replicates the habits and behaviours of famous footballers. Lovers of the sport will recognise their favourite stars through behaviour as well as looks now, which is a big bonus if you're a fan and know what to look for. If your favourite player isn't a top star, though, he won't have been given the same treatment, and if you aren't a football addict, the personality built into the virtual players may not be as obvious.

The game also adds a higher degree of physicality, so that the players really feel the part. With a greater degree of graphical variation in models, they look it, too, and the player will (with a little practice) be able to judge the capabilities of players based on their physical appearance. It's not exactly a science yet, but it's a step in the right direction, and the greater variation in physical reactions and actions makes for some interesting dynamic options.

A new passing mode has also been included, which will allow the player to plan longer, aimed passes. This can lead to one or two niggles if the game misunderstands the player's intentions, but it works well for the most part.

One of the biggest claims during the hype period for this game was the new 'Be the Goalie' mode – a first for the series. This is a variation on the Be a Pro mode, but is a bit of a let-down. The player will be stuck to the goals for the most part, although they can get a view further up the field to keep an eye on the action. Aside from the occasional well-timed save, though, this mode is a little disappointing.

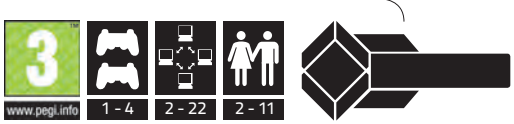
The various career modes, like Be A Pro and Manager Mode, all make a welcome come-back, but the game is still a bit unforgiving when it comes to making it big as a star player – it just takes far too long.

In addition, the AI is still a little robotic at times – something that could have been addressed a while ago.

When all is said and done, *FIFA 11* is a good football game, particularly for fans of the sport that are looking for something a little more technical. The new 11 vs. 11 online mode is also great. The problem is that it just isn't a big enough step along the advancement path from the last *FIFA* title. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

THE SCORE



›Plus
+ Personality Plus
+ Good Physicality
+ New Passing system

›Minus
- Some AI issues
- Not a big enough step

Look & Listen For the Fans

›Bottom Line
Still a great option for football aficionados, but not a big step from the previous title.

80

DEVELOPER > Gearbox Software **PUBLISHER** > 2K Games
DISTRIBUTOR > Online **WEB** > www.borderlandsthegame.com

Borderlands: Claptrap's New Robot Revolution

Unts, unts! I think I lost the beat, but... unts!

GENRE > Action Adventure RPG

PC **360** **PS3** WII PS2 PSP DS

IT SOUNDS LIKE SUCH a great idea. I can just imagine how the quarterly board meeting over at Gearbox went.

"So, like, people are way into the Claptraps. So let's do an expansion that's all about Claptraps."

"OMG, YES."

"So what I'm thinking, right, to save us anything like real effort, is that we just recompile and repackage everything we've already done, but – wait for it, here's the kicker, guys – with more Claptraps. And we'll also rename existing enemies with a '-trap' suffix to make it all look like something new."

"OMG, YES."

Cue cake and investment cash.

After playing an hour or so of this, I realised two things. One, *Borderlands* is a rubbish single player game, and that I hate all my friends for not buying this DLC and abandoning me to slog through this on my own. And two, I'm actually totally over *Borderlands*. Then none of the Achievements would unlock properly, and I decided to destroy everything, everywhere.

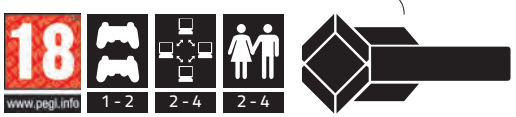
Although I might just wait until they fix the Achievements glitch, because I want *something* for my 800 MSP, and I only really care about Gamerscore, anyway.

Ostensibly, then, *Claptrap's New Robot Revolution* has Claptraps... well, revolting. Or something. I kind of stopped paying attention when the game loaded, and everything looked pretty much exactly the same. And then everything played exactly the same too. Hey, remember the *Zombie Island of Dr Ned*'s hilarious zillion brain collection quest? Yeah. It's back. Now it's Claptrap bits. And hey, remember that tedious, seemingly interminable boss fight against General Knoxx? Yeah. It's back. Now it's... actually, it's the same, just with more Claptraps. Oh, there's also a bunch of new areas, including a massive dump. Full of Claptraps, of course. Which seems rather appropriate, considering.

Wait for *Borderlands 2*, maybe. **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl

THE SCORE



>Plus
+ More of the same

>Minus
- More of the same

Look & Listen For the Fans

>Bottom Line
Been there. Shot that.

50

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Pro Evolution Soccer 2011

And in second place...

GENRE > Sport simulation

PC **360** **PS3** **WII** **PS2** **PSP** DS

THERE'S THIS THING ABOUT competition. For there to be a winner, there has to be a loser. Maybe it doesn't even have to be that extreme... for there to be a winner, there needs to be someone in second place. And sometimes second place is more of a bitter pill to swallow than being dead-last. Just look at the Dutch team at the 2010 World Cup. They looked far less happy than Uruguay, who came in third. Maybe it's the "almost had it" sensation that leads to such disappointment.

If that's the case, then the developers of *Pro Evolution Soccer 2011* are going to be feeling it big time. They have made good progress with this title, and have introduced improvements that elevate the game to a higher level. But while it is essentially a good game, it still doesn't manage to unseat its competitor, *FIFA 11*, as the top of the soccer pile.

There are numerous reasons for this, technically speaking, but one cannot help but get the impression that the game falls short largely because it's 're-invention' started later than that of the *FIFA* franchise.

PES 2011 is a game that would appeal more to casual soccer game fans. It lacks a little of the technicality that goes along with playing *FIFA*, as well as the rich crop of licenses that EA holds. While there are a handful of properly named and kitted teams in *PES 2011*, the majority still bear mangled names and looks, which would drive hard-core football fans crazy.

Playing the game is enjoyable enough, although it does feel a bit more arcade-like than *FIFA*, and the AI leads to some issues. The opposing AI is exploitable, if you manage to crack a formula, and the same moves will work time and again to score goals. The friendly AI, on the other hand, just isn't aggressive enough. Many is the time the player will find himself making a perfect tactical play, only to not have support from his AI controlled team mates in the last third.

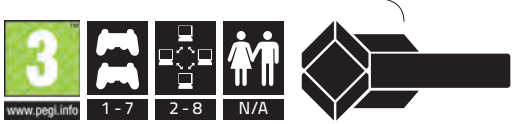
Looks wise, the game certainly looks better than its predecessor, but it still lacks the organic feel that FIFA offers. Some of the player models are better, though, and a few tweaks to the physicality of the players comes in not only in looks, but also in the ability of larger players to bully smaller ones.

While the game does offer solid performance, its online component could have been a lot better. It's not bad, but in the face of what the competition has going for it, it pales. The introduction of 11 vs. 11 games by *FIFA* leaves *PES 2011* stumbling out of the online starting blocks.

On the whole, it's not a terrible experience, and fans of the game will notice a few tweaks and changes over last year's effort. The changes aren't huge, mind you, but they do result in the best *PES* we have seen in a while. Still, the game has a long way to reclaim the title of top soccer simulation that it once held. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

THE SCORE



›Plus
+ Less technical
+ Some good improvements
+ New passing system

›Minus
- Some AI issues
- Exploitable

Look & Listen For the Fans

›Bottom Line
A better *PES* game, but not enough to reclaim the crown...

76

THE FUTURE OF THIRD PERSON SHOOTERS
CVG CO.UK
VANQUISH™
FROM THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED GAME DIRECTOR SHINJI MIKAMI
NuMetro interactive
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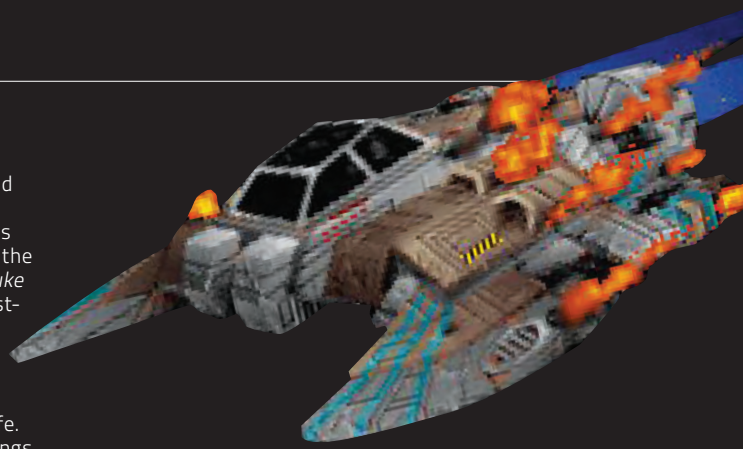
Raptor: Call of the Shadows

DEVELOPER > Mountain King Studios **PUBLISHER** > DotEmu **PRICE** > $5.99



OUT OF APOGEE'S VAST archives comes *Raptor: Call of the Shadows*. Considered by many to be worthy of a spot in the top-ten shoot 'em ups of all time, *Raptor* was developed by Mountain King Studios – a small Chicago-based studio that sadly hasn't released a new game since their 2004 puzzler *Treasure Fall*.

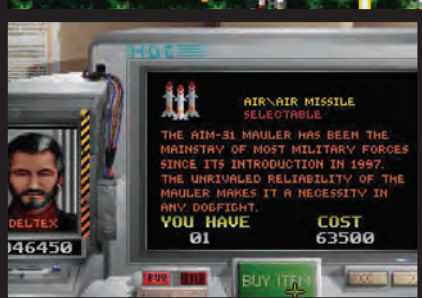
Raptor's story belongs to the school of storytelling that beats up all the other storytelling schools, and only gets invited to their parties because their parents are also scared of it: you play as some guy who has a Raptor fighter jet, and you do jobs for "the Mega-Corps" to vanquish their competition and make a fat packet. Simple, effective, and to-the-point, and it makes for a great reason to spend a few hours playing this game.

The game is made up of three chapters, each spanning nine levels that all play out in exactly the same way: fly through waves of incoming enemy aircraft, ground defences and buildings, tear through them with all manner of cool-looking weaponry, and defeat the boss at the end. For every enemy that you blow up, your employer pays you money. That money is then used to buy more powerful weaponry, and so the cycle continues until you're shooting giant death rays out of every orifice and cruising through enemy territory without a care in the world.

There are many kinds of shoot 'em ups (called shmups by those who like their fancy talk), but *Raptor* falls under that delicate "shoot everything on-screen and try not to die" sub-genre. The action is big, and the bullet-hell pattern dodging is trimmed to a minimum on anything but the hardest difficultly level. *Raptor* is the *Duke Nukem* of shoot 'em ups, with less breast-waggling and more flying in jet-fighters. Instead of the instant death offered by many other games in the genre, *Raptor* gives players a health bar and optional stackable shields to prolong their jet's life. That means more smashing through things to get to the other side, and less faffing about with precision air manoeuvres. That's not to say that *Raptor* is easy, and will definitely put up a fight on the Hard or Elite difficulty levels, but is decidedly more accessible than its *Raiden*-inspired competitors.

The version available on GOG.com is the updated *2010 Edition*, which has been re-published by retro game website DotEmu. As well as native support for Windows 7 (no DOSBox here), this edition has support for screen resolutions up to 1280x800 and a high-quality filter. Personally, I'd recommend that you play with the HQ filter disabled; it smoothes the edges in an unnatural way and causes slight lag during movement, since the filter is applied at runtime rather than editing the sprites directly. NAG

"There are many kinds of shoot 'em ups (called shmups by those who like their fancy talk), but Raptor falls under that delicate "shoot everything on-screen and try not to die" sub-genre. "



LEGION

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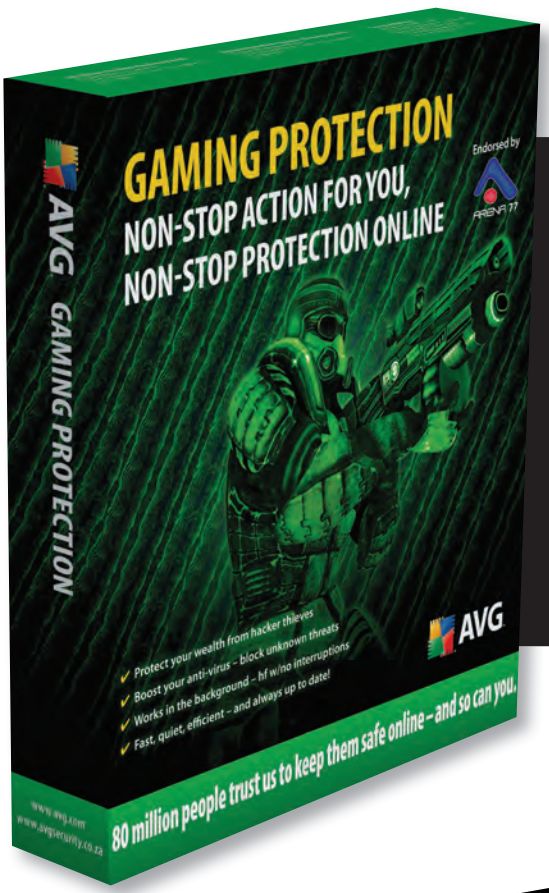

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StarCraft II Strategy Guide

Part 2: The Protoss

LAST MONTH WE DISCUSSED the importance of intelligence (in the "military intelligence" sense – if you lack smarts, not much we can do to help you there!) and took a look at some Terran concepts. In this issue, we examine some fundamentals of economy management, and put the Protoss under the microscope (or, given their general size, a large magnifying glass).

A high power-redundancy base layout

A MATTER OF PRIORITIES

Besides information (which we already discussed) and timing (which we leave for a later time), the main priorities in StarCraft can be summarised as follows:

1. Macro-management – economy and production
2. Appropriate unit countering
3. Micro-management – clever plays with small numbers of units

Ultimately, StarCraft is a game of numbers, of masses of troops. If your army is too small, no matter how cleverly you play, you will get squashed. To this end, it is important to first master the art of quickly developing your economy, and using it to churn out tons of problems for your opponent. Accomplishing this, in the general sense, is surprisingly simple.

- Keep training workers (SCVs, Probes, and Drones) and setting them to work. You want three workers per Vespene Geyser, and about 2.5 per Mineral Crystal. If your resource areas are saturated, then you should already be founding your next expansion. Likewise, if any of your resource areas are running out, an expansion should already be going up.
- Keep building/training unit supply (Supply Depots, Pylons, and Overlords). The message "not enough supply/psi/etc." is one of the deadliest in the game, because it means that you are stalled and waiting, while your opponent is probably growing.
- Keep your production queues active but short. If you find yourself with long queues, it means your income is outpacing your expenditure, and you should build more production facilities. Idle queues, however, are also bad news, so strike a balance.
- Keep your "racial energy" (Orbital Command, Nexus, and Queen) low – these are designed to accelerate or expand some or other element of your war effort. For example, using the Nexus's Chrono Boost on itself to hurry the Probes out faster means you can get a leg up on your opponent in terms of resource gathering.
- Bind your production facilities to control groups, so you can quickly train units from wherever, without having to look at your base. (Master the hotkeys in general – clicking on the icons in the control card is much slower.)
- Be sure to carry on training units even while you are in combat (by using control groups, as mentioned above). Even if things are looking good, don't let up – if a battle turns and you suddenly find yourself on the back foot, you want fresh recruits ready to jump in.
- Keep your Minerals and Gas low – unspent resources do nothing for you, it's units and structures that you want.

If you adhere to the above principles, you will quickly find your game improving, your armies getting larger, quicker, and that's half the battle already won. Try to minimise idleness, in resources and in facilities, and experiment with build orders that promote

High Templars

High Templars don't have a regular attack, but their Psionic Storm does massive area-of-effect damage to clusters of units. You'll have to research the ability at the Templar Archives, but the damage it can deal to your enemy's army is catastrophic – particularly air units and massed ground forces. Then, once they're out of energy, merge your High Templars to create incredibly powerful Archons – which also provide a strong counter against massed air and ground units (biological units especially).

Touching the Void

Playing against Protoss, you're eventually going to come up against a player who does nothing but mass Void Rays. In team games, this is a common strategy – one player keeps enemies occupied while another masses an almost unstoppable force of Voids. The key here is to prevent those Voids from getting charged up, because once they do, their relentless momentum will allow them to effortlessly cut huge chunks out of your base while decimating any units you send to counter them. Use Guardian Shields to lower the already pitiful uncharged damage of the Voids, then use Stalkers to focus their fire on one Void at a time to slowly knock them from the sky. Oh, and Phoenixes – they own Void Rays if you know how to micro them.

Blinking your Stalkers can help you finish off an enemy before they retreat.

A fairly typical Protoss base arrangement. Notice how the Photon Cannons are protected by other structures

Rushes

Early-game Zergling rushes can cripple your economy in a heartbeat if your opponent walks into your base, ignores any units you may have and heads straight for your Probes. Even if you don't have any units out yet, send all your Probes to attack the Zerglings – you'll lose a bunch of Probes, but it's better to have a weakened economy than a dead one.

a smooth flow of uninterrupted operations. Next month, we will take a look at some finickier aspects of combat.

EN TARO ADUN!

The Protoss embody concentrated power. Lore-wise, they are not as numerous a people as either humans or Zerg, but individually are far more formidable. Their units reflect this: typically, most Protoss units cost more, but are tougher and pack a bigger wallop in exchange. In any given mixed game, if as Protoss your kills are the same as those of your opponent, odds are that you are looking at a defeat screen. Protoss can be highly mobile, and their shields make them resilient – it is quite possible for a Protoss strike force to arrive, do some damage, then withdraw before taking any real damage: their shields regenerate and they are ready to pounce again. Used right, this aspect makes it possible for a Protoss player to wear out an opponent with well-timed attacks and retreats (cycled fairly rapidly), or by micro-managing ("dancing") units that are taking fire so they can replenish their shields.

THAT'S PRETTY WARPED

Warp technology is one of Protoss' strongest weapons. It is common for beginners to neglect the Warp Gates research, but converting Gateways into Warp Gates is crucial. Reinforcements can be summoned in seconds, and to any powered location. One way to capitalise on this is by having a probe following an advancing army and warping in pylons along the way – this way, the army can be quickly reinforced as it marches, without having to wait for reinforcements to move in from the home base.

Warp Prisms are more than just transports – they are essentially portable pylons that can fly. This can be a huge tactical advantage. For instance, your army can knock on your opponent's front door, and then, as the forces engage each other, you fly a warp prism into a vulnerable part of the rear of your opponent's base, and warp in

Sneaky hints

The proper use of Photon Cannons: These are heavy hitters, particularly in the early game before units have upgrades, but are very fragile. Always try to have units, and even buildings, between your cannons and enemy forces – this way the cannons give you the home-turf advantage, and are somewhat protected.

Seeing things: Hallucination is an underrated ability that (if used right) can divert much damage from your forces. It can also, if timed correctly, attack enemy morale – for example, your opponent suddenly sees Archons or Carriers he wasn't expecting, odds are that he'll fight back less efficiently while changing into clean shorts. For damage mitigation, use hallucinations of forces you are using, especially Zealots.

From the ashes: Phoenixes are not only competent air-to-air fighters, but also make excellent scouts, due to their speed. Also, don't forget the Graviton Beam ability, which will effectively disable enemy ground units for a while (and make them attackable by other Phoenixes.)

Be quick or be dead: If using Void Rays get them the speed upgrade at the Fleet Beacon ASAP – it will likely save their lives!

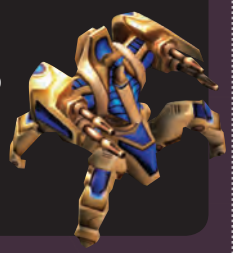
Colossi

If you do happen to find yourself facing a massive Terran bio-ball, never underestimate the power of Colossi. Provided you've researched Extended Thermal Lances at the Robotics Bay (which increases their range from six to nine), your Colossi can safely form up behind your weaker units and do massive damage to the clump of Terran Marines and Marauders while your anti-air troops whittle away at any Medivacs. Their attacks hit multiple units, cutting through weaker enemies like Marines with ease. Guardian Shields (one of the Sentry's special abilities) are pivotal here to minimise damage inflicted on your troops as well. Even if your opponent attempts to focus fire on your Colossi, this'll just buy your weaker units time to do damage to the bio-ball.

The Phoenix's graviton beam immobilises enemies for a few seconds, allowing you to get the upper hand.

Immortals

Immortals – you should use them. These units do ridiculous amounts of damage to armoured foes and can therefore tear a base apart before your opponent can shout "LOLwaitplease." Their Hardened Shields reduce incoming damage to a maximum of 10 as long as the shields are up, making them deadly against late-game heavy hitters like Thors, Colossi and Ultralisks. They're weak against early game units like Marines, Zealots and Zerglings though, and they cannot attack air, so be sure to always have them backed up by other units. Just build a couple of Immortals and dump them in your main army: you'll quickly notice the difference they make to any attacking force.



some units, typically Dark Templars, which hack things quickly and are cloaked. This move can quite easily cripple your opponent's economy, and/or destroy technology.

Another possible way to use warping is in the case that your scout probe got into your opponent's base and wasn't spotted. If you get away with it, you can put up a pylon somewhere discreet and, if it goes undiscovered, use it to warp in units, and possibly build a proxy base around it. Quite a cheeky application is to do this early, just out of your opponent's sight range, and then cannon-rush him. Spectacular (and spectacularly cheesy) when it works, but a decent player won't often let you get away with this. (This example shows why it's a good idea to make sure you sweep your own back yard diligently; enemy photon cannons, gateways, barracks – these are things you do not want squatting on your premises!)

INTERRACIAL RELATIONS

Dealing with the other races requires different approaches depending on what you are up against.

Vs. Terran: Terrans, if left alone, can build up a virtually unstoppable steamroller. Once Terran gets up to a mass of infantry with Medivacs healing them, backed up by siege tanks and what-not, it can become just about impossible to kill them. Consequently, it is important when facing Terran to take the offensive early. A small squad of Zealots works wonders against a similarly priced bunch of infantry, but do it early, before they get too numerous – at that point, their numerous ranged attacks will start to wither too many of your charging Zealots before they even get to swing. If, as is very likely, your Terran opponent has walled himself in, you need to gain map dominance as soon as possible: expand vigorously, and turn your enemy's fortress into a death trap, making it difficult to leave, by setting ambushes outside – Dark and High Templars, Stalkers with Blink ability, maybe a Colossus or two. Use Sentries, particularly early on, to mitigate damage from marines.

Vs. Zerg: Unlike the rather slow-to-get-started Terrans, Zerg is quite likely to be attacking you before the reverse is true. Expect this, and play a little more defensively (use structure placement to constrict access to your base, and block your entrance with a couple of Zealots to deny Zerglings entry.) Zerg needs to expand the most of the races – that's its nature. Consequently, once you've foiled any attempts at early intrusion, seek to interfere with expansions by using a nimble, mobile force to hit expansion attempts (Stalkers with Blink are ideal). Also remember that, once out of combat, Protoss shields regenerate a lot faster than Zerg units heal (other than burrowed roaches) – take advantage of this by hitting and running, thus inflicting attrition, or luring pursuing Zerg units into a trap. If you can tie a Zerg player down to a ground war, you may be able to surprise him with a group of Void Rays, which the Zerg player may be ill-equipped to counter.

Vs. Protoss: Play better than your opponent! NAG

Alex Jelagin

Sneaky hints

Turn their own strength against them: While Psi-Storm is flashy, Feedback is a surgical way to destroy specialist units, or at least hurt them while disabling their special abilities. It often kills Medivacs and Overseers outright, is great for taking Battlecruisers down a peg or two while disabling their Yamato Cannons... the possibilities are almost endless!

Blink and you might miss it: Stalkers' blink ability is for more than just jumping cliffs or gaining on a pursuer or victim. While in combat, you can blink your stalkers to force enemy units to retarget – doing this will often mean that stalkers with low shields can regenerate them, while fresh shields soak up damage. Blink also serves to allow Zealots that may be among or behind the stalkers to come forward and engage enemies in intimate conversation.

In the heat of battle...: individual sounds can easily be missed. Throw a few Dark Templars into a fracas, and your opponent may well end up scratching his head wondering how your evenly matched army utterly decimated his. (Of course, dispose of any detectors first...)

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SteelSeries gives gamers new cool stuff

A FULL RANGE OF LICENSED gaming peripherals have been released by SteelSeries. The SteelSeries 6Gv2 mechanical keyboard Medal of Honor Edition; the Xai Medal of Honor Edition mouse; the SteelSeries QcK Warrior Edition mousepad; and the SteelSeries 5Hv2 Medal of Honor Edition for PC players and the SteelSeries Spectrum 5xb Medal of Honor Edition for Xbox 360 players.

They also recently launched their Shift Gaming Keyboard. The name comes from the keyboards ability to alter its appearance and functionality through interchangeable keysets and advanced customisation features.

SteelSeries CEO, Bruce Hawver said, "The Shift greatly expands the functionality and concept of the original Zboard, which joined our product line in 2008 as a result of our acquisition of Ideazon, with new SteelSeries features that will provide gamers with a keyboard experience that can be customized for all types of games. As we bring the SteelSeries Shift to market, we are continuing to work with the best developers and publishers in the games industry to offer player's unique layouts and functionalities that will enhance their entire gaming experience."

The new keyboard was constructed from the ground up with high-quality, strong materials for durability. The Shift has three height levels, extra wide feet, and a wrist rest that include rubber inserts to prevent slipping. It also has gold plated audio-out and microphone-in 3.5mm ports and 2 USB 2.0 ports, including 1 powered.

The SteelSeries Shift and Shift Keysets are forward and backward compatible with SteelSeries Zboard and Zboard Keysets.

Snippets

Razer has hired the creator of the **Mouse Bungee** and will be releasing its own version by the end of the year.

ECS have announced the Black Series A890GXM-A2, a motherboard that features the **ECS M.I.B. III overclocking interface**, enabling users to unlock the hidden cores of the CPU easily.

The **MSI GT663** is packing a powerful punch in the form of the GeForce GTX 460M (1.5GB GDDR5 of display memory), nVidia's high-end discrete graphics card to support DirectX 11.

Gigabyte showcased two motherboards based on the **Intel P67 chipset** at IDF 2010. Debuting in Q1 2011 the motherboards will require the new LGA 1155 socket and will be incompatible with existing motherboards.

Support for stereoscopic 3D visuals on 3D-ready HDTVs and Nvidia 3D Vision-ready PCs that use active shutter 3D glasses has been announced for **Call of Duty: Black Ops**.

Razer on a rampage

Razer has just launched a new suite of Razer Naga Special Edition gaming mice – the Razer Naga Maelstrom Special Edition and the Razer Naga Molten Special Edition. "After the phenomenal response we received for the Razer Naga, we've decided to create two collectible versions to offer our fans even more ways to dominate their game," said Robert "Razer Guy" Krakoff, president, Razer USA. "We took the same functionality of full button remapping and macro capabilities of the original Razer Naga and rejuvenated the aesthetic design for a more immersive MMO gaming experience."

The Maelstrom Special Edition has a whirlpool of entrancing blue light emanating from its swirling core while the Molten Special Edition glows a wicked and fiery red hue.

Another new addition to the Razer family is Ironclad, an elite hard metal gaming mouse mat. It's finely sandblasted surface and extra-wide anodized aluminum body will withstand even the most intense gaming sessions. The extra-large surface area caters for low-sensitivity settings and wide sweeping movements.

Know Your Technology

IPS: In-plane switching is an LCD technology developed by Hitachi which is used to improve poor viewing angle and colour reproduction of TN panels. The fundamentals behind the technology dictate that the crystal molecules in the substrate move parallel to the panel plane instead of perpendicular to it. This reduces light scattering, resulting in wide viewing angles and good colour production.

DLP: Technology developed by Texas Instruments, used in rear-projection televisions. Digital Light Processing was designed to compete with LCD and Plasma flat panels in HD video but has since fallen out of favour in the home and is now presently used in digital cinema projection mainly. There are two types of DLP projectors in use today, single and three-chip projectors, but Samsung has been using a proprietary method called sequential illumination which uses three coloured LEDs.

AMOLED: Active-matrix organic light-emitting diode; a display technology used presently for mobile devices (soon televisions). The organic part of OLED refers to certain organic compounds which are used for the electroluminescent material in the display. The Active matrix part relates to how pixels are addressed. OLED displays have significantly faster response times, wider viewing angles, much tougher, brighter, more power efficient and lower cost.

4K Resolution: A standard for digital film and computer graphics, where the "4K" refers to the 4,000 pixels of horizontal resolution. Quad Full High Definition (QFHD) at 3840x2160 qualifies as 4K Resolution and so does 4096x3072 media. Both formats are in a 16:9 ratio. Several Cinema/Digital film standards exist for this resolution, including Academy 4K (3656x2664), Full Aperture 4K (4096x3112), Digital cinema 4K as well at 3996x2160. This standard is not currently available for use in home equipment.

By the Numbers

6870

The Radeon HD 6870 is based on a new GPU from AMD, codenamed Barts. It is said to be the successor to the previous-generation Juniper GPU, which was used in the Radeon HD 5700 desktop and Mobility HD 5800 series.

Did you know?

The BIOS will at some point be replaced by UEFI (Unified Extensible Firmware Interface). The Forum overseeing its development includes eleven industry leaders and says it "will provide a clean interface between operating systems and platform firmware at boot time." UEFI started life as an Intel specification but has now changed into a general standard that offers similar boot and runtime services as the BIOS, but has the advantage of not being specifically tied to any processor architecture. It also has a different approach to dealing with the process of identifying and activating hardware prior to handing over to the OS. For example, instead of telling the operating system that there's a mouse attached to a specific port, UEFI simply recognizes that somewhere in the machine there's a device that behaves like a mouse.

Hardware Scoring System

1	Not worth reviewing so it's unlikely to ever appear in the magazine.
2	Hardware turns on/installs but doesn't do much else.
3	This is reserved for all products that function exactly as advertised but not well at all.
4	Hardware that is worth considering if your budget is extremely tight.
5	Middle of the road product. Performs and works exactly as advertised.
6	Slightly above average product with additional functionality over the standard model.
7	Good product that falls only a little short of being a must have item.
8	Reserved for products you will definitely want to go out and buy if you're in the market.
9	Excellent product, near perfect.
10	The stuff of dreams, the best in the market, bar none.

Hardware Awards

This award can be given for a product that is fast, useful, great value, innovative, first of its kind, etc. It is typically only awarded to a product that scores 7 or higher.

The Dream Machine award isn't always given to the fastest version of any product, but the most versatile, powerful, etc. Only products scoring 9 or 10 get this badge.

The Mosh Pit

TWISTDOCK FOR PS3

If you own a PS3 then the TwistDock is a must-have. Aside from being a docking station (for both the Original and Slim versions of the PS3), it also recharges your controllers (even when your PS3 is turned off), and makes use of the centre pedestal to store/secure your cables. You can further expand your setup by adding two additional accessories – the TwistDock CableSet, which adds a HDMI and extra powercable for the Slim, and the TwistDock USB HUB, which gives you four extra USB ports.
R999 | www.radionic.co.za

ANTEC MINI SKELETON-90

It's hard not to fall in love with this open-air Mini-ITX chassis. It has five drive bays, one expansion slot and a 0.8mm cold rolled steel frame. There's also a top 150mm TriCool blue LED fan to add to its funky appeal.
R930 | www.frontosa.co.za

GENIUS SW-HF2.-1800K

This 2.1ch karaoke stereo speaker system has 50 watts of total output power, one low-mid frequency 5.25" subwoofer for bass reproduction and support for two microphones.
R599 | www.geniusnet.com.tw

PLAYON!DVRHD

A digital video recorder that you can access via the Internet – now that's how we like to manage our media player. Features include Dual TV tuners, record, store and playback functionality, remote scheduling of recordings via the web and remote file browsing. It also has support for HDMI, eSATA and high definition audio.
R2,699 | www.playondvr.com

The Dream Machine

Sweet dude, that's sound!

If any of your relatives/family are already asking you what they should get you for Christmas, now is a good time to start that list and get it off to them. Don't be too alarmed when their faces freeze in shock at the prices – simply suggest to them that they all contribute a small amount of money towards one item that you really want. You might also need to point out to them that to play the Best Game Evaar you need the Best Hardware Evaar to make your experience whole. And yes, we're talking about *CoD: Black Ops* here. Come on, we all know that most of our December holidays will be spent playing this game. So it makes perfect sense then that you have epic sound and totally awesome headphones for this mind-blowing gaming 'event'. The ASUS Xonar Xense comes in a really cool box and will only require one sheet of Reindeer wrapping paper with matching label to look right at home under your Xmas tree. If said relatives/family are still in need of a bit of convincing, tell them Neo said it's "the best PC audio combination to date." A statement like that from Neo shouldn't be taken lightly at all, since he is fanatically particular about his sound requirements for his PC. Someone once called him an audiophile and he just blinked.

The Damage...

COMPONENT	PRICE*
CASE	R3,999
PROCESSOR	R9,799
MOTHERBOARD	R5,999
MEMORY	R2,699
GRAPHICS	R12,499
STORAGE DRIVE	R1,999
OS DRIVE NEW!	R1,699
SOUND NEW!	R2,699
POWER NEW!	R3,699
DISPLAY	R4,599
KEYBOARD	R2,001
MOUSE	R899
TOTAL	R52,590

** At print time*

NOTEBOOK
Alienware M17x
R29,999 | www.dell.co.za

System Specs:
CPU: Intel Core i7 720QM (2.8GHz)
RAM: 8GB DDR3 1066
Graphics: 2 x ATI Mobility RADEON HD4870 CFX
Display: 17-inch LCD (1920x1200)
HDD: 320GB SATA2
OS: Windows 7 Ulitimate 64-bit

PROCESSOR
Intel Core i7 980X
www.intel.com

MOTHERBOARD
GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD9
www.gigabyte.com

MEMORY
Corsair Dominator GT 2000C8
www.corsair.com

GRAPHICS
ASUS ARES Limited Edition
za.asus.com

STORAGE DRIVE
Seagate Barracuda XT 2TB
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OCZ Agility 2 60GB SSD
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***Disclaimer:** all letters sent to NAG are printed more or less verbatim, so ignore any spelling or grammatical errors.

Tech Q&A

GRAPHICS CARD PROBLEM

From: Cheslyn Benting

"**I HAVE A LEADTEK NVIDIA** GT 9800 512MB 256bit card. Whilst playing *StarCraft II* my PC just stuck and would not do anything! I then rebooted the PC by hitting the reset button. Upon startup instead of the usual black background it was now filled with blue blocks all over and when Windows starts up its got horizontal lines all over the screen. None of my games work because the graphics driver was deleted and won't re-install and I have tried the graphics card in other PCs and it does the same thing. Please help! What can be wrong?"

Neo: *The graphics card has broken. There have been some cases reported where* StarCraft II *has broken some graphics cards under certain conditions. Yours sounds like a victim of this bug.*

WHAT TO UPGRADE TO?

From: Ironic 2.0

"**I AM SENDING THIS E-MAIL** to ask what would be the best computer I could get that will cost in the region of R10,000. I all ready have a screen, mouse, keyboard and such so I only need the stuff to go inside the case."

Neo: *Core i5/i7 motherboard; 2x2GB RAM; ATI Radeon HD5850 1GB VGA card; 2x500GB hard drives; Intel Core i5 750. That should come to about 10K or less and should offer good performance for a while.*

GPUS

From: Jacques Scheepers

"**I HAVE GOTTEN QUITE TIRED** of the constant war between ATI and NVIDIA fanboys that has lead to biased opinions about both GPUs online. I need to upgrade and I was thinking of getting either the ASUS ENGTX470 or the ASUS EAH4870 (maybe the Matrix edition?). Which of these cards is truly the best value? I am inclined to want to go for the NVIDIA (old habits die hard), but I'd like to get some proper advice before buying. Any other suggestions?"

Neo: *The cards you're comparing are not from the same generation and have vastly different price points. The 4870 is a DX10 card from 2008, while the GTX470 is a DX11 card from 2010. Anyway, but I would go for the GTX470, as it's significantly faster and newer.*

WHAT TO DO....

From: Michael V.d Walt

"**HEY TO ALL OF** you at *NAG* and thanks for a GREAT magazine. I have a Sony Bravia 32" TV, on the TV I connect my PC (via VGA), my PS3 (via HDMI) and my DStv decoder. Not wanting to carry the TV to LANs and stuff I decided to buy myself a monitor. I surfed the web a bit and came across the Samsung p2770h, it took my breath away! Starting to look at the specs I noticed that it doesn't have an antenna input. Very disappointed I started to look again and saw the Samsung p2770hd, which does have an antenna input. I saw the p2770h has a response time 2ms and the p2770hd has a response time of 5ms. I also noticed that the p2770h has a 70000:1 contras ratio and the p2770hd 50000:1 and also a lot of other features were missing for example Colour Calibration etc. Is the p2770h really that better? And what should I buy?"

Neo: *The 2770HD is essentially a TV, so if you need to have a TV at LAN then you should get the HD, otherwise all you need is the regular H model.*

BROKEN STUFF

From: Shaun van Niekerk

"**HEY ALL THE GREAT** people at *NAG*... awesome mag!!! Now down to problems... now I got a mobo and a GPU the other day but the problem is the 9400gt 512mb Biostar card is kind of a 'ok' card it runs my games (Far Cry, Race Driver Grid, etc) but after like 10min play the card starts making cubes and all weird colours. Now I took the card back and the place sent it back; after 4 amazingly boring weeks I got word to go get my card and I received a 9500gt coz there were a 'shortage' of 9400 cards so happy I went home and installed my 'new' card, put NVIDIA drivers 197.45 on and rebooted. So the card worked great for about two days and bam same problem as the first card (weird blocks and stupid colours), and then it locks up making me have no choice but to reboot...???? And about the mobo, it's a p35 g31 MSI mobo it's cheap but it's ok...now I put my ram on it ddr2 800mhz 2gb and my CPU 2.6 dualcore Intel and it works but gets vlipen hot! Even with new thermal paste it doesn't go lower than 60, even after installing 4 extra fans it keeps going hotter? Please I don't have a lot of cash for parts so I use what I can afford. What can be the problem with these parts they aren't even a month old??? Also I know a lot about hardware but I've tried what I think would work and nothing works...thanks again for ur awesome advice...."

Neo: *Your CPU heatsink base is probably warped and not making proper contact with the CPU HSF. You should consider an aftermarket CPU cooler, which will not only bring temperatures down but should have a level base. That will sort out your heat issues as 60°C idle is far too high a temperature.*

XBOX LIVE HELP

From: Gian Paolo Buffo

"**XBOX LIVE IS COMING** to SA! This is big news for me as I still don't have an Xbox Live account *gasp!* But here's the problem: I don't know how to get connected. I have an Iburst desktop modem, which is a small little thing with just one ethernet port. Now obviously that port is used for my computer. Does that mean I have to buy a router or something, and if so what would you recommend? Another problem is that my modem connects to the Internet much like a dial-up connection, meaning that when my PC turns off, I lose my internet connection. Does that also mean that my PC will have to be on if I want to connect to Live? I'm sure you guys at NAG must be rolling your eyes right now and calling me a n00b, but I'm seriously not clued up when it comes to anything but the actual games; so any help would really go a long way. Oh, and great magazine as always."

Geoff: *A router is your best bet. What you need is a router with a WAN port (looks like a regular Ethernet port, but is used to connect to a modem), such as the* **Linksys WRT54GL** *(pictured above). Your current setup involves your PC initiating the connection through your iBurst modem, so that is the function that you need to replace. That Linksys can do this, and will then provide you with four Ethernet ports and Wi-Fi to share with your PC, Xbox and any other devices. Your PC won't need to be on for you to have Internet access on your Xbox.*

PS3 USB MODEM SETUP – SOLUTION

From: David e Freitas

"**REGARDING THE LETTER PUBLISHED** with the above title in the last mag. There is another solution to the one you gave him (expensive solution) – you can connect your PS3 to your internet via Wi-Fi by sharing your Internet (3G hotspot) over Wi-Fi. This requires Windows 7 though, and the program is called connectify.me and it's free.

So, you have a computer that is online via a 3G Dongle - you share that connection over Wi-Fi (your PC becomes a hotspot) to which you PS3 connects.

Q & A

From: André

"**HEY NEO AND EVERYBODY** at *NAG* HQ, I just have a few things that I could use your help on (I did try the web but I couldn't get solid info).

1. The speakers I own are 2.1 surround. On some games they don't give off all the sound, like on C&C Red Alert I only hear sound effects and music but no voices, with headphones this issue is not present. Am I missing something?
2. Can I crossfire a Club 3D 5750 with an ASUS 5750?"

Neo: *1. Check your Windows sound settings and make sure you have selected 2.1 speaker configuration instead of surround. 2. Yes you can, Crossfire is brand independent.* NAG

»

If you'd like our tech guru, Neo, to answer your hardware questions, send a mail to **lauren@nag.co.za**. There aren't any prizes for the letters we print, just simple and honest advice (that is, if we can even decipher the garbled e-mail we sometimes get).

»

XBOX LIVE IS COMING

In case you haven't heard, Xbox LIVE will be launching in SA on 10 November. If you're already connected to LIVE via an account in another region, you will be able to migrate your account to the local service without losing your Profile, Gamer Score, Achievements, Microsoft Points Balance and paid for Subscription time remaining. You also won't lose any of the content that is stored on your hard drive. Details on how to do your account migration can be found here **www.xbox.com/En-za/live/faq.htm**

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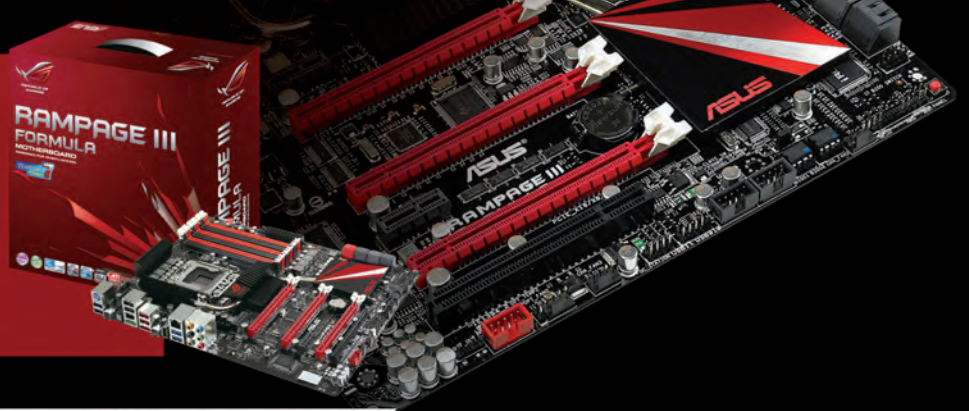

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Xbox 360 S

What's in a name?

Officially, the redesigned Xbox 360 is called the Xbox 360 S, but many people call it the new Xbox 360, the Xbox 360 Slim, the Xbox 360 Short (for the sticklers), the Xbox Slim 250GB or the Xbox 360 250GB/4GB. The motherboard and chipset revision is known as Valhalla.

Size matters: The new Xbox 360 S is considerably shorter than it's older brother.

What we love

- Built-in Wi-Fi
- Plenty of storage space in the 250GB model, and a decent amount in the Arcade
- Smaller size
- Low power draw (about half that of the original Xbox 360)
- Five USB ports and built-in optical output
- Much quieter than the original Xbox 360

What we hate

- Fingerprint-loving glossy black surface, although it does look slick
- The side fan exhausts hot air, so if the unit is positioned vertically and to the left of you, you're going to get toasty
- No HD cables included in either bundle
- The problem of scratched discs due to movement while the machine is on is still a problem

Peace and quiet

Possibly the biggest concern for new and returning buyers alike; the Xbox 360 S is definitely quieter than its predecessor. And, while we're still a little nervous to crack open our console to poke around inside with temperature sensors, various reports online indicate that the unit is indeed cooler as well. Both fixes come from a combination of improvements: a redesigned interior and motherboard; the CPU and GPU now reside on the same chip (called a GCPU), where they benefit from a much more efficient single heatsink and fan; and for those users coming from the first series of Xbox 360s with the noisy optical drives, you'll certainly notice an improvement during heavy disc usage.

Jasper (the previous revision of the Xbox 360) users will already be familiar with the improved Lite-On DVD drive (model DG-16D2S) which makes a welcome return as the DG-16D4S. It's still not as quiet as, say, a PS3's optical drive, but those with the 250GB version will be able to install most of their game library without flinching, which all-but negates optical drive usage and occasionally improves loading times. In addition, the drive is fitted with sound-dampening rubber strips that do their little bit to reduce overall noise levels.

Storage

The 250GB version of the Xbox 360 S obviously includes a 250GB hard drive, which is now internal and reachable from the underside of the console. There is also an Arcade version with 4GB of built-in memory. You'll be able to buy the 250GB hard drive as a separate add-on at a later date or simply use a flash drive for additional storage of save games or DLC. Unfortunately, the HDD is once-again stuck inside a proprietary enclosure and won't be upgradeable with anything but an official unit.

Since the Xbox 360 S drops support for Microsoft's proprietary and hideously expensive memory units, you'll need to make use of an external, FAT32-formatted hard drive or flash drive to transfer your data between your old and new console (assuming you have an original Xbox 360, of course). This function can be accessed from the Memory menu under System Settings, and don't forget to follow-up by transferring your DLC licenses online through www.xbox.com/drm. You'll need LIVE access on your new console up and running before you can do this.

Kinect Ready

Microsoft's motion-sensing Kinect system should be available by time you read this. If Kinect interests you, you'll be happy to know that the Xbox 360 S supports it without the need for any other attachments or external power. The rear auxiliary input will provide all of the bandwidth and power needed by Kinect, so all you'll need is a single cable to connect the device and you're good to go.

Somewhere in this picture a sniper has a high velocity rifle trained right between your eyes.
Unless you're gaming on a Samsung LED Series 50, you're as good as dead. With sRGB that recognises the original picture quality and corrects your screen accordingly as well as Magic Lux which decreases eye fatigue, it's easy to see why the Series 70 may very well be the difference between life and death.
LED BX1950 BX2050 BX2250 BX2350 BX2450
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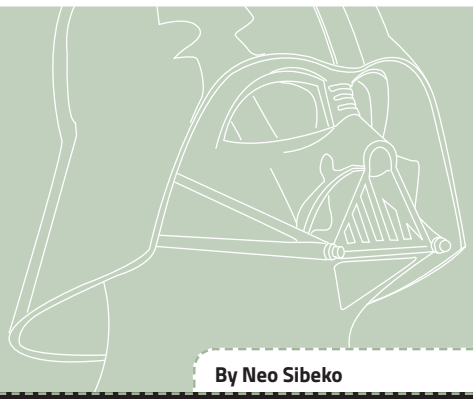

Hardwired

By Neo Sibeko

$1,000 Eulogy

I'VE BEEN OVERCLOCKING FOR years now and as much as I have loved the past time/hobby something quiet annoying has been taking place over the last four years or so, and that's the cost of overclocking, in particular where CPUs and graphics cards are concerned.

This is specifically related to the latest CPUs from Intel especially from the Core i7 range. In essence the only truly worthwhile CPU to have in a competitive overclocking context is the Extreme Edition CPUs, and these retail for $1,000 and even more locally, like most things. The price itself isn't the issue as much as the lottery you are playing when purchasing such a CPU.

How the overclocking circles work is that system integrators and others who have access to pre-release (often handpicked) engineering samples always give previews online on each generation, showing some truly amazing CPU frequencies and performance numbers like 3DMark Vantage stable 6.5GHz CPUs. This is all well and good and certainly helps generate interest and in a way serves as the greatest marketing campaign Intel can have. This, unlike a review, represents the best of the entire platform and justifies the insanely priced motherboard, RAM, graphics cards and everything that goes with competitive overclocking.

The problem with this however is that retail samples or other ES CPUs that people further down the line have access to are rarely ever capable of such frequencies. For instance there are some retail 980X CPUs that are truly poor overclockers incapable of surpassing 4.9GHz. Now compare 4.9GHz with a 6.5GHz sample and it becomes clear that while both parties potentially bought $1,000 CPUs, they didn't buy equal CPUs at all.

While no two CPUs will be identical in how they overclock, previously this discrepancy cost you $200. This was also because many years ago the differences between any two identical CPUs was rarely more than 400MHz and even when the Core 2 range was still relevant, good samples were 6.7GHz while very poor ones were 5.9GHz stable. A huge difference still but hardly the discrepancy we see today.

Once again this isn't Intel's doing as such because AMD's FX line of CPUs used to cost just as much and not all CPUs were equal. However because of the process and technology used at the time, the differences were 200MHz or so and the stakes were not as high as they are now. If AMD's CPU's next year are as great as they promise, then we will see the return of the FX line and I can put money on it that we'll see the exact same differences in CPUs, each selling for $1,000 each.

This isn't limited to CPUs only, but VGA cards as well. If you've ever been charged with investigating the differences in VGA cards from the cream of the crop, then you'll know that this happens here as well. Company X will show you a graphics card clocking to 1.48GHz and based on this, one is tempted to try and achieve the same. After all, additional power circuitry, multi layer PCBs, custom polymer caps, industrial strength/grade mosfets and such are supposed to ensure one gets such high clocks. However this isn't the case and your personal experience may yield results no better than those of a standard version of the graphics card. So you'll pay up to $500 and sometimes more for what is essentially a lottery pick.

"This may seem like the nostalgic remembrance of days gone by in overclocking, and maybe it is to some degree, but believe me, what is currently happening in the competitive overclocking circles is proof that something is fundamentally wrong with the entire scene."

This may seem like the nostalgic remembrance of days gone by in overclocking, and maybe it is to some degree, but believe me, what is currently happening in the competitive overclocking circles is proof that something is fundamentally wrong with the entire scene. Over the last six months, the number of competitive overclockers who have lost or who have left the competitive scene is staggering, and I'm one of them. (I no longer Captain the local team as well.)

All we can do is hope this changes for the better but from what we have learned about the Sandy Bridge CPUs it's likely to get worse because the Bclk is locked to 100MHz, and only the K chips have an unlocked Multiplier, which means any kind of overclocking will need you to pay K CPU prices. Anyway let's wait and see what happens, but for now it's just not remotely attractive to be a competitive overclocker. NAG

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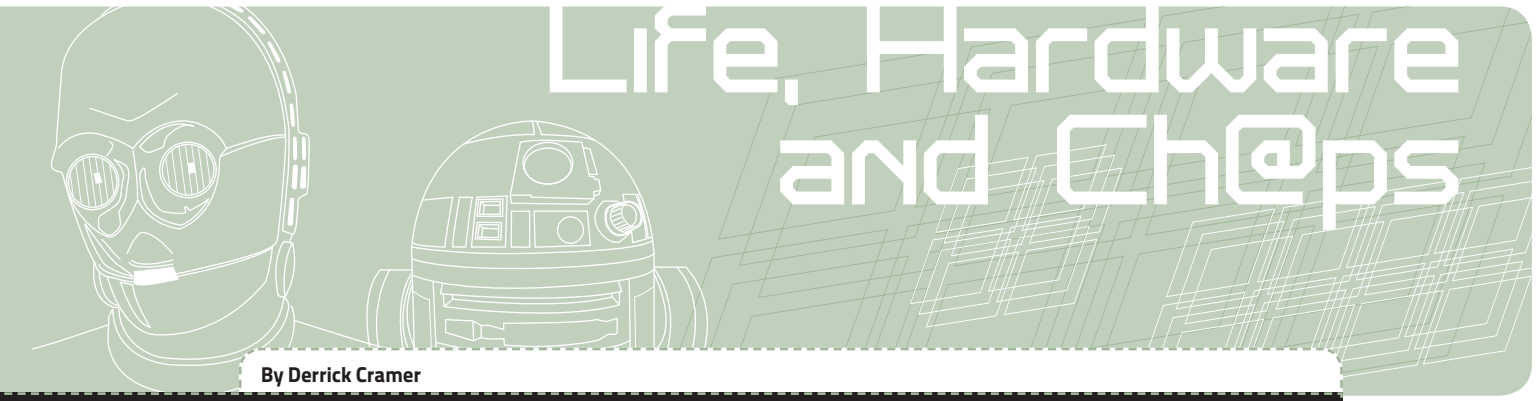

Life, Hardware and Ch@ps

By Derrick Cramer

Signs that you need to upgrade your PC

SO IT'S BEEN A while since you last upgraded your PC, and so far things have been running smoothly. However, lately you've started to notice some lag here and there, a small jitter in games, and your newly installed programs taking forever to load. If the above is your machine, maybe it's time to upgrade.

LAG IN GAMES

The type of lag most of you will notice first. Your games will start to dip below acceptable frame rates, you'll lose an advantage in FPSes, and frustration will replace the joy you once experienced. Well, here's what to do. First off there is no "lower limit" for frame rate in games, it all comes down to personal preference. So while others may swear by over 60 frames per second in a first person shooter, you may be comfy with 35. Don't make the mistake of using fraps or any other program to determine whether your game is lagging unless you have money burning a hole in your pocket. Now, once you've decided the game is lagging, the first stop is dropping the graphics settings slightly. The first to go should be AA and AF, followed by a resolution drop, and then anything with the word "textures" in it. Once you've lowered the settings, is the lag gone? If so, can you stand to play the game on these lowered settings? If the answer to either of these questions is no, it's time to upgrade.

LAG IN WINDOWS

Have you ever waited longer than a few seconds for your web browser to respond? Do you sit around staring off into the distance while your PC takes forever to boot up? If so, you have some lag to deal with. Normally, Windows lag can be solved with a simple reinstall of your OS, so naturally you should try this first. If after a reinstall things are still slow, you're in need of an upgrade. There are three things to consider here. First off, a new CPU. Is your CPU usage through the roof when doing everyday tasks? Do you find that every task you give your PC takes forever to complete? If so, CPU is the culprit, although if you've built your system properly you shouldn't need a CPU upgrade for around three years. The next culprit is RAM, and this is where you need to pay attention. If you're still on a 32-bit OS, more than 3.25GB of RAM will not benefit you in any way. If you're on 64-bit however, here's where it gets interesting. 4GB of RAM should be enough for your average user, so if you have a dual-channel system (think 775 chipsets, any modern AMD system, and P55 chipsets), upgrade to 4GB of RAM and leave it there. If you're lucky enough to be running an X58 based system with tri-channel memory, go for a 6GB set of RAM, 3GB is a waste, 12GB is overkill, and 9GB was built by an idiot. Already got 4GB or more RAM? Well then, have a look at your hard drive. If your primary hard drive (and by this I mean the drive with your operating system on it) is getting old, chances are you'll need to replace it. Now either you can go for an SSD which is terribly expensive and low in capacity, or you can upgrade to a new 500GB hard drive. Most modern 500GB drives are a dime a dozen, have more than enough performance for the average gamer, and have enough space for your operating system and games.

"If it doesn't lag, don't upgrade it, you're just spending money that would be better suited to buying games. Or putting yourself through university. But probably buying games."

While the above is a very basic guide, it should help you in two ways: eliminating a laggy system, and save you the trouble of spending too much on unnecessary upgrades. As a last word of advice, if it doesn't lag, don't upgrade it, you're just spending money that would be better suited to buying games. Or putting yourself through university. But probably buying games. **NAG**

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customised and built by Ettienne "DAE_JA_VOO" Venter

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CASE SPECIFICATIONS

Case: Lian-Li PC-A77F
Motherboard: ASUS Rampage III Gene
RAM: 6GB Kingston HyperX KHX1600C8D3K3/3GX
Power Supply: Corsair HX1000W
Cooling:
EK Supreme HF CPU Waterblock
Swiftech MCP355 Pump
XSPC Laing DDC-1T Pump top
EK-MultiOption RES X2 - 150 Basic Reservoir
Black Ice GT Stealth 360 Radiator
Feser Tubing
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- Competition closes 30 November 2010
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DIY: Hands-on with Dremel

Part 9 – NAG Case Mod Part 1

I'VE BEEN WORKING ON a mod project for *NAG* for a while now, and it's looking fantastic so far. By the time you read this, the mod will be complete, and will probably be standing in the *NAG* office. There are quite a few areas of the mod that required extensive work, and I'd like to cover one or two of them, explaining all the details regarding how I did those parts of the mod.

The biggest aspect of this mod that I want to go into is the PSU, as it has been extensively modded. I've cut the cables off from within the PSU and soldered new wires in place. The reason I went with this is because I needed all the wires to be white, due to the white sleeving, and I needed to cut the wires to the exact lengths that I wanted. A 24 pin connector with cables that are too long looks messy, so I needed to avoid that. New wires allowed me to have cables cut to the exact length I needed. The new wire is white 18 AWG wire that was imported from the US, and it was sleeved in white sleeving imported from Germany.

So here's the whole process:

The first thing I did was cut off the original cable sleeving, and then remove the ATX connectors off the ends of the cables. I had a tool to help me with this part. What's important here is the labelling. I labelled all the cables while removing them from their connectors, so that I know which is which, and where it belongs **(1)**. The next step was to get the new wires connected to the 24 pin connector **(2)**. I had a schematic written down so that I know what cables go where **(3)**. That schematic is really important if you want to do something like this, because if you mix up just two wires, you could potentially fry something expensive.

The next step was incredibly tedious and repetitive, but the result was beautiful – sleeving all the cables. I chose to sleeve all the cables individually as I feel that this looks amazing. So, once the sleeve length was measured and cut to length, I pushed the cable through it. It's a mess without some heat shrink, though **(4)**. So the heat shrink was pulled over and put in place **(5)**. In order to heat up the heat shrink, I used a Dremel Versatip **(6)**, which ended up looking great, and allowed for a neater look altogether **(7)**. That's almost perfect, but not quite. The final touch to a good sleeving job is getting the sleeve into the connector, which is just a light push. The final result looks amazing **(8)**. I repeated the process 24 times, and was left with an incredibly beautiful set of cables **(9)**.

That was only half the job, though. That was the easy part. The next half of the job is cutting off the wires in the PSU and getting the new wires soldered and fitted properly. So I opened up the power supply **(10)** and then had to find exactly where the first wire runs and cut it off **(11)**. That's when the new wire gets soldered onto the wire inside the power supply **(12)**. At this point, I heat shrunk the new connection to hold the sleeving in place, and protect the new joint **(13)**. The final result **(14)** is absolutely beautiful. These wires will be routed through the motherboard tray, and not the way they have been previously, but this gives you an idea of what to expect. **NAG**

Ettienne Venter

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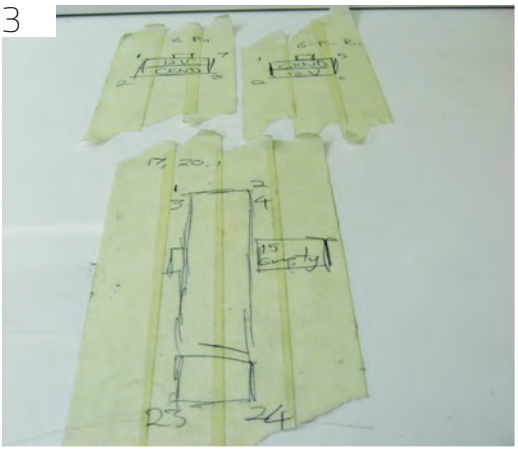

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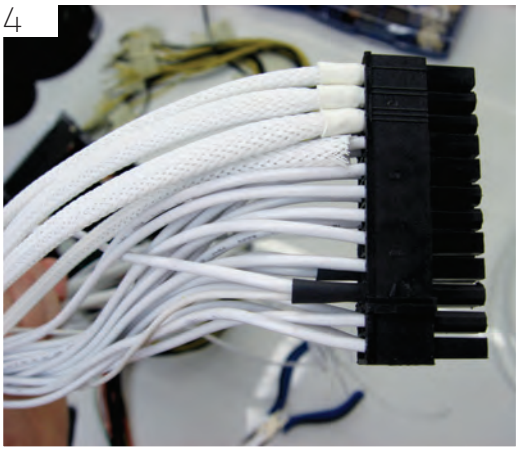

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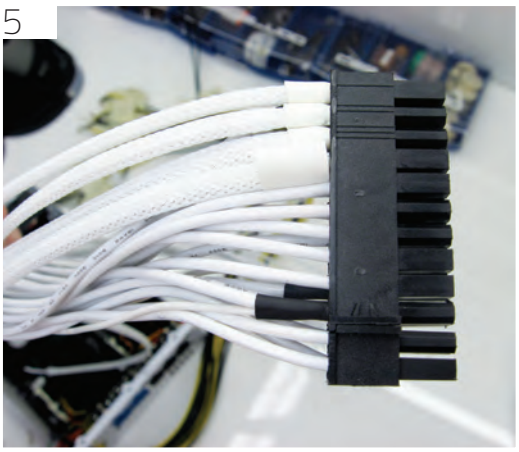

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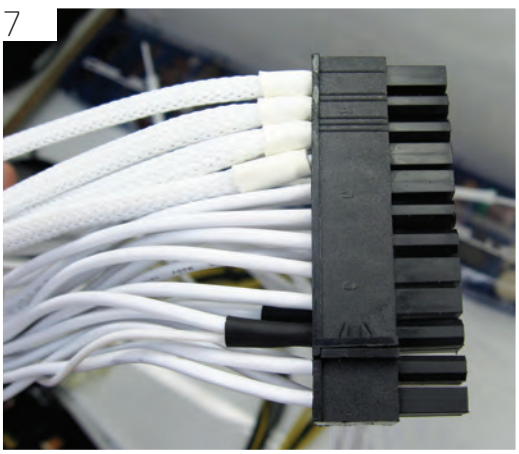

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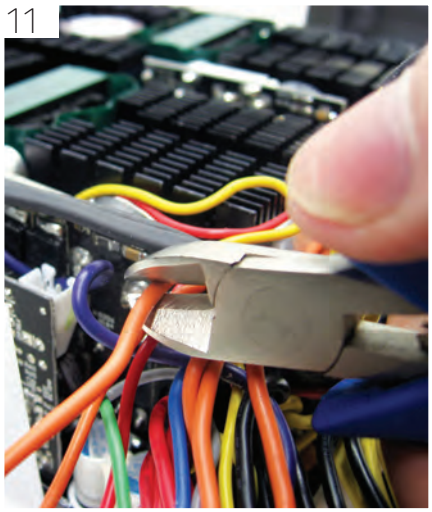

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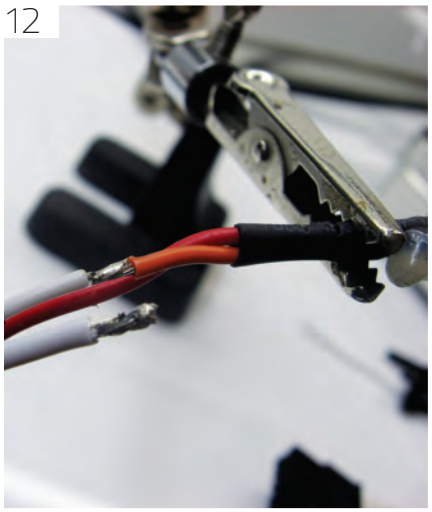

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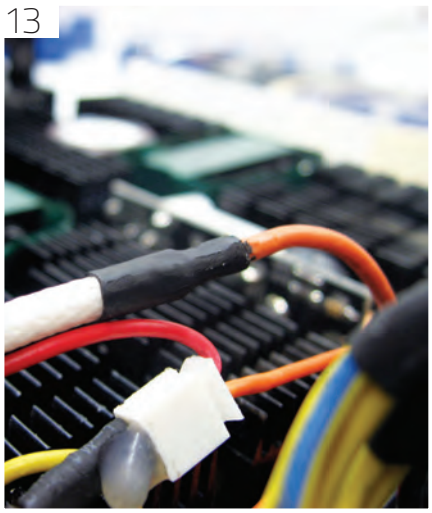

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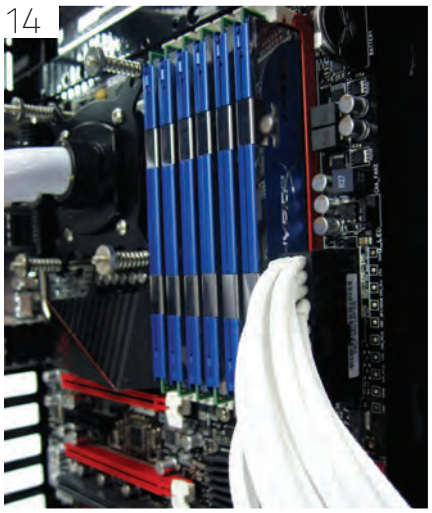

Win with Dremel & NAG

For a detailed and step-by-step guide on how this case mod was built check out the *NAG* DVD this month. You can find the file in the Extras section – it's called the BiT.pdf.
We are giving away this *NAG* case mod once Ettienne has completed the project. For details on how to enter go to page 77.

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MSI MOA 2010: MAY THE X-POWER BE WITH YOU!

FOR THE PAST TWO years, MSI has hosted one of the most anticipated overclocking competitions on the overclocker's calendar. With each contest, the competition is tougher, the hardware is better and the prizes are grander. This was particularly true this year, where contestants were able to play with some of the best hardware available.

Before we get into the details of the hardware though, it's worth mentioning that MSI took a slightly different approach this year and appear to have listened to the community on how the competitions should be run. For instance, unlike having the rules be dictated to the contestants by MSI, renowned and prolific overclocker, Giorgioprimo (fifth-highest ranked overclocker on HWBOT) helped to structure the rules and format and, given his vast knowledge and experience in the field, it was a cheat-proof competition.

The event itself took place at the National Taiwanese University (NTU) Sports Centre, where MSI put on an elaborate Star Wars themed show, complete with Storm troopers, Darth Vader and a Princess Leia competition. As to which of those was the most interesting remains a debate, however we have to add that there was a four-minute dance to "The Hustle" by the Storm Troopers, just one of those things that only MSI can pull off with straight faces.

The Star Wars attractions didn't end there as R2D2 also made a guest appearance and engaged in what seemed to be a detailed and pleasant conversation with Princess Leia in Mandarin and his 80s synthetic noises.

In returning to what made the competition special, MSI made available to the overclockers their premier X-Power Big Bang motherboard. We recently reviewed this motherboard and found it quiet appealing, although we did discover that this motherboard needs an OCP mod (as all the overclockers performed it) and that is what allowed some contestants to clock some CPUs up to 6GHz.

Sadly, it seems not all the CPUs were binned before the competition, as some teams had very poor samples. Like the first Indonesian team (which included the winner of MOA 2008) which had a CPU that could only run 3DMark Vantage at 4.9GHz, which practically spelled the end of the competition for them, as there was no way they'd win any benchmark at such a low-frequency.

Having said that, all contestants seemed very happy with the MSI NGTX480 Lightning (we hope to review this sometime this year or early next year) with several stating that it's the best GTX480 on the market. Memory was courtesy of Kingston HyperX T1 series memory (we will be reviewing this set of RAM soon), storage provided by Western Digital in the form of the highly impressive VelociRaptor 600GB drives, and finally power was provided by Enerman ERV 1050EWT PSUs.

The line up of contestants was impressive, as usual featuring 2nd highest ranked Overclocker Nick Shih (if you're wondering where the number one ranked overclocker was, it was technically impossible for him to be there), Mean Machine from Sweden and his head turning partner Mink.

From Finland, SF3D (another top-10 ranked overclocker) and Junksu had the honours. Splav and Steponz from the US, clon22 and NightRaven from Singapore, Hazzan and Ekky from Indonesia,

ryba and BORKO from Poland, and other equally talented overclockers filled up the rankings. So there was no shortage of talent at the competition.

Right from the beginning there were some impressive SuperPi 32M scores, with eventual second place winners Team XtremeLabs.org delivering a score of 6 minutes 20.688 seconds, making it the fastest SuperPi 32M time of the day. The Taiwanese team and Italian team had very similar scores as well, but just couldn't match the time set by the Ukrainians.

At this point the competition was open to anyone, and for those who didn't manage to submit a competitive time, 3DMark Vantage was going to be where they made up lost points and hopefully win the competition. The graphics cards were more than capable so all it would come down to is how much each team could squeeze out of their graphics card clocks and CPU to a slightly lesser extent.

This was probably the most interesting part of the competition, because scores were relatively close at first with many teams scoring in the 33,000 range at first, than fewer making it to 34,000 and ultimately only two teams making it past 35,000. These ultimately became the winning teams with the Swedish Expandables (yes that's how they spelled it) scoring an incredible 3DMark Vantage score of P37424.

After this result it was pretty much over for anyone else and the victory was clear for Elmor and ME4ME. This victory made the Expandables, the first back-to-back champions of MOA, having won in 2009 and receiving the automatic invitation to this year's competition. With a grand prize of $3,000 and some impressive hardware to boot, we suspect they'll be making waves on the BOT soon enough.

As usual with MSI, there was a freestyle session the following day, where the best components of the competition were put together in an attempt to set a new world record. However this didn't happen, despite the cherry picking, the components just didn't work well together. However the entire session was actually a way for MSI to gather all the overclockers and media and find out how the company could better meet their needs.

Compared to 2008, when MSI first did this, the suggestions were far more sophisticated and the feedback was less critical, which proves that MSI has come some way in their products in a short two years. As it is, MSI produces the best graphics cards on the market in their Lightning series and the general sentiment was that such strides were still needed in the motherboard department, despite the progress the company has made already.

With each of these sessions, MSI usually comes away with a wealth of information and their products following such sessions, show notable improvements in several areas. We suspect it will be no different this time and look forward to what MSI will be bringing in the future, especially with the upcoming P67 chipset and going forward into 2011 with Intel's X58 replacement.

Overall, this years' MOA was a vast improvement over last year's event and it's encouraging to see such a large company take both positive and negative feedback from its target market and turn it into great products.

We would like to thank Corex and MSI for making coverage of this event possible and eagerly anticipate MOA 2011. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

NVIDIA GTX460

Hardcore Round-up

EVER SINCE WE TESTED our first GTX460 card we knew that manufacturers would be capitalizing on this part, which happens to be the most exciting 400 series part. Not only because it's cheaper than the GF100 based parts, but because it ushered in a new level of performance at the price point, not seen since the G92 based 8800GT graphics card.

In case you missed our previous reviews of the GTX460 cards, here is a quick re-cap of the GPU.

At the heart of all GTX460 parts, is the 40nm GF104 which is not a cut down version of the GF100, but a re-designed GPU based on the advances of the GF100. The GF104 has been repurposed to be more graphics-centric than the GF100 and that means some features (associated more with GPU computing than graphics) have been removed. This includes full FP64 processing capability on all SMs. The GF104 retains this ability on one unit only for software compatibility, however that means FP64 performance is 1/8th that of a full complement GF100 core. These are but some of the simpler high level changes that differentiate the GF104 from the GF100.

We're more interested in the performance than the technical details right now and here are our findings.

TEST SYSTEM AND BENCHMARKS

Intel Core i7 980 3.6GHz
GIGABYTE X58-UD3R
Corsair XMS DDR3 1600MHz CL8 6GB
Windows 7 64-bit
NVIDIA Forceware 258.96 WHQL

For the benchmarks we selected as wide a range of graphics loads as we could, from synthetic tests to the most graphically taxing games. We avoided games that didn't have built-in benchmarks, because as great as FRAPS is, it's hard getting consistent and reliable benchmarks we can use across multiple systems. There are only two DirextX9.0c games here, with the majority being DirectX10 titles and a few offering DirectX11 support.

Sparkle GTX460 768MB

Website: www.sparklegraphics.co.za | **Distributor:** EUROBYTE | **RRP:** R2,500

Point Of View GTX460 768MB

Website: www.pointofview-online.com | **Distributor:** Esquire | **RRP:** R2,499

WE HAVE TWO REFERENCE card samples in this round-up in the form of the Sparkle and Point Of View offerings. Both these companies are likely to have special overclocked editions at a later date, but at the time of writing these were the only models available.

Both cards offer great performance as the numbers show, and they present the basic performance one should expect in any of the current gaming titles.

Where overclocking goes, it's important to note that all models are capable of some impressive overclocks and every single GTX460 out there (not special passive-cooled versions) can achieve at least a 750MHz core clock.

If you're looking for a basic GTX460 you could buy either the Sparkle or POV card and enjoy great performance in all games out right now. These two are especially worth considering given how much cheaper they are likely to be than the overclocked or non-reference versions.

GIGABYTE GTX460OC-1GI

Website: www.gigabyte.com | **Distributor:** Rectron | **RRP:** R2,999

PALIT GTX460 SONIC

Website: www.palit.biz | **Distributor:** TVR | **RRP:** R2,499

WE HAVE REVIEWED THE GIGABYTE part previously, and found it impressive. Not much has changed as it remains a great VGA card (GTX460 3DMark Vantage WR holder with GPU core @ 1,145MHZ) offering the coolest and quietest cooler out of the lot. It's clocked only 15MHz higher than the PALIT Sonic OC edition so their performance is very similar as 15MHz isn't much at all when it comes to graphics cards.

The GIGABYTE card doesn't stray much from the standard model, and only features a different cooler, while the PALIT card, much like the Platinum edition, looks exactly as the NVIDIA branded samples. These are middle of the ground parts and should be cheaper than the highly overclocked editions but a little more than the reference models.

Gainward GTX460 GLH Golden Sample

Website: www.gainward.com | **Distributor:** Comstar | **RRP:** TBA

PALIT GTX460 SONIC PLATINUM

Website: www.palit.biz | **Distributor:** TVR | **RRP:** R2,699

THESE ARE THE TWO fastest graphics cards in the test and they also happen to be the exact same graphics card (they are probably manufactured by the same contractor). They don't stray much, if at all from the reference design, but do come pre-overclocked to an impressive 800MHz, which brings the performance up to Radeon 5850 and even GTX470 levels.

If ultimate performance out of the box is what you want these will be the cards to buy. If your budget stretches further you could consider them in SLI for GTX480-crushing performance at a lower price. There isn't much to dislike about these two, however we had hoped they would use a better cooler as the higher clock speeds do push the reference cooler a bit more, and we'd rather we didn't have to deal with load temperatures in the mid to upper 70s.

MSI NGTX460 CYCLONE

Website: www.msi.com | **Distributor:** Corex | **RRP:** R2,599

ASUS ENGTX460 TOP

Website: za.asus.com | **Distributor:** ASUS | **RRP:** R2,399

THESE WERE THE ONLY two overclcocked 768MB parts we tested and because of the slightly cut-down core and impressive aftermarket cooling, they operated much cooler than all the other cards save for the GIGABYTE GTX460OC-1GI. Between the two cards, however, the MSI card had the advantage over the ASUS offering. Not only did the Cyclone card feature the most convincing cooler out of any other card here, it's arguably the most attractive of the lot.

Both cards outperformed the reference models, and this makes them particularly attractive for those who have the lower-end power supplies and are considering the SLI, because despite the overclocking, they draw slightly less power than the 1GB models.

Both cards feature good overclocking software, but MSI once again stands out with Afterburner which remains without a doubt the best VGA overclocking software suite on the market. Luckily though, the program also works with the ASUS model.

As far as 768MB models are concerned, we would go with the MSI, as it really is just that much better than the ASUS TOP card.

BENCHMARKS

Manufacturer	Model	3DMARK VANTAGE	HEAVEN BENCHMARK 2.1	STONE GIANT	JUST CAUSE 2	STALKER: COP	BATMAN: AA	CRYSIS: WARHEAD	RESIDENT EVIL 5	H.A.W.X.	LOST PLANET 2
ASUS	ENGTX460TOP	14 974	798	44	23.8	28.4	59	55.5	85.3	72	33.0
PALIT	Sonic OC Edition (700/900)	16 143	829	46	25.2	31.8	67	57.5	89.7	78	34.1
PALIT	Sonic Platinum (800/1000)	17 153	947	52	28.2	36.1	75	64.9	101.3	87	39.0
GIGABYTE	GTX460OC-1G	16 409	843	47	26.1	32.4	65	57.4	90.9	78	34.8
GAINWARD	GLH Golden Sample	17 155	947	52	28.2	36.0	75	64.3	102.0	87	39.0
MSI	N460GTX Cyclone	15 748	825	46	24.7	29.3	60	57.3	86.7	75	34.2
Sparkle	SXX460786D5	14 515	773	43	23.0	27.5	57	53.9	82.8	71	32.0
POV	VGA-460-A1	14 517	773	43	23.1	27.0	57	54.0	82.0	71	32.0

RESULTS

The results speak for themselves. Do not be too concerned with the inability of any card to score above 30fps in the *Just Cause 2* benchmark. We made use of every single feature the game had via NVIDIA specific enhancements like the Bokeh-filter and CUDA accelerated/enhanced water effects. All games were run at full HD 1920x1080 and present what is likely a worst case scenario for graphics cards at this price point, so 1680x1050 and removal of any AA will greatly improve performance in this title. All the other benchmarks churn out frame rates above the 30fps mark. *Batman* was run with hardware PhysX and 4xAA as it's an UE3 powered game and fairly light on modern graphics cards. All the other benchmarks are pretty much standard affair with maximum detail enabled and a minimum of 16xAF.

CONCLUSION

Selecting a winner from these graphics cards is not possible but also futile because these may have the same GPU104 GPU, but they are different in pricing, performance and to some degree people they are targeting. There isn't a poor showing here at all, as by merely using the GF104 core, the graphics cards deliver good performance.

So in light of this, we have broken down the cards into four segments.

REFERENCE GTX460 768MB - The reference POV and Sparkle cards are tied and there's nothing between them so you're better off with the cheaper of the two or the one with the longer warranty.

Mid-range GTX460 – The midrange GTX460 cards are also very similar. We will give the win to the GIGABYTE GTX460OC-1GI not because of the 15MHz clock speed advantage, but the superior cooler on the product.

High End GTX460 – Tied again as the Gainward and Palit card are the exact same product, once again buy the one that's the cheaper of the two or the one with the better warranty.

Overclocked GTX460 – This one has to go to the MSI card. Not only is it clocked higher, has a better cooler, it also has better overclocking software. The ASUS card is great, but just isn't enough to stand toe to toe with the MSI N460GTX Cyclone. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

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1. Respondents from Infonetics September 2008 survey report that Tipping Point blocks 2.3X more threats compared to next closest competitor
2. IDC white paper sponsored by HP, *ROI of a Complete Networking Portfolio: The Business Case for Open Standards*, September 2010

RRP > R2,699 **SUPPLIER** > ASUS **WEB** > za.asus.com

DREAM MACHINE

ASUS Xonar Xense

FOR THE PAST FOUR to five years, ASUS has without a doubt taken the lead in PC audio. While the sound card industry has in itself almost completely disappeared, the remaining players produce audiophile-grade parts and ASUS is the leader in this regard.

It's safe to say that while Creative was the leader of audio cards on the PC, ASUS has taken over with the Xonar line of audio cards. Even the most basic Xonar cards offer better audio quality than any on-board solution you can find on any motherboard today.

As great as sound cards have become though, it remains true that the best audio experience short of having very expensive speakers is a set of good cans. This is what the Xonar Xense is, in essence. ASUS have packaged the fantastic Sennheiser PC-350 headphones with their sound card, which is near identical to the Xonar Essence STX. That means the card features the AV100 chip, which is actually a re-branded C-Media Oxygen-HD processor, a separate headphone amp (with a special PC-350 option) from Texas Instruments (6120A2).

Unlike the ST, which is a stereo-only card (without expansion card), the Xense supports 7.1 channel output via a breakout cable. The outputs of each of these channels is powered by the Cirrus-Logic CS4362A and true to ASUS's legacy of high-end audio cards, the Xense features swappable op-amps. By default, these are great and we doubt any user will need to replace these, but it's nice to know that the option is there for those who want even better audio signal.

Specs wise, the card reads pretty much like the STX, capable of playing 192 KHz/24-bit audio over all channels (input and output) and features an impressive (for this level at least) low-latency ASIO 2.0 driver which will come in handy for those who want to dabble in audio production. All this is basically a throwback to what we already knew was an impressive part in the form of the STX.

Upon listening we were particularly impressed with the headphone amp and how clean the audio signal was at even the most ridiculous db levels. Paired with the PC-350 headset it's even better. We have previously tested the STX with the PC350 a few years ago, and this combination is as impressive now as it was then, if not a little better.

This package is targeted at gamers, and it will work very well in that environment, but, as we've stated previously, all the electronic and component wizardry will be wasted if all that this package will be used for is games. Not because games don't have great audio, but because that's not the focus of what one is doing when playing a game.

To be truly appreciated, one has to load up a great DVD or Blu-Ray Disc of a grand movie and in this context the audio card shines and the PC-350 cans round up the entire experience delivering punchy, yet warm bass, a wide sound stage and pristine high frequencies without oppressing your ears. It's hard to describe in words exactly, because of how well the sound card deals with a wide variety of music types. Sometimes you may need to tweak the audio settings a little to suit your chosen music, but once you get it right, it's unlikely you'll find a better combination of sound card and headset than what ASUS is offering in this package.

If none of the above is convincing, then consider what ASUS is offering and how much one would have to pay if one had to buy these separately. The headset alone costs more than R2,000 and the sound card at least R1,500. From an economical point of view this package makes sense, but most of all as we keep saying, there just isn't anything that sounds better out there on the PC, regardless of how much you are willing to spend. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

Specifications

Audio Processor: C-Media Oxygen-HD / ASUS AV100
Audio Channels: 7.1
Dedicated Headphone AMP: Yes
Interface: PCI-Express 1X

THE SCORE

›Plus
+ Incredible sound quality
+ Value

›Minus
- Nothing

›Bottom Line
The best PC audio combination to date.

10 out of ten

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HARDWARE

SUPER TALENT Speed Series WS220UX4G8 4GB DDR3-2200 CL8 Dual Channel Kit

EVERY GENERATION OF DDR memory since its introduction many years ago has had a seemingly magical DRAM chip associated with it. With DDR1, there was nothing quite as amazing as MICRON's BH5 chips. Not only did these IC's offer the best possible timings (remember 2-2-2-5 at 550MHz) they could also do some amazing speed with enough voltage (in excess of 3.5V sometimes higher). While Samsung's TCCD chips were the closest to BH5 they just weren't up to scratch for most enthusiasts.

With DDR2 we saw the rise of MICRON's D9 FatBody chips which once again remained peerless, offering the tightest timings at the highest speeds. Towards the end of DDR2 popularity we had a number of DDR2 1,200MHz sets, but few could offer the tight CL4 timings of the FatBody chips. At the end of DDR2's life though D9 GMH chips ruled, and most records to this day on any DDR2 platform are with RAM based on these chips.

DDR3, was a little different as it had two lives in the original 1.8V spec where once again MICRON D9 GTR chips were the ones to have. However, with the introduction of Intel's X58 chipset, it all changed, as no RAM could essentially be sold that required above 1.65V, which was just a little more than the reference 1.5V JDEC spec of DDR3.

This is where we find ourselves now and because of this change, we have even better RAM such as this SUPER TALENT set which is powered by the peerless ELIPDA HYPER ICs. While these may come in various versions, it's safe to say that any set which features such chips will be impressive to say the least.

As a testament to the confidence manufacturers have in these chips, SUPER TALENT has produced this set which operates at a blistering 2,200MHZ but keeps tight timings of CL8-8-8-24. Nothing we have ever tested before is configured like these and the performance is nothing short of staggering.

Indeed these are designed for Intel's P55 chipset; hence they are a dual channel kit. However it doesn't mean they cannot be used by X58 owners. In fact because of the price, we would strongly consider any power user determined to have the best consider buying two kits and making a 3-channel set for their X58 platform. Even with buying two sets, the price will still be a great deal cheaper than our current Dream Machine RAM (which remains a good set).

The kind of performance this set can deliver at 1,800MHz cannot be matched by any other set we have reviewed before at 2,000MHz. This set isn't the fastest product in their P55 range but we find that the 2,400MHz set has rather poor timings of 9-11-10-28, which is practically useless because of the significantly higher latencies that ruin performance. Add to which, with such sets you can't be sure what chips you are getting and chances are they are not ELIPDA HYPER ICs at all. So a safer bet would be this set without hesitation.

For those who are using an AMD platform, provided your IMC is capable of it, (most Tuban based cores are) you should be able to reach DDR 2000 speeds with 7-7-7-21 timings using this RAM. Nothing else we have tested came remotely close to these settings. This set seems to work just as well for AMD as it does for Intel platforms. We would have wanted to make this kit our Dream Machine set, however it isn't a Triple Channel kit, so we are unable to. Make no mistake about it though; this kit is head and shoulders above anything we have ever come across. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

Benchmarks

Frequency (MHz)	Timings	Voltage	NorthBridge (MHz)	Everest Read (MB/s)	Everest Copy (MB/s)	Everest Latency (ns)	MaxxMem Marks
1800	6-6-6-18	1.66	3600	18242	16560	37.4	1046
2000	7-7-7-24	1.68	3600	18622	16666	37.7	1052
2208	8-8-8-24	1.66	3600	19137	17059	37.1	1123
2304	8-8-8-24	1.72	3840	19876	17798	36	1206

Specifications

Size: 4GB (2x2GB)
Memory Type: DDR3
Chip: ELPIDA HYPER

THE SCORE

›Plus
+ Capable of incredible timings
+ ELPIDA Hyper ICs

›Minus
- Nothing

›Bottom Line
The fastest DDR3 we have ever tested.

10 out of ten

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RRP > P256 – R7,000 | V256 – R7,500 **SUPPLIER** > Frontosa **WEB** > www.corsair.com

Corsair P256 and V256 SSD drives

SSDS ARE EXPENSIVE, A fact that many of us know all too well. If you're lucky enough to own an SSD, it's probably a smaller 40GB/64GB model from one of the lesser known brands, and even then it would be one of the most expensive components in your PC. So you can imagine my delight when I got the chance to review two large capacity drives from one of the biggest names in the PC industry. Ridiculously expensive, astonishingly fast, I give you the Corsair P256 and V256 SSDs.

Starting at over R7,000, the dent these SSDs put into your wallet is rivalled only by Intel Extreme Edition CPUs and the most over the top dual GPU graphics cards from the likes of ASUS and GIGABYTE. Not something Timmy will be getting for his 14th birthday then.

So up first, the P256. Utilizing a Samsung controller and MLC NAND flash, the P256 does well in all aspects of performance. Recording a blistering 220mb/s read and 192mb/s write in the Sequential tests of CrystalDiskMark, the drive is bang on target for its theoretical figures. The seek time scores of 0.103ms read and 0.513ms write are pretty good as far as SSDs go, but mind-blowing if you're used to old-fashioned mechanical drives.

By contrast, the V256 which uses an Indilinx Barefoot controller and MLC NAND flash, is faster in CrystalDiskMark sequential tests with 255mb/s read and 188mb/s write scores. However, the seek time scores in AS SSD benchmark of 0.152ms read and 0.492 write puts the V256 just behind the P256 here.

So while each drive has certain strengths and weaknesses, both are close enough for the performance gap to seem negligible. So what do all of these figures mean? Well the above artificial tests as well as benchmarks that test Random IOPS are great for sorting though the finer details, but what we all really want to know is, how will these drives perform in real world tests?

Using a test rig consisting of an i7 930, Rampage II Extreme and 6GBs of DDR3 RAM, we installed Windows 7 Pro on each machine and recorded the time taken from the beginning of the install to the Windows home screen. The P256 did it in 14 mins dead, the V256 meanwhile took a sluggish 14 mins and 2 seconds. By contrast, an old Samsung F1 640GB hard drive took 19 mins and 32 seconds. Next up were the total bootup times measured from switching the power button on to sitting at the home screen. This includes all BIOS initialisation, raid controller initialisation and Windows bootup time. The P256 was done in 31 seconds, the V256 in 30 seconds, and the 640GB F1 in 53 seconds. Next up, loading a large database file for editing: The P256 took 21 seconds, the V256 took 21 seconds, and the 640GB F1 trudged along for 44 seconds. Lastly, game load time: Loading up levels in Metro 2033 was a painless affair, with the average time for the P256 being 13 seconds, theV256 taking 15 seconds, and the 640GB F1 taking 28 seconds. To add its weight to the real world results, it should be noted that the system with the two SSDs was far more responsive than the hard drive in all areas from web browsing to using Windows media player.

For R7,000, you expect a large box, with a nice leather protector, some custom SATA cables and maybe a gift voucher for an online game; these are the norm that people have come to expect from such high-end hardware. Well you'd be wrong. The V256 comes in a tiny box, with nothing other than some cheap plastic to hold it in place and a bracket that allows you to install the 2.5-inch drive into a 3.5-inch bay. The P256 is the same bundle only in a smaller box, with no 2.5-inch to 3.5-inch bracket. Talk about a missed opportunity to impress the customer.

At the end of the day, is the performance benefit worth the price premium? Not at all. Don't get me wrong, having a large capacity SSD drive as your OS drive is a wonderful experience, and it will make you smile every time you do much of anything on your PC. However, for the price it's hard to justify it. While the P256 and V256 are amazing pieces of technology, they only appeal to the consumer who already has the best of everything else and has a large wad of cash burning a hole in their pocket. **NAG**

Derrick Cramer

Specifications

PERFORMANCE SERIES
Maximum sequential read speed: 220MB/s
Maximum sequential write speed: 180MB/s
Controller: Samsung
Cache: 128MB DRAM and NCQ support

NOVA SERIES
Maximum sequential read speed: 270MB/s
Maximum sequential write speed: 195 MB/s
Controller: Indilinx Barefoot
Cache: 64MB

THE SCORE

›Plus
+ Blisteringly fast
+ Good build quality

›Minus
- No Trim support in Raid
- No Sandforce Controller
- Price

›Bottom Line
Both large capacity SSDs from Corsair are incredibly fast, but are too expensive and outperformed by newer drives.

08 out of ten

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Windows®. Life without Walls™.
msi recommends Windows7.
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New level of Sound and Performance
Your PC, simplified.
Windows 7
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Antec DF-85

AIMING TO BUILD ON the relative success of the Twelve Hundred, Antec has catered to the gaming market in more than just looks with the high-end, full-tower Dark Fleet DF-85 chassis, but is it improvements all around, or does this monster chassis disappoint?

Starting off with visual aspect of the DF-85, you can tell right away that this chassis won't be to everyone's taste. Appealing to the gamer in you, the front of the chassis is extremely busy, feeling almost cluttered, but sporting an industrial and somewhat military look. It must be said that I never much liked the proportions of the Twelve Hundred, it was too tall, too narrow and too shallow. It suffered because of this, not only visually when compared to the likes of the Coolermaster ATCS 840 and the Lian Li PC-P80, but also performance-wise with regard to airflow and cable management. Unfortunately the DF-85 keeps similar proportions and so suffers the same problems.

Dealing with features next, Antec have added a few nifty ideas that make the DF-85 stand apart. First off is Fleet-Release, a set of three lockable doors on the front of the chassis that house variable speed 120mm fans. Some dust filters are thrown in to complete the deal. Above this, there are three 5.25-inch bays, and each has its own separate access handle. The handles feel relatively solid, but serve more as a visually appealing hindrance than an actual feature. They also make installing a front display unit like the Zalman control panels or Antec's own Veris range look rather ridiculous. Still, there are some good features, such as nine internal 3.5-inch bays at the expense of 5.25-inch bays. This is a great idea that has taken far too long to enter the high-end chassis market. You will almost always find that high-end users need more than six 3.5-inch bays while the majority of the 5.25-inch bays stand empty, and for that market the DF-85 does superbly. In addition to this, there is a mounting point at the bottom of the chassis for a 2.5-inch SSD or mechanical drive. While it feels like an afterthought, it's a very logical place for this type of drive, another feather in the DF-85's hat.

There is one last feature worthy of mention. At the top of the Chassis, there is a single 2.5-inch drive hot swappable bay covered by smoked plastic for either SSDs or laptop sized hard drives. I'm not entirely blown away by this though, as realistically, I definitely wouldn't be carrying my expensive SSD outside of an external enclosure, considering how costly they are. Although some may indeed find this a very handy offering. As for a 2.5-inch hard drive? Once again, these are too frail to be transported outside of an external enclosure making the hot swappable bay redundant in my opinion.

Lastly, we'll focus on the performance of the DF-85. Firstly, the thermal test. This was conducted by leaving a temperature sensor hanging in free space between the graphics card and CPU to give us an ambient temperature. The higher this is, the worse the thermal performance of the case. Testing equipment used was an Intel i7 930 (3.6GHZ) with the Intel stock cooler, an ASUS Rampage II Extreme motherboard, and a pair of ASUS 4890TOP Edition graphics cards. Using this test setup, the DF-85 reported an idle ambient temperature of 30 degrees Celsius, and a load temperature of 47 degrees Celsius. By comparison, a Coolermaster ATCS 840 reported temperatures of 27 degrees Celsius at idle, 40 degrees at load. It should be noted that both cases were tested with their default fan configurations in place. Thermal performance isn't quite poor, but does leave this reviewer wanting. When it comes to cable management, cases such as the ATCS840 and 690 II from Coolermaster offer an easier time of things, thanks to their wider design allowing for a wider cable management compartment. Once again cable management in the DF-85 isn't terrible, but it is far from class leading.

So is the DF-85 a good buy? Questionable looks for some that may however hold huge appeal for others, interesting and unique features, and average performance are the order of the day for Antec's latest high-end chassis, and while it may certainly appeal to some, the DF-85 feels more like a missed opportunity than a smash hit. **NAG**

Derrick Cramer

The busy front of the DF-85 houses most of the noteworthy features such as the three-door Fleet-Release system allowing swift customization of front fan and drive configurations and easy access to tool-less, washable fan filters

Specifications

Dimensions: 596mm (H) x 213mm (W) x 505mm (D)
Weight: 11kg
Front ports: 1 x USB 3.0; 3 x USB 2.0; Audio In and Out
Motherboard Support: Mini-ITX, micro ATX, ATX
Maximum graphics card size: 12.5" / 318mm
Expansion slots: 7

THE SCORE

›Plus
+ USB 3.0 front connection
+ Seven variable speed fans
+ Ports for water cooling

›Minus
- Heavy
- Looks might not be to everyone's taste

›Bottom Line
If you're looking for a solid build with some interesting new features, the Antec DF-85 is a worthwhile consideration.

06 out of ten

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NETGEAR N300 Wireless Gigabit Router

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS NETGEAR, the first thing that comes to mind is an ugly pearl white router with a flimsy feeling aerial and basic functionality. I'm happy to report the WNR3500L is none of these things. But does that make it any good?

Well, the looks are a major plus, a sleek glossy black finish looks smooth and refined, while the square shape and absence of an external aerial makes sure this is a router you'd be proud of displaying.

Looks aside, all we really want from a router is performance and functionality, and this NETGEAR seems almost to define that. Wireless N support, four Gigabit LAN ports, and a WAN port for connection to the modem are all you would expect from a mid-range router in this category. However the WNR3500L has a trick or two up its sleeve. The first is a USB 2.0 port that allows you to plug an external hard drive into the router, turning it into a NAS that any PC on the network can access as storage. While the USB 2.0 speeds are slightly limiting, it's a good idea which got plenty of use during the time we had the WNR3500L for review. The other handy feature is the "Press 'N Connect" button. Pressing this allows the router to setup and connect to wireless devices in range and despite some early trouble, it worked as stated.

The other huge benefit of the WNR3500L is that it runs on the OpenRouter open source firmware, which as routers running on DDWRT firmware have proven, adds a wealth of functionality to power users. The other plus side is, as the OpenRouter community grows, the WNR3500L router will gain new features and have a far greater support base than NETGEAR alone.

All in all then, a good investment if you already have a modem and plan on extending your networks functionality with wireless N and Gigabit capability, not to mention a NAS. NAG

Derrick Cramer

Specifications

Dimensions: 175 x 130 x 35 mm
Weight: 0.33 kg (0.72 lb
Wireless protocols: 802.11 b/g/n 2.4 GHz
Ports: 5 x 10/100 (1 WAN, 4 LAN) Gigabit Ethernet
Security: WPA/WPA2-PSK,WEP; double firewall protection (SPI and NAT firewall); Denial-of-service (DoS) attack prevention

THE SCORE

›Plus
+ Wireless N
+ 4 Gigabit ports
+ Open-source firmware

›Minus
- No built-in modem
- Can't add your own antenna

›Bottom Line
Small and stylish, offering ease of operation for the novice, and plenty of features for the power user.

09 out of ten

RRP > R1,599 **SUPPLIER** > Circuit City Electronics **WEB** > www.intellipen.co.za

IntelliPen PRO

IT MIGHT LOOK A little odd, and you might look a little strange putting it to use, but the IntelliPen PRO is a smart way to get around the restrictions of digital writing. Instead of requiring the user to buy special marked paper, the IntelliPen PRO's sensor clips onto the top, bottom or side of the (completely ordinary) writing surface and detects the movements of the included pen. When the pen nib is pushed in, the sensor activates and reads its motion around the page. It sounds effective, but this method isn't without its own share of restrictions.

The biggest weakness in this design is, if anything blocks line-of-sight between the sensor and pen, such as your own hand, it will be unable to record the writing. Additionally, there is a dead zone an inch or so from the sensor. Another issue is that the device consistently fails to accurately re-establish the location of the pen when it's lifted and then put back down. Obviously, this makes it virtually unusable for even amateur drawing, as even a simple line drawn in multiple parts will come out as a jagged, disconnected mess. Perhaps the biggest flaw when it comes to drawing is the device's inability to read strokes that don't fully-depress the nib. It's all or nothing for this pen.

If writing is the biggest concern for you, however, the IntelliPen PRO manages to perform its duties fairly well. This is thanks to the included MyScript Notes 3 handwriting recognition software that is surprisingly accurate. Stress-testing this application resulted in good results for handwriting of various levels of sloppiness, but if you can't read it, the software can't. MyScript can also process basic shapes used in flowcharts and other diagrams, but it will need some fixing up before it's ready for export to PDF, e-mail, Word or a number of image formats. NAG

Geoff Burrows

THE SCORE

›Plus
+ Doubles as a flash drive
+ Works on any surface
+ Good bundled software

›Minus
- Inaccurate sensor
- Not for drawing

›Bottom Line
If you're only using it for handwriting, then the IntelliPen PRO is acceptable.

05 out of ten

RRP > R1,199 **SUPPLIER** > Frontosa **WEB** > www.corsair.com

Corsair Hydro Series H70

SELF-CONTAINED WATER COOLING UNITS have gained popularity over the past few years, which isn't surprising given that more users are dabbling in minor overclocking and even CPUs are starting to come with built-in overclocking features (TURBO). This has obviously resulted in cooling companies looking into better ways to curb temperatures.

The best way to cool any component in the PC remains water cooling, but the maintenance and setup is a pain for most people and this is where self-contained units shine. The Corsair Hydro Series H70, much like the H50 it replaces, aims to deliver water cooling performance and noise levels but with the convenience of air coolers. With zero maintenance and significantly easier installation, these coolers are gaining favour with enthusiasts and most importantly gamers with mid- to high-end computers who want to run overclocked systems without risking damage to the CPU.

If convenience is what you need, the H70 is the cooler for you. Not only does it offer mounts for every single relevant system there is today (LGA775, 1156, 1366, AM2 and AM3) it comes standard with two 120mm fans, pump retention clips and everything you'll need to have this up and running in less than 15 minutes.

Specifications

Fans: 2 x 120mm
Socket: LGA775/1156/1366/AM2/AM3
Radiator: Aluminium
Water Block: Copper

As for actual performance, this unit is certainly better than the H50, and is unmatched by any air cooler save for one or two premium units which cost just as much as this unit. With a 980X CPU at 4GHz we recorded temperatures just less than 67°C at full load. That's impressive and certainly better than we could have hoped for before testing. Surprisingly enough, when we removed the second fan the temperature only rose by 3°C.

At idle we recorded an unimpressive temperature of 47°C, but this isn't important because load temperatures are what matters the most, and this is where the H70 performed. It's hard to fault the H70 on anything as it really is one of the best self-contained water cooling units on the market. It may not be better than every air cooler there is, but its close enough to make this irrelevant. NAG

Neo Sibeko

THE SCORE

›Plus
+ Very good load temperatures

›Minus
- Relatively high idle temperatures

›Bottom Line
One of the best self-contained water coolers on the market

08 out of ten

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SUPER TALENT RAIDDrive GS

SOLID STATE MEMORY HAS come a long way and in particular SSDs. From our fist SSD review of the Intel X25M, which was the first viable end-user SSD, to what we have today. The technology has improved at a sometimes slow but none the less steady pace.

The days of the tragic JMICRON JMF602 controller based SSDs are behind us and we have far better controllers (like the incredible SandForce SF1200) which have better wear levelling, better TRIM support, larger caches and a host of other features.

The SUPER TALENT RAIDDrive GS is a result of these better controllers and because of the insatiable need for high transfer rates, the PCI-Express interface has gained favour with such drives which are essentially Raided SSD's on the fastest interface we have yet.

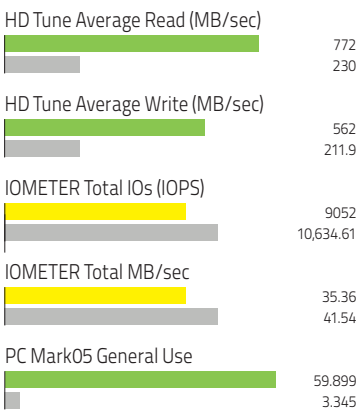
To bring all this together, SUPER TALENT has used the Intel IOP348 controller, which helps deliver the amazing read and write performance of the drive. While SUPER TALENT does claim speeds exceeding 1GB/sec in writes and reads, we were not able to achieve any of those speeds during any test or benchmark; however we managed to get some really good performance from the drive. In the IOPS test we had expected better, but it seems the Intel controller isn't as efficient as we may have hoped and it even produced results lower than that of the OCZ Agility 2 Drive, let alone the Vertex 2 which delivers close to 50,000 IOPS.

With that said, this is a drive that is primarily geared for high bandwidth sequential read/write scenarios like streaming of large volumes of data. Random access and small transactions are not its strong points so one should be aware of this before committing to the drive.

As for the price the, well it's not cheap, in fact it costs up to 10X the average 60GB SSD. It's not for your regular gaming rig, but more for data servers or those with extremely deep pockets. As far as we are concerned one is better off with an SSD raid array of individual drives. NAG

Neo Sibeko

Benchmarks



Specifications

Size: 256GB
Controller: Intel IOP348
NAND Type: MLC
Form Factor: Discreet Card
Interface: PCI-Express 8X
RAID Features: RAID level 0 with RxS0-xxxxx / RAID level 5 with RxS5-xxxxx

THE SCORE

›Plus
+ Read/Write speeds

›Minus
- IOPS is rather low
- How much?

›Bottom Line
The fastest single SSD array we have tested ever.

06 out of ten

RRP > R2,499 **SUPPLIER** > GIGABYTE **WEB** > www.gigabyte.com

GIGABYTE GV-R577SL-1GD

EVER SINCE THE RADEON 5770 GPU came out it's been the choice GPU for many low- to mid-range gaming computers. Not only is it just as fast as a Radeon 4850, its cheap, runs cool and consumes very little power compared to what the competition offers.

In some ways it's pretty much the best VGA card one can buy at this price point. Put two together and you get Radeon 5870-like performance for significantly less. That alone makes this a worthwhile card for gamers on a budget. Factor in overclocking headroom and you have a graphics solution that pretty much makes it the best bang for buck purchase in a very long time.

With that said though, by the time you read this the Radeon 6000 series will have launched and without question these are great graphics cards, better than the 5000 series in every way, with improvements in every department. However, there is still a market for Radeon 5770 graphics adapters, especially for those making use of HTPCs where outright performance isn't important, but video quality, video encoding, DX11 support and such are attractive features.

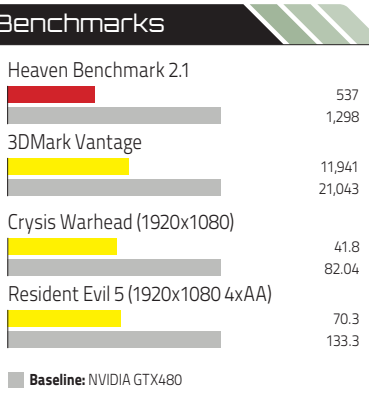
In this context one needs not only a feature-rich card, but a silent one. The GIGABYTE GV-R577SL-1GD is one such card. It won't get any quieter than this because it uses no fans. It just makes use of a massive heatsink that makes the card run very cool idling at around 45°C and loading well below the 80°C mark. The cooling capability is so great that even when overclocked the card still manages to run under 80°C. Amongst the best passive coolers we have seen on a graphics card.

However all of this comes with a huge cost. The graphics card is longer than a standard Radeon 5870, and it is much taller which means that it's not useable in a HTPC environment for the most part. We would have preferred if GIGABYTE had opted for a standard height card and maybe even used a triple slot cooler or a small fan instead. As with the current dimensions it defeats the purpose of having a silent card.

Still with that said it isn't a bad product and with the Catalyst 10.9 drivers, does put in some respectable numbers. NAG

Neo Sibeko

Benchmarks



Specifications

Core: 850MHz JUNIPER (40nm)
Processors: 800
Render Outputs: 16
Memory: 1GB GDDR5 4.8GHz (76.8GB/sec)
API: DirectX11/OpenGL 3.x /OpenCL 1.X

THE SCORE

›Plus
+ No noise
+ Low temperatures

›Minus
- Far too big

›Bottom Line
The quietest graphics card we have tested in a long time.

07 out of ten

RRP > R955 **SUPPLIER** > Frontosa **WEB** > www.antec.com

Antec Veris Multimedia Station Premier

The remote is well-built and offers a wide range of functions

SO YOU'RE BUILDING AN HTPC and you want an easier way of controlling it; a wireless mouse and keyboard are too bulky and don't quite fit with your assortment of remote controls. Well, the Antec Veris Premier is here to solve your problems.

Taking up two 5.25-inch bays, the Veris Premier features a large LCD screen, IR receiver, and a wide array of buttons that allow you to control every aspect of the device, although these are for the most part redundant since the remote offers even more functionality from a more comfortable position. Build quality on the unit is great, barring the two dials which fell off numerous times, although this is probably a fault limited to our review unit. After an installation process that would intimidate a PC novice, the unit was installed and setup was a breeze. The iMon software that ships with the Veris Premier is relatively easy to navigate around and setup, and does just about everything you'd want it to, whether you feel like browsing images, listening to MP3s, or playing .mkv files, the software and unit handled whatever we threw at them. The remote feels at home with TV/AVR/DSTV remotes and doesn't look out-of-place or draw attention. Responsive spaced out buttons that are clearly labelled compliment the software's ease of use.

All in all, the Antec Veris Premier is a good example of a unit that is built well and offers a great feature set and functionality for its size. Overkill for the average Joe, but perfect for HTPC media enthusiasts. **NAG**

Derrick Cramer

Specifications

Dimensions: 3.3" x 5.9" x 3.4"
Connection type: External/Internal USB
Remote control: Yes

THE SCORE

›Plus
+ Quality unit
+ Great remote

›Minus
- Intimidating installation for some users

›Bottom Line
A great multimedia station that works well and has all the features you'll need.

08 out of ten

RRP > R3,699 **SUPPLIER** > Corex **WEB** > www.thermaltake.com

Thermaltake Toughpower 1.5KW

AS UNDERRATED AS PSUS used to be, these days almost everyone knows that a generic unit won't do. In fact, besides being generic, anything less than 450W is rather dangerous, especially for anyone reading this magazine. While it isn't necessary to go out and buy a 1.5KW unit like the Thermaltake Toughpower, anything from a reputable company at 500W should be considered the bare minimum. For the serious power user though, this kind of PSU is exactly what the doctor ordered. If you are going to configure or use a system with one or two 12-thread CPUs with copious amounts of RAM, a large RAID array or multiple graphics cards, this is the kind of PSU you will likely need. While it's possible to get away with 1KW units that are able to provide power just above what they are rated for, it's best avoided because this drastically reduces the life of a PSU.

The Toughpower unit will be hard to max out, and it's definitely a PSU that can claim to cater for every power user and enthusiast out there. Quad Crossfire or Quad SLI (using four independent graphics cards) is a breeze with this PSU with a total 120A available for the 12V lines. While this isn't the only PSU that will provide that kind of power, it's one of the few units that one can be sure will work in this configuration regardless of how far one has overclocked the GPUs or CPU.

DREAM MACHINE

Specifications

Total Power: 1,500W
12V Rails: 6x (2x40A, 2x30A, 2x20A)
Efficiency: 80% +
Features: Quad Crossfire, Quad SLI support, 4-Way SLI, ATX 2.2, EPS 12V 2.91

Testing a PSU like this is hard, especially just doing load testing, because there just isn't anything you can throw at it that it won't handle, and even if you had to do ripple testing it's likely to be within the specifications because it's very hard to truly load such a PSU.

As for what standards this PSU supports, the short answer is every one. ATX, EPS 2.91 etc, they are all supported. This isn't a cheap PSU by any stretch of the imagination, but you can be assured that with such an investment (and a PSU is probably the only component in a PC that is an investment) you're unlikely to need another PSU for years on end and this PSU is almost as close to perfect as possible. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

THE SCORE

›Plus
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+ Easy cable management system

›Minus
- Not cheap

›Bottom Line
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09 out of ten

GG

By Tarryn van der Byl

Dumb and Dumbererer

WHEN I WAS LIKE, six or seven years old, my favourite game was *Robot Wars*. It was one of several games on a pirated 5¼-inch floppy disk grandly titled "PC ARCADE" on a dot matrix printed sticker that turned up around about the same time my dad dragged an IBM XT into the house. Anyway, in *Robot Wars*, you – a robot – had to navigate a sort of maze and shoot other robots. I say "maze," of course, but it was more like "box with one or two randomly placed barriers just barely creating the illusion of a maze but not actually really a maze at all." And I say "robots," but they were more like "two or three squares more or less approximating some kind of something that could actually really have been anything because it was just a heap of squares." But I was just a kid, this was the 80s, and although *Terminator 2* wouldn't be in production for another couple of years, *Robot Wars* was already *Judgement Day*, and it was totally the most epic thing in the history of stuff ever.

Maybe that's why I'm completely baffled when people describe something like, say, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* as "dumbed down." You know, because it doesn't have... lean. Apparently lean control has been around forever or something, and gamers everywhere have now – SCANDAL! PETITION! HOMOSEXUAL AGENDA! – been rudely divested of a fundamental and indispensible gameplay mechanic that no game could conceivably exist without. What a difference that might've made in *Robot Wars*, if I'd only known the keys. Also, facepalm.

I'm increasingly convinced it's not games that are dumbed down, but gamers[1] themselves. And I say "dumbed down," but it's more like "actually really dumb." What are these six and seven year olds doing playing *Modern Warfare 2*, anyway? I'm assuming they're six and seven year olds, of course, because they've obviously not played anything that came out before 2005.

So while You Know, That Guy gets busy compiling a scrupulously annotated list of games featuring lean control that launched before 2005 then[4], let's get real. We're playing games in 1080p HD, 60 frames per second, and pushing about 300 million more megagigavoxelbytes of CPU instructions and handled exceptions every clock cycle than it took to chuck Apollo 11 at the freaking moon. We've got surface penetration, cover systems, procedural generation, deformable terrain, adaptive soundtracks, soft body physics, companion cubes, and emergent, emotional AI. We've got fully automatic assault rifles with chainsaws bolted onto them. If you're not having the most fun of your life, you must be dead.

And nobody ever used lean, anyway. NAG

[1] Certain gamers[2].

[2] Certain PC gamers[3].

[3] Certain PC gamers who, for the most part, don't even know what they mean, but are rather just copy-pasting this really clever new phrase they've learned from the YouTube comments under a *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* frag video. The one where some guy was shot in the face because... there's no lean control. It's not balanced for skill.

[4] Cool story, bro.

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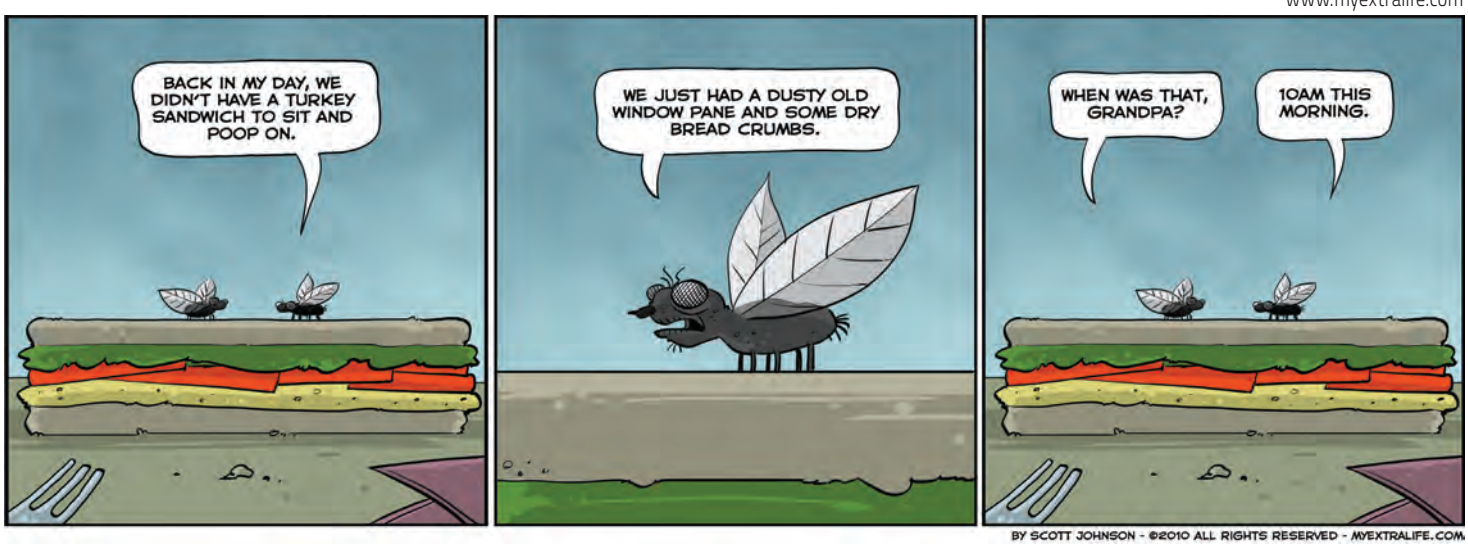

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